



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 31: 1885

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 31: 1885* by Charles Spurgeon

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The Song of a City, and the Pearl of Peace

A Sermon

(No. 1818)

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, January 4th, 1885, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."—Isaiah 26:3

This is no dry, didactic statement, but a verse from a song. We are among the poets of revelation, who did not compose ballads for the passing hour, but made sonnets for the people of God to sing in after days. I quote to you a stanza from the song of a city. Judah has not aforetime thus chanted before her God, but she has much to learn, and one day she shall learn this psalm also:—"We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Into the open country the adversary easily advances, but walled cities are a check upon the invading foe. Those people who had been hurried to and from as captives, and had frequently been robbed of their property by invaders, were glad when they saw builded among them a city, a well-defended city, which should be the centre of their race, and the shield of their nation.

This song of a city may, however, belong to us as much as to the men of Judah, and we may throw into it a deeper sense of which they were not aware. We were once unguarded from spiritual evil, and we spent our days in constant fear; but the Lord has found for us a city of defence, a castle of refuge. We have a burgess-ship in the new Jerusalem which is the mother of us all; and within that strong city we dwell securely. Let us sing this morning, "We have a strong city." The man that hath come into fellowship with God through the atoning sacrifice, hath gotten into a place of perfect safety, where he may dwell, ay, dwell for ever, without fear of assault. We are no longer hunted by hosts of fears, and trodden down by dark despairs; but "We have a strong city" which overawes the foe, and quiets ourselves. Our gospel hymns are the songs of men who, in the truest sense, have seen an end of alarm, by accepting God's provision against trouble of heart.

Observe how the song goes on to dilate upon the city's strength. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Our refuge will repay a close examination. We are doubly defended. Its lofty walls are the mainstay of a city's security; when they are strong, and high, they keep out the foe, whether he assail by scaling-ladder, or battering-engine. Outside the wall, on the other side of the moat, lies what is called the bulwark; the earthwork where, in times of peace, the citizens delight to take their walks. The bulwark of their confidence is the *boulevard* of their communion. The Lord our God has set ring upon ring, defence upon defence, around His people. All the powers of providence and grace protect the saints. Material and spiritual forces alike surround her. The Lord keeps His people doubly fenced by walls and bulwarks, and hence He speaks of a double peace. "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace," saith the Hebrew. God does nothing by halves, but everything by doubles. His salvation is decreed and appointed, and this is made the basis for the unbroken serenity of all His chosen.

The song, however, does not end with verses concerning the city, but it conducts us within its walls. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Entrance

into this grace, wherein we stand, is a choice privilege. The greatest joy of true godliness lies in our being able to enter into it. If the City of God were shut against us, it were sad, indeed, for us. If, to-day, you and I were outside of her, of what value would her walls and bulwarks be to us? Whatever God has done to His people, it is just so much additional sorrow rather than increased joy to ourselves if we are not partakers therein. That there should be a Christ, and that I should be Christless; that there should be a cleansing, and I should remain foul; that there should be a Father's love, and I should be an alien; that there should be a heaven, and I should be cast into hell, is grief embittered, sorrow aggravated. Come, then, let us sing of personal entrance into the City of God. The music and the feasting are not outside the door: to enjoy them we must enter in. Our citizenship is now in heaven. Nothing is barred against us, for the Son of David has set before us an open door, and no man can shut it. Let us not neglect our opportunities. Let it not be said, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." No, let it be ours to sing of salvation because we enjoy it to the full. Let our music never cease.

Now, when we get as far as this,—a strong city, and a city into which we have entered, we are still further glad to learn who the keeper and garrison of that city may be, for a city needs to be kept while there are so many foes abroad. To render all secure there needs to be some leader and commander for the people, who has strength with which to man the walls, and drive off besiegers. Our text tells us how securely this strong city will be held—so securely that none of her citizens shall ever be disturbed in heart,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Permit me to remind you again that my text is the verse of a song. I earnestly desire you to feel like singing all the time while I am preaching, and let the words of the text ring in your heart with deep mysterious chimes, as of a land beyond these clouds and tempests,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." I do not want you to be thinking, "I wish that the Lord would keep me in peace;" I would have you now enter into rest before the Lord. Do not say, "I am fretting and worrying, because I cannot reach this peace;" but pray to enjoy it this morning. O Lord and Giver of peace, vouchsafe it to our faith at once! O ye trustful ones, enter at once into the opened gates of the city of peace, and then bless God that you cannot be driven out again, for the Lord promises to be your garrison and safeguard. May the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and whose fruit is peace, now work peace in each of us!

I. First, we are going to answer this question as best we can, **WHAT IS THIS PERFECT PEACE?** The text in the original, as I have told you, is—"Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace." It is the Hebrew way of expressing emphatic peace; true and real peace; double peace, peace of great depth and vast extent. Many of you know what it is; and you will probably think my answer a very poor one. I shall give the best I can, I can do no more; and if you try to make up for my deficiencies, our brethren will be gainers. I confess that I cannot to the full describe the peace that may be enjoyed if our faith is strong, and our confidence in God has reached its appropriate height. We are not limited as to quality or measure of this precious thing. Peace is a jewel of so rare a price that he only hath valued it aright who has sold all that he hath to buy it. Describe it? Nay, verily, there we fail.

This "peace, peace" means, I think, *an absence of all war, and of all alarm of war*. You who can imagine the full meaning of siege, storm, sack, and pillage, can also guess the happier state of things when a city hears no longer the tramp of armies, when from her ramparts and towers no sign of adversary can be discovered; but all is peace. That is very much the condition of the people of

God when the Lord keepeth them in peace. God Himself, at one time, seemed to be against us: the ten great cannon of His Law were turned against our walls; all heaven and earth mustered for battle; God Himself was against us, at least, so conscience reported from her look-out. But, now, at this moment, having believed in Jesus Christ, we have entered into rest, and we have perfect peace as to our former sins. Who is he that can harm you, O ye that are reconciled to God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" We have by faith arrived at a state of perfect reconciliation with God. The divine Fatherhood has covered us. We inherit the spirit of children, the spirit of love and of unquestioning confidence. Everything is quiet, for we dwell in our Father's house. Look upward, and you will perceive no seat of fiery wrath to shoot devouring flame. Look downward, and you discover no hell, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Look back, and sin is blotted out. Look around, and all things work together for good to them that love God. Look beyond, and glory shineth through the veil of the future, like the sun through a morning's mist. Look outward, and the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field, are at peace with us. Look inward, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. The Lord leadeth us by still waters at such happy times, along that road of which we read, "No lion shall be there." If you who are believers in Jesus do not usually enjoy this peace, the blame must be laid to your own door: you make your own disquietude, for God saith to you, "Peace, peace," and He will keep you there if your mind is stayed on Him. Happy is he whose conflict is ended, and whose warfare is accomplished by faith in Christ Jesus.

Further, *this perfect peace reigns over all things within its circle*. Not only is no enemy near, but the inhabitants of the city are all at rest, and all their affairs are happy. No man can be said to be at *perfect* peace who has any cause of disquietude at all. Yet the child of God has this perfect peace according to our Lord's own statement; and, therefore, it must be true that the believer is raised above all disquietude. "What," say you, "has he not an evil heart of unbelief?" Yes, and that demands his watchfulness, but should not create in him any kind of terror, for God is greater than our hearts, and where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. The flesh has received its death-warrant, and unbelief is but a part of the flesh doomed to die. The holy life within us must triumph. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Though we be as yet like the smoking flax, we shall soon shine forth, and He will bring forth judgment unto victory. "Ah," saith one, "but I have disquietude in my family: I have a wild, unruly son; or, I have a sick, pining child, who will soon be taken away from my by consumption!" Yes, friend, but if your mind is stayed on God, and you can trust God with such matters, you should not lose your perfect peace even through this. For, what if your heart be troubled? Will that make the consumptive child any the stronger? Or will your melancholy be likely to restrain your rebellious son? No, but "The just shall live by faith," and shall triumph by faith, too. It shall be your strength to bring your sick, and lay them at Jesus feet; it shall be your hope to bring your unruly one, and say, "Lord, cast out the devil from my child, and let him live unto Thee." Nothing ought to avail to break the peace of the believer; the shield of faith should quench every fiery dart. For, observe, that your sin is forgiven you for Christ's sake, and that is done once for all. Observe, that Christ has taken possession of you, and you are His; neither will He lose you, but He will hold you single-handed against the world, and death, and hell. Observe, too, that your heavenly Father rules in providence, giving you what you need, for He has said, "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." He reigns in power, anticipating every danger, for He hath declared, "No weapon that is formed

against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." God's peace covers the whole extent of the territory. Tell it out through every street of Mansoul that the Prince Emmanuel has come, and to every creature within the city walls the peace of God is granted, to be possessed with gladness and delight.

We are getting some idea, I trust, of this peace, though words cannot fully convey it; we must know it ourselves. Yet it is pleasant to note that this peace is deeply real and true. No perfect peace can be enjoyed unless *every secret cause of fear is met and removed*. Whisper it at the gates, and in the hostleries, that the city might be taken by surprise, and that spies had been seen in the meadows, down by the East gate; and straightway the city would be in a ferment. No; peace cannot breathe while suspicion haunts the streets. Our peace may be a false peace, a fools peace; we may be lulled into a carnal security. Politically, nations have become self-confident, have dreamed of peace when the forges were ringing with the hammers of war; and so ill has happened unto them. Spiritually, there are multitudes of persons who think that all is right with their souls, when, indeed, all is wrong, for eternity. It is to be feared that some have received a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Now, we cannot call that perfect peace which lies only on the surface, and will not bear to be looked into. We desire a peace which sits in open court, and neither blindfolds nor muzzles ambassadors. The peace which requires that there should be a hushing-up of this and that is an evil thing. Such is the direct opposite of the peace of God. If there be any charge against God's people, men are challenged to bring it,—"*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*" The pardon which God gives us is not a smothering-up of our sins, nor a blinding of justice. God is as just in His pardons as in His punishments. It shall be seen at the last, when believers enter into their glory, that they rise there by law, just as surely as the lost sink down to hell by law: that is to say, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath rendered to the law such recompense by His perfect obedience, and His matchless atonement, that it shall be as just on God's part to save His elect as to condemn the unbelieving world. We claim that our peace is just and right. It may be examined and tested; for here we have NO FICTION. If truth is to be found beneath the stars, it is in the peace which come through the precious blood of the Son of God. The peace which God gives goes through the very bottom of things, and brings us into the eternal harmonies.

We may gaze upon this truth with the most attentive eye, but we shall see only the more clearly that he that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath salvation for walls and bulwarks. Under any light believers in Jesus are secure. You may be put in circumstances of a very trying kind, especially you may be brought to the brink of death, and near to the bar of God; and yet, dear friend, the God in whom ye trust will not fail you. Your heart rests on His promises and faithfulness, and there is no reason why its peace should be broken.

Is not this a perfect peace? If I stood here to preach up a sort of enthusiastic confidence, which would not bear the test, I would be ashamed of myself; but in preaching this peace of God, which passeth all understanding, which has no back-reckonings to disturb it, which has nothing behind that can come in ultimately to break it up, I preach something worth the having. I do desire and pray that every man and woman here may know it as I know it; for I have peace with God, and therefore my heart is glad. Oh that all of you here present might now believe God, and stay yourselves upon Him; then would you hear the Lord say "Peace! peace!"

One thing more, *peace in a city would not be consistent with the stoppage of commerce*. During perfect peace intercourse goes on with all surrounding places, and the city by its trade is enriched. Where there is perfect peace with God, commerce prospers between the soul and heaven. Good

men commune with the good, and thereby their sense of peace increases. If you have perfect peace, you have fellowship with all the saints: personal jealousies, sectarian bitteresses, and unholy emulations are all laid aside. Oh, it is a happy state of mind when we have no prejudices which can wall out the godly from fellowship with us! Oh, how blessed to say spontaneously, "If he is a child of God, I love him; if he is a member of the heavenly family, he is my brother, and I welcome him!" When we are at one with all the people of God, we are quit of a world of wars.

Better still, there is a sweet peace between the heart and its God when from day to day, by prayer and praise, we commune with the Most High. Any peace that is linked with forgetfulness of God is a horrible thing: it is the peace of the miasma, which is brooding in quiet before it strikes with the arrow of death; it is that dead calm which precedes the cyclone or the earthquake. The perfect peace which God giveth sunneth itself in the presence of God; it is a tropical flower, which lives in the flaming sun-light; a bird with rainbow-wings, which is at home in the high-noon of heavens summertide. God gives us to know more and more of this perfect peace, by enabling us to plunge more and more completely into His own self! One with God in Christ Jesus, we have reached everlasting peace.

Further let me speak upon this peace that God gives to us. It consists in *rest of the soul*. You know how the body casts all the limbs upon the bed, and they lie at ease; so does our spiritual nature stretch itself at ease. The heart reclines upon God's love, and the judgment leans on His wisdom; the desires recline, the hopes repose, the expectations rest, the soul throws all its weight and all its weariness upon the Lord, and then a perfect peace follows. To this absolute recumbency add a *perfect resignation to the divine will*. If you quarrel with God, your peace is at an end; but when you say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good," you have obtained one of the main elements of perfect peace. When the Lord's will is owned and love, all ground for quarrel is over: the peace must be deep. It consists also in *sweet confidence in God*, when there is not the shadow of doubt about anything God does, for you are sure of this, if of nothing else, that He must be true, and He must be right and kind, and in all things better to you than you are to yourself. Then to leave everything with God, trusting in Him for ever, because in Him there is everlasting strength—this is peace. It means, in fact, the swallowing up of self in the great sea of God, the giving up of all we are, and all we have, so entirely to God that henceforth we cannot be troubled, or be disturbed, because that which could make trouble is already bound over to keep the peace. Then comes a *blessed contentment*; we want no more, we have enough. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Having Him, my desires all stay at home with Him. Let me but know Him better, and I shall grow even more satisfied with unutterable beauties, His indescribable perfections.

I hope you know this peace; and if you do, I need not tell you it means *freedom from everything like despondency*. The mind cannot yield to mistrust, for the Lord's peace keeps it. The compass on board an iron steam-vessel is placed aloft, so that it may not be so much influenced by the metal of the ship: though surrounded by that which would put it out of place, the needle faithfully adheres to the pole because it is set above the misleading influence. So with the child of God, when the Lord has given him peace: he is lifted beyond the supremacy of his sorrowful surroundings, and his heart is delivered from its sad surroundings.

Thus we are *kept from everything like rashness*: resting in God, we are not in sinful haste; we can wait God's time to deliver us, knowing that there is love in every second of the delay. We do not kick, as the untutored bullock kicks against the goad, but we push on the more eagerly with our

furrow, toiling on to the end, till God shall appear for us. Thus we are saved from the temptations which come with our trials. We get the smelting of the furnace without its smut. We endure the sorrow, but escape the sin, and this is joy enough for a pilgrim in this vale of tears.

O friends, he that hath this perfect peace is the richest man in the world! What are broad acres if you have a troubled spirit? What are millions of gold, laid by in the bank, if you have no God to go to in the hour of distress? What would it be to be a prince, a king, an emperor, if you had no hope for the hereafter, no treasure of eternal love? I, therefore, charge you to get and keep this "peace,"—this perfect peace.

II. May the Lord strengthen me, in this time of painful weakness, while I speak upon another question. WHO ALONE CAN GIVE US THIS PEACE, AND PRESERVE IT IN US? The answer is in the words of the song, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." See, it is God Himself that can give us this peace, and keep us in it. The answer is one and indivisible. I know that while I was speaking some of you were saying, "The pastor is setting forth a high style of living; how can we reach to it?" But if peace be God's gift, and if the Lord Himself is to keep us in it, how easily can we attain it by putting ourselves into His hands! To be striving after peace is hard work, for by our very anxiety to find it we miss its trail. How differently does the matter appear when we read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace!"

How does the Lord keep His people in peace? I answer, first, *by a special operation upon the mind in the time of its trial*. We read in the 12th verse, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." If this be so, we can understand how the Lord can work peace in us among all the other works. There is an operation of God upon the human mind, mysterious and inscrutable, of which the effects are manifest enough; and among those effects is this, a quiet of heart, a calm of spirit, which never comes in any other way. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." The Creator of our mind knows how to operate upon it by His Holy Spirit. Let the heart and will be allowed to be as free as you choose, yet is the Lord free to act upon them. As we can tune the strings of an harp, so can the Lord adjust the chords of our heart to joyous serenity. Not only by the Word of God, and by our meditation thereon, but by His own direct operation, the Lord can create peace within the land-locked sea of the human spirit. The Lord can get at men, and influence them for the highest ends, apart from the outward means. I have noticed that, altogether apart from the subjects of my reflections, I have, on a sudden, received a singular calm and peace of spirit directly from God. I can remember occasions when I had been hurried through broken water; the winds were wild, and my little vessel was at one instant lifted out of the water, and at the next beaten under the waves. Then, in a moment, everything was calm as a summer's evening, quiet as when the hush of Sabbath falls on a hamlet in the lone Highlands. My heart was royally glad, for it had entered into perfect peace. I think you must have noticed such matters in your own case. Generally, I grant you, we are led into this peace by the consideration of the promises of God; but sometimes, apart from that, without our knowing why or wherefore, we have upon a sudden glided from darkness into light, by the distinct operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind.

But usually the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace *by the operation of certain considerations, intended by His infinite wisdom to work in that manner*. For instance, if sin be before the mind, it may well disquiet us, but when a man considereth that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he hath that before him which allayeth the disquietude. When he considereth that, in dying, the Lord Jesus rendered unto God a full and satisfactory atonement for all the sin of all His believing people, then the man is at once, by that consideration, brought into perfect peace. Or

suppose that a temporal trial ruffles the mind; the uneasy one turns to Scripture, and he finds that affliction is not sent as a legal punishment, but only as a fatherly chastisement of love: then is the bitterness of it passed away. Let a man know that all his trials work together for his good, and every sufficient reason for discontent is removed. The man noteth that there is good in the evil which surrounds him; indeed, he perceives the Lord to be at work everywhere, and henceforth he accepts the arrangements of providence without mistrust, and his heart is at peace. Depend upon it, dear friend, if you are tossed up and down, like the locust, you will only find peace by flying to the fields of Scripture. In this garden of the Lord, flowers are blooming which yield a balm for every wound of the heart. Never was there a lock of soul-trouble yet, but what there was a key to open it in the Word of God. For our pain, here is an anodyne; for our darkness, a lamp; for our loneliness, a friend. It is like the garden of Eden: a double river of peace glideth through it. Turn you then to the Lord's Word, to communion with His people, to prayer, to praise, or some form of holy service, and God will thus keep you in perfect peace.

I believe, also, that the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace *by the distinct operations of His providence*. When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. By secret workings he can quiet foes so that they are as still as a stone till Thy people pass over, O Lord. When one providence apparently fights against you, another will come in to deliver you. The Lord's thoughts towards His people are thoughts of good, and not of evil; and they shall see it to be so. Either the afflicted shall reach a place of rest, or else double strength shall be given for the double trial. God will allow no war in His providence against His own child, all must be for you there. If you are God's Jonah, and are thrown into the sea, a whale must wait upon you; and if you are God's servant, and are brought into the lowest dungeon in Egypt, Pharaohs own self must send and fetch you out of it to sit upon a throne. Lift up now your eyes, O you that crouch among the ashes because of your daily fret! Be no longer grovellers in the dust! The Lord is your King; nothing can break your peace. The Creator of yon stars and clouds, Lord of the universe, Monarch of all nature: thinkest thou that He cannot speedily send thee deliverance? All these ages has He loved thee; canst thou mistrust Him? Knowest thou not that He feeds the sparrows, ay, and the fish of the sea, and the myriads of living creatures which only His eye can see? There is no limit to His stores, nor bounds to His power. Canst thou not trust in Him, that He will help thee through, and give thee rest? Thus, you see, our peace comes from God in some way or other; and I therefore the more earnestly ask you never to seek peace elsewhere. Do not seek peace by praying for the absence of trial. You may be just as happy *in* affliction as out of it, if the Lord be with you. Do not seek peace by cultivating hardness of heart, and indifference of spirit. No, when you are afflicted, you ought to feel it: God means you should; and you must learn to feel it, and yet be fully at peace. Do not imagine you can get peace by philosophy, or by considerations derived from reason, or by knowledge fetched from experience. There is but one well from which you can draw the sweet waters of perfect peace, and it bears about its rim this dainty inscription—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, O Jehovah." Such peace as God giveth makes us like to God, it fills us with His love, it sets us acting according to His holiness; and, meanwhile, it prepares us for His palace, where everlasting peace perfumes every chamber, and covers the whole fabric with glory.

III. I have to answer another question this morning, and that is—WHO SHALL OBTAIN THIS PEACE? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." The Hebrew is very involved and difficult to understand, but we shall not err if we permit it to teach us this,—that *the whole of our being is stayed upon God in order to this peace*. The word for "mind" is very vague,

but it must include our thoughts. If your thoughts are stayed on God, you will have perfect peace: our misery comes from stray, vagabond, unsettled thoughts. If you will think of nothing except in connection with God, if you will only think of your sin in connection with a merciful God, if you will only think of tribulation in connection with a faithful God, if you will set the Lord always before you, so that he is at your right hand, you shall not be moved; but you certainly cannot be perfectly at peace till each thought, being held captive, learns to stay itself on Him. This includes the imagination. The imaginations are most untamable wild beasts, and cause a world of terror in timid minds. Oh for grace to fasten up imagination in the Lord's own cage! We must not imagine anything to be possible which would make the Lord appear to be unkind or untrue. Pray that your imagination may be stayed on God, that you may never again imagine anything contrary to the grace, goodness, and love of your heavenly Father. What peace would rule if this were the case! I think our text includes especially the desires. Desires are very grasping things. It is utterly impossible to satisfy a worldly man's heart: if he had all he now wishes for, he would be sure then to enlarge his desires as hell, and ask for more. But you, dear friend, must stay your desires at some bound or other, and what more fit than to stay them upon God? Say, "I want nothing but what God wills to give me; I desire to have nothing but what He thinks is for His glory, and for my profit." When you once come to this point, when your imaginations and desires all pitch their tents within the compass of God Himself, Who is your heavenly portion, then you will be kept in perfect peace.

What else is meant by being stayed? Does it not mean rested? When your thoughts recline at their ease in God's revealed will, that is staying upon God. When your desires are filled, and no longer open their greedy mouths for more, because God has filled them, that is staying. Does it not mean stopping there? We speak of staying at a place. Well, when our minds are stayed upon God, we just stop at God; we do not propose any further journeying; we do not wish to push on in advance of where He leads the way. Our heart is rooted and grounded in the great Father's love, and so we stay our souls on Him.

Staying means upholding. We speak of a stay, and of a mainstay; it is something upon which we are depending. Such a person is the stay of the house,—its chief upholder and support. See, then, what it is to stay your souls on God, and mind that you daily carry it out. Some are staying themselves upon a friend, others are staying themselves upon their own ability, but blessed is the man who stays himself upon God. We are to have no confidence except in the Almighty arm; our reliance must be placed there only. When in our God we live, and move, and have our being, this is the crowning condition of a creature. Oh, to feel to the utmost that we are wholly the Lord's, and that, whether His will appoints us joy or woe, we shall be equally satisfied, for we have come to lie down on His will, and go no further. I like staid persons—you know what they are and where they are. They are not easily put about, neither do they readily forsake a cause which they have espoused. He that is stayed upon God is the most staid in the world; he is steadfast, grounded, settled, and he cannot be removed from the blessed hope of the gospel. He that is fully staid is the man that shall have perfect peace. Oh, whither away, ye undecided ones? Oh, whither away, poor hearts? Will ye wander over every mountain? Will ye never take up lodging with your God, and dwell at ease in Him? Of this be ye well assured, your souls are on the wing, and are bound to fly on and on for ever unless they make bold to settle down upon the Lord their God. In God is rest, but in none else. All earth and heaven, time and eternity, cannot make up a peace for a bruised spirit, and yet a word from the Lord bestows it beyond recall.

Observe, it says, "*stayed on thee.*" Dwell with emphasis upon that, for there are many ways of staying yourself, but you must mind that all your staying is on God; on your heavenly Father, who will withhold no good thing from you; on your divine Saviour, who pleads for you at the right hand of God; on the Holy Ghost, who dwells in you; on the triune God, who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, instead of saying more, I should like, if God the Holy Spirit would help us, for each one to go through the mental act of rolling our care upon the Lord. Let us commit ourselves, and all that we are, and all that we have, and all that we have to do, and all that we have to suffer, to the guardian care of our loving God, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us. Here we are in God, and here we mean to abide. We are not regretting the grace of yesterday, nor sighing for the grace of to-morrow. We stay where we are—at home with God. Our anchor is down, and we do not mean to draw it up again. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." "Oh," saith one, "you do not know my troubles!" No, but I remember the story of a poor Methodist at the battle of Fontenoy. He had both his legs shot away, and when the surgeon came to attend to him, he was evidently bleeding to death, but he cried, "I am as happy as I can be out of Paradise!" Well, if in the very article of death, and suffering as he was, he could overflow with happiness, surely you and I can rejoice in perfect peace. I want you all to be like Dr. Watts, who said that for many years he went to his bed without the slightest solicitude as to whether he should wake up in this world, or in the next. To rest in God's Word, to rejoice in God's covenant, to trust in the divine sacrifice, to be conformed to God's will, to delight in God's self—this is to stay yourself upon God, and the consequence of it is perfect peace.

IV. WHY IS IT THAT THE LORD WILL KEEP THAT MAN IN PERFECT PEACE WHO STAYS HIMSELF ON HIM? The answer is, "because he trusteth in thee." Dear friends, that means surely this, that *in faith there is the tendency to create and nourish peace*. In all other ways of trying to live before God there is a tendency to produce uneasiness; but he that believes shall rest. Faith lays a cool hand upon a burning brow, and removes the fever of the fearful heart. Faith hath a voice of silver, wherewith she whispers, "Peace, be still." Nothing can conduce so much to a quiet life as a firm, unwavering confidence in the faithfulness of God's promise, and in the fact that what He has promised He is able also to perform.

Further, the text means this, that when a man stays himself upon God it is not only his faith that brings him peace, but *his faith is rewarded by peace*, which the Lord gives him as a token of approval. A kind of discipline is going on in our heavenly Father's family, not rewards and punishments such as judges award to criminals, but such as fathers give to their children. By this we are being trained for the many mansions in the Father's house above. If we will stay ourselves on God, we shall have peace; if we will not do so, we shall have no rest, and shall be in sore disquietude. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." The pressure of the trouble comes with the decline of faith. If thou believest more, it may not make thee richer, but thou wilt not feel thy poverty so keenly. If thou believest more, it may not make thee healthy in body, but thou shalt not fret because of thy sickness: if thou believest more, it will not give thee back thy buried ones, but it shall fill thy heart with a still higher love. "All things are possible to him that believeth," and peace, peace is among those possibilities; but if thou wilt not believe, neither shalt thou be established, thine unbelief shall be a rod for thine own back, a bitter for thine own cup. If thou wilt not trust thy God, thou shalt wander into a weary land, seeking rest and finding

none. Come, brothers and sisters, let us fly from such a fate, and win perfect peace as the reward of perfect confidence.

I think, lastly, this peace comes out of faith, because *it is faiths way of proclaiming herself*. If God gives you perfect peace, you will not need, when you go home, to shout to your friends, "I am a believer." They will soon see it. You have lost one that was very dear to you, and instead of fretting and repining, you kiss the hand of God, and go about your daily duties with patience. That is a very wonderful fruit of the Spirit, wrought by faith, and thus faith is seen. A man has had a fire, or some other form of loss, and his comforts are destroyed. If he is an unbeliever, we do not wonder that he tears his hair, and curses God, and rages and fumes. But if he has stayed himself on God, he will be at peace, and he will say, "The Lord hath done it. It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." By this will you be known to be the disciples of Christ, when in patience ye possess your souls. Faith which only operates when all goes well, is the mockery of faith; the love that praises God when God gives thee according to thy desire is no more than the love of some dogs to their masters, who care just as much for them as the number of the scraps may be. Wilt thou have such a cupboard love as that? It were far better to get to this state, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." If thou hast this faith within thee, then shall thy peace be like a river. The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep thy heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

I am very much concerned in leaving you, that you, dear friend, should aim much at the possession of this peace. It is a mode of propagating the gospel never to be despised. Multitudes of people have been converted by seeing the holy patience of God's people: they have been impressed by it, and have said, "There must be something in a religion that can give such a peace as this." When you are fretting and worrying, you are undoing your ministers work. When the people of God are over and above troubled, when they count life to be a burden to them because things are not as they would wish them to be, they are really slandering their heavenly Father, and they are preventing the wandering from coming back. The unconverted say, "Why should he go to God to be made miserable?" O ye banished seed, be glad! O ye troubled ones, rejoice! Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Within a short time you shall put on the garments of your excellency and beauty, and the weeds of your mourning shall be laid aside. Wherefore play the man: better still, play the Christian; and let all men know where God is, and where the Lord rules the heart, there is, there must be, a deep and profound peace. May God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 26.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—46, 738, 552.

The Horns of the Altar

A Sermon

(No. 1826)

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On March 23rd, 1884,

"And he said, Nay; but I will die here."—1 Kings 2:30

WE MUST tell you the story. Solomon was to be the king after David, but his elder brother, Adonijah, was preferred by Joab, the captain of the host, and by Abiathar, the priest; and, therefore, they got together, and tried to steal a march upon dying David, and set up Adonijah. They utterly failed in this; and when Solomon came to the throne Adonijah was afraid for his life, and fled to the horns of the altar at the tabernacle for shelter. Solomon permitted him to find sanctuary there, and forgave him his offence, and said that if he proved himself a worthy man he should live without further molestation. But very soon he began plotting again, and sought to undermine Solomon now that their venerable father was dead. It became therefore necessary, especially according to oriental ideas, for Solomon to strike a heavy blow; and he determined to begin with Joab—the bottom of all the mischief, who, though he had not followed after Absalom in David's time, was now following after Adonijah. No sooner had the king determined upon this, than Joab, conscience-stricken, began to look to himself and fly. Read the twenty-eighth verse. "Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." I suppose that he thought that, as Adonijah had done this successfully before, Joab might repeat it, and have some hope for his life. Of course, he had no right to enter into the holy place, and lay hold on the horns of the altar; but being driven to desperation, he knew not what else to do. He was a man of hoary head, who had thirty or more years before committed two atrocious murders, and now they came home to him. He did not know where to fly except he fled to the horns of an altar, which he had very seldom approached before. As far as we can judge, he had shown little respect to religion during his lifetime. He was a rough man of war, and cared little enough about God, or the tabernacle, or the priests, or the altar; but when he was in danger, he fled to that which he had avoided, and sought to make a refuge of that which he had neglected. He was not the only man that had done the same. Perhaps there are some here who before long will be trying to escape from impending woe by like means.

Now, I want you to notice that when Joab fled to the tabernacle of the Lord, and took hold of the horns of the altar, *it was of no use to him*. "And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus saith Joab, and thus he answered me. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men, more righteous and better than he,

and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa, the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab. So Benaiah the son of Jehoida went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness."

I have two lessons I am anxious to teach at this time. The first is derived from the fact that Joab found no benefit of sanctuary even though he laid hold of the horns of the altar of God's house, from which I gather this lesson—that *outward ordinances will avail nothing*. Before the living God, who is greater and wiser than Solomon, it will be of no avail to any man to lay hold upon the horns of the altar. But, secondly, there is an altar—a spiritual altar—whereof if a man do but lay hold upon the horns, and say, "Nay; but I will die here," he shall never die; but he shall be safe against the sword of justice for ever; for *the Lord has appointed an altar in the person of his own dear Son, Jesus Christ, where there shall be shelter for the very vilest of sinners if they do but come and lay hold thereon*.

I. To begin, then, first, OUTWARD ORDINANCES AVAIL NOT. The laying hold upon the literal horns of an altar, which can be handled, availed not Joab. There are many—oh, how many still!—that are hoping to be saved, because they lay hold, as they think, upon the horns of the *sacraments*. Men of unhallowed life, nevertheless, come to the sacramental table, looking for a blessing. Do they not know that they pollute it? Do they not know that they are committing a high sin, and a great misdemeanour against God, by coming amongst his people, where they have no right to be? And yet they think that by committing this atrocity they are securing to themselves safety. How common it is to find in this city, when an irreligious man is dying, that someone will say, "Oh, he is all right; for a clergyman has been, and given him the sacrament." I often marvel how men calling themselves the servants of God can dare thus to profane the ordinance of the Lord. Did he ever intend the blessed memorial of the Lord's supper to be a kind of superstitious *vialicum*, a something upon which ungodly men may depend in their last hour, as if it could put away sin. I do not one half so much blame the poor ignorant and superstitious persons who seek after the sacrament in their dying hours, as I do the men who ought to know better, but who pander to what is as downright a superstition as anything that ever came from the church of Rome, or, for the matter of that, from the fetish worship of the most deluded African tribe. Do they conceive that grace comes to men by bits of bread and drops of wine? These things are meant to put us in memory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as far as they do that, and quicken our thoughts of him, they are useful to us; but there is no wizardry or witchcraft linked with these two emblems, so they convey as form of grace. If you do rely upon such things, I can only say that this error is all of a piece: it is a superstition which begins with, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven"; which statement is altogether false; and then it continues the delusion by prostituting an ordinance meant for the living child of God, and giving it to the ungodly, the ignorant, and the superstitious, as though it could make them meet for entering heaven. I charge you, as before the Lord, cleanse yourselves of this superstition. There is no salvation apart from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and you might as well trust in your sins as in sacraments. In fact, the sacraments become sins to men who trust in them, for those men sin against the ordinances of the Lord by putting them where they never ought to be, and making an Antichrist of them, so as to push Christ out of his place with their baptisms and their masses. If you died with the sacramental bread in your mouths, ye will be lost unless your faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Your hands, which are superstitiously laid upon the altar's horns, might as well be placed

upon your weapons of rebellion. Outward emblems can do you no good whatsoever if you remain unspiritual. Without faith in Christ, even the ordinances of God become things to condemn you. If ye eat and drink unworthily ye eat and drink condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body; and, if this be true, how dare any unconverted, unbelieving man put his trust in the outward ordinance of which he has no right to partake?

There are others who put their trust in *religious observances of sundry kinds*. Their visible altar-horn is something which they believe to be very proper and right, and which, indeed, may be so if wisely used, for the thing is good if used lawfully; but it will be their ruin if it be put out of its own place. For instance, there are, doubtless, some who think that they are all right because they frequent *sermons*. They delight to be found hearing the gospel. Now, in this you do well, for, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"; but, if you suppose that the mere hearing of a sermon with the outward ear can save you, you suppose what is untrue, and you build the house of your hope on sand. "Oh, sir, I have sat to hear the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ these many years." Yes, and these many years you have rejected it. The kingdom of God has come nigh unto you, but I fear it will work your damnation through your unbelief; for it will be a savour of death unto you. I fear that in the last great day it shall be seen that I have ministered unto some of you to your hurt. It will not be laid to my charge, but to yours, if I have been faithful in the declaration of the word. Oh, may God grant that no man or woman among you may ever put the slightest faith in the mere hearing of the word! Except ye receive it by faith ye deceive your own souls; if ye are hearers only, what good can come of it?

"Oh, but," says another, "I attend *prayer meetings*." I admit that it is not every hypocrite that will regularly come to prayer-meetings, but there are some that do; and, though you are so fond of prayer-meetings, yet, my dear friend, unless it can be said of you, "Behold *he prayeth*," you need not make sure of safety. Your being found in the place where prayer is wont to be made may be no true sign of grace. "Ay, but I do more than that, for I have prayers in my own house." Yes, and very proper, too. I would that all did the same; I am grieved that any should neglect the ordinance of *family prayer*. But yet, if you think that the reading of a form of prayer in your household, or even the use of extempore prayer, is a thing to be relied upon for salvation, you do greatly err. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life", but he that believes not in the Lord Jesus Christ does but offer unbelieving prayer to God; and what is that but a vain sacrifice which he cannot accept? Oh, do not rely upon the habit of outward worship, or you will lean on a bulrush!

"But I regularly *read a chapter*," says one. I am extremely glad you do, and God bless that chapter to you! I would that all were in the habit of reading right thought the Bible regularly, and endeavouring to understand it; but, if you trust in your Bible-readings as a ground of salvation, you are resting upon a mere soap-bubble which will burst under your weight. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, producing in the soul a change of heart, a new birth unto God, this is what is wanted; and, apart from that, all the Bible reading you ever practice can do you no good whatsoever. "Ye must be born again. Ye must be born again"; and if they be not this inward change, then vain is all outward observance. You may wash a corpse, you may clothe that corpse in the purest white shroud that was ever woven, but when all is done it does not live; and what are all the outward devotions of a carnal man but dead things which bring no life with them to men dead in sin?

Some are foolish enough to put their confidence in *ministers*. It would seem to me to be the maddest thing in all the world for anybody to have confidence in me as to helping him in his salvation; and I trust that nobody is such a fool. I cannot even save myself; what can I do for others?

Do not come to me with "Give us of your oil," for I have not enough for myself, except as I keep on begging a supply. When I look at the priests in whom some trust, especially such as I have seen abroad, they may be very fine fellows, but I would not trust some of them with a half-crown, let alone my soul. The very look of most priests makes me wonder how they manage to secure power over people's minds. They may know a great deal, but they do not look as if they were overdone with wit. I would as soon trust my soul in the hands of a gipsy with a red cloak as I would with the best-ordained priest or bishop that ever lived. There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, and he who sets up another is an enemy of souls. There is but one who can be trusted with our soul affairs, even the Lord Jesus Christ; and woe to us if we put our confidence in men! Ordained or unordained, shaven or unshorn, they cannot help us. Yet I know that people do trust in ministers most foolishly. I remember years ago being at three o'clock in the morning in a house now pulled down, which stood not far from the London Bridge railway-station. A gentleman of considerable means had spent the Sunday at Brighton, had come home, and had been taken with cholera on a sudden, and nothing would do him, when he was in the pangs of death, but he must send for me. I went, not knowing what was required of me. But when I got there what could I do? There was a little consciousness left to the man, and I spoke to him of Jesus. I asked if he had a Bible. The people of the house searched high and low, but there was no such thing to be found. The mind was soon too beclouded for further comprehension, and as I came away I asked, "Has he ever gone to a place of worship?" No, never—never cared for such a thing; but as soon as he was ill, then, "Oh, send for Mr. Spurgeon!" He must come, and nobody else: and there I stood, and what could I do? There died in the City of London, not long ago, a tradesman of much wealth; and when he came to die, though I had never seen the man in my life before, he importunately asked for me. I could not go. My brother went to see him, and, after setting before him the way of salvation, he enquired, "What made you wish to see my brother?" "Well," he said, "you know whenever I have a doctor I always like to get the best; and when I employ a lawyer I like a man who is high in the profession. Money is no object. I want the best possible help." Ah me! I shuddered at being so regarded. The best help he could get! That best is nothing—less than nothing, and vanity. What can we do for you, dear hearts, if you will not have our Saviour? We can stand and weep over you, and break our hearts to think that you reject him; but what can we do? Oh, if we could let you into heaven, if we could renew your hearts, how joyfully would we perform the miracle; but we claim no such power, no such influence! Go you to Christ, and lay hold upon the true altar-horn; but do not be so foolish as to put confidence in us or in any other ministers.

"Ah, well," says one, "I am free of that. I am *a professor of religion*, and have been a member of a church now these twenty years." You may be a member of a church fifty years, but you will be damned at last unless you are a member of Christ. It matters not though you are a church-officer, a deacon, an elder, a pastor, a bishop, or even Archbishop of Canterbury, or an apostle, you will perish as surely as Judas, who betrayed his Master with a kiss, unless your heart is right with God. I pray you, put no confidence in your profession. Unless you have Christ in your heart, a profession is but a painted pageantry for a soul to go to hell in. As a corpse is drawn to the grave by horses adorned with nodding plumes, so may you find in an outward profession a pompous way of being lost. God save us from that!

"No," says one, "but I do not trust in mere profession. I have great reliance upon *orthodoxy*. I will have sound doctrine." That is right, friend, I would have all men value the truth. "My confidence is in my sound doctrine." That is not mine, friend, and I hope that it will not be yours long, for

many lost souls have firmly believed orthodox doctrine. In fact, I question whether any one is more orthodox than the devil, for the devils believe and tremble. Satan is no skeptic; he has too much knowledge for that. Devils believe and tremble, and yet they are devils still. Put no confidence in the mere fact that you hold to an orthodox faith, for a dead orthodoxy soon corrupts. You must have faith in Christ, or else this altar-horn of a correct creed, on which you lay your hand, will bring you no salvation.

I will not enlarge upon this topic. Whatever you depend upon apart from the blood and righteousness of Christ, away with it! Away with it! If you are even depending upon your own repentance, and your faith, away with them! If you are looking to your own prayers or alms, I can only cry again,—Away with them! Nothing but the blood of Jesus; nothing but the atoning sacrifice; but, if you come and lay your hand upon that, blessed shall you be.

II. That assurance is the second part of our discourse, on which I will speak briefly. COMING TO THE SPIRITUAL ALTAR, AND LAYING OUR HAND UPON IT, WILL SAVE US.

Now, notice first, *the act itself*. Joab came within the tabernacle. So, poor soul, come and hide yourself in Christ. Joab took hold of the horns, the projecting corners of the altar, and he would not let go. Come, trembling sinners, and take hold on Christ Jesus.

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Lean with your hand of faith upon your Lord, and say, "This Christ is mine. I accept it as the gift of God to me, unworthy though I be."

When that is done, *a fierce demand* may be made upon you. The enemy will probably cry, "Come forth! Come forth!" The self-righteous will say, "What right has a sinner as you to trust Christ? Come forth!" Mind you say to them, "Nay, but I will die here." Your sins and your guilty conscience will cry to you, "Come forth! Come forth! *You* must not lay hold of Christ. See what you have been, and what you are, and what you are likely to be." Answer to these voices, "Nay, but I will die here. I will never give up my hold of Christ." Satan will come, and he will howl out, "Come forth! What right have you with the Lord Jesus Christ? You cannot think that he came to save such a lost one as you are." Do not listen to him. As often as he howls at you, only say to yourself, "Nay, but I will die here." I pray God that every sinner here may be brought to this desperate resolve, "If I perish, I will perish trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. If I must die, I will die here." For certain, we shall die anywhere else. If we trust in any but Jesus, we must perish. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not,"—whatever else he trusts to,—*"is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."* Make, then, this desperate resolve—

If I must die, here will I die,
Here at the cross I bide;
To whom or whither should I fly?
Where else can I confide?

Say to all those who call you away, "Nay, but I will die here"; for nobody ever did perish trusting in Jesus. There has not been through all these centuries a single instance of a soul being cast away that came all guilty and hell-deserving, and took Christ to be its salvation. If you perish, you will

then be the first that perished with his hand laid upon Christ. His love and power can never fail a sinner's confidence. Wherefore, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to resolve, "If I must die, I will die here." Listen to me, soul, whoever thou mayest be out of the crowd, man or woman, whatever thy life may have been, even though it should have been that of a harlot or a thief, a drunkard or a profligate, if thou wilt now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved; for, *if not, then God himself will have missed his greatest design.* What did he give Jesus for but to save sinners? What did he lay sin upon Jesus for, but that he might take it off the sinner, and let him go free, and be pardoned? If, then, Christ fails, God's grandest expedient has broken down. That method by which the Lord resolved to show what his almighty grace can do has proved to be a failure if a believing sinner is not saved. Dost thou think that such a thing can ever be? It is blasphemy to think that Jehovah can be defeated. He that believes in Christ shall be saved; nay, he is saved.

If thou art not saved believing in Christ, then Christ himself is dishonoured. Oh, let them once know, down in the dark abode of fallen spirits, that a man has trusted in Christ and yet has not been saved, I tell you that they will make such exultation over Christ as Philistia made over Samson when his eyes were put out. They would feel that they had defeated the Prince of Glory. They would trample on his blood, and ridicule his claim to be the Saviour of men. If any soul can truly say hereafter, "I went to Christ, and he refused me," then Christ does not speak the truth when he says, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Then he has changed his nature, foregone his word, and foresworn himself. But that also can never be. Wherefore, dear heart, cling to Jesus, and say still, "If I die, I will die here."

Moreover, *if thou canst perish trusting in Christ thou wilt discourage all the saints of God;* for if Christ can break his promise to one, then why not to another? If one promise fails, why not all the promises? If the blood has lost its power, how can any of us ever hope to enter heaven? I say it will breed great discouragement in the hearts of all people if this be true; for what a wet blanket would e throne over all thy fellow-sinners! If they are coming to Christ, they will start back, and say, "What is the good of it? Here is one that came to Jesus, and he did not save him. He trusted in the precious blood, and yet his sin was laid to his charge." If one fails, why not the rest? I must give up preaching the gospel when once I hear of a man trusting Jesus and not being saved; for I should be afraid to speak with boldness, as I now do.

If one poor soul that puts his trust in Christ should be cast away it would spoil heaven itself. What security is there for glorified spirits that their splendours shall endure except the promise of a faithful, covenant-keeping God? If, then, looking down from their celestial seats, they behold the great Father breaking his promise, and the Son of God unable to save those for whom he died, then will they say, "We will lay our harps aside, and put our palms away, for we, too, after all, may perish." See, then, O man, heaven and earth, ay, God and his Christ, as to their credit and their glory, do stand and fall with the salvation of every believing sinner. If I were in your stead tonight, I think that I should bless God to have this matter put so plainly to me. I know that years ago, when I was under a sense of sin, if I had heard even such a poor sermon as this I should have jumped for joy at it, and would have ventured upon Christ at once. Come, poor soul; come at once. You have heard the gospel long enough; now obey it. You have heard about Christ long enough; now trust in him. You have been invited and entreated, and pleaded with; now yield to his grace. Yield to joy and peace by trusting in him who will give you both of these as soon as you have rested in him.

Look! sinner, look! A look out of thyself will save thee. Look away from all thy works, and prayers, and tears, and feelings, and church-goings, and chapel-goings, and sacraments, and ministers.

Look alone to Jesus. Look at once to him who on the bloody tree made expiation, and who bids thee look, and thou shalt live.

God make this present hour to be the period of thy new birth. I pray it, and so do his people. The Lord hearken to our intercessions, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—Psalms 61 and 62.

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—560, 589, 514.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,—As I am expected to report myself weekly, and have only this corner left to do it in, the bulletin shall be brief. *Weather unsettled; progress fair, but not rapid. I find myself too readily depressed with small matters, and I have a sense of unfitness for my future work. This shows that while rest has done much, there is more to be done. Three weeks have worked such marvels that I hope in due time to return in full vigor.*

My heart is with the Special Services at the Tabernacle; for which I beg every reader to pray daily.

C. H. Spurgeon

Mentone, February 21st, 1885.

The Man Christ Jesus

A Sermon

(No. 1835)

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, April 12th, 1885, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Now consider how great this man *was*."—Hebrews 7:4.

CONSIDER how great Melchizedek was. There is something majestic about every movement of that dimly-revealed figure. His one and only appearance is thus fitly described in the Book of Genesis,—“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.” We see but little of him, yet we see nothing little in him. He is here and gone, as far as the historic page is concerned, yet is he “a priest for ever,” and “it is witnessed that he liveth.” Everything about him is on a scale majestic and sublime.

“Consider how great this man was” in the combination of his offices. He was duly appointed both priest and king: king of righteousness and peace, and at the same time priest of the Most High God. It may be said of him that he sat as a priest upon his throne. He exercised the double office to the great blessedness of those who were with him; for his one act towards Abraham would seem to be typical of his whole life; he blessed him in the name of the Most High God. “Consider how great this man was” that he not only ruled his people with righteousness and brought them peace, but he was their representative towards God and God’s representative to them; and in each character distributed divine blessings.

“Consider how great this man was” in the power of his benedictions. Abraham had already been greatly blessed so much so that he is described as “he that received the promises.” Yet a receiver of promises so great, a man with whom God had entered into solemn covenant, was yet blessed by Melchizedek, and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. This great man yet further blessed the blessed Abraham, and the father of the faithful was glad to receive benediction at his hands. No small man this: no priest of second rank; but one who overtops the sons of men by more than head and shoulders, and acts a superior’s part among the greatest of them.

“Consider how great this man was” in supremacy over all around him. He met Abraham when he was returning as a conqueror from the overthrow of the robber kings; and the victorious patriarch bowed before him and gave him tithes of the best of the spoil. Without a moment’s hesitation the man of God recognized the priest of God, and paid to him the tribute of a subject to the officer of a great king. In Abraham’s bowing all the line of Aaronic priesthood did homage unto Melchizedek; for as the apostle saith, “Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.” So that all kings in Abraham, and all priests in Abraham, did homage unto this man, who, as king and priest, was owned to be supreme. “Consider how great this man was” when Paul had once proved that Melchizedek was greater than all other, at least to the Hebrews; for the seed of Abraham can recognize none greater than Abraham; and

since Abraham by paying tithes acknowledges his subordination to Melchizedek, it is clear that the priest of the Most High God was the greatest of men.

"Consider how great this man was" as to the singularity of his person, "without father, without mother, without descent": that is to say, we know nothing as to his birth, his origin, or his history. Even this explanation hardly answers to the words, especially when it is added, "Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." So mysterious is Melchizedek that many deeply-taught expositors think that he was veritably an appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are inclined to believe that he was not a king of some city in Canaan, as the most of us suppose, but that he was a manifestation of the Son of God, such as were the angels that appeared to Abraham on the plains of Mamre, and that divine being who appeared to Joshua by Jericho, and to the three holy ones in the furnace. At any rate, you may well consider how great this man was when you observe how veiled in cloud is everything about his coming and going—veiled because intended to impress us with the depth of the sacred meanings which were shadowed forth in him. How much more shall this be said of him of whom we ask—

"Thy generation who can tell,
Or count the number of thy years?"

"Consider how great this man was" in the specialty of his office. He had no predecessor in his priesthood, and he had no successor. He was not one who took a holy office and then laid it down; but as far as the historic page of Scripture is concerned we have no note of his quitting this mortal scene; he disappears, but we read nothing of his death any more than of his birth. His office was perpetual, and passed not from sire to son; for he was the type of "One who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

"Consider how great this man was" in his being altogether unique. There is another "after the order of Melchizedek," the glorious Antitype in whom Melchizedek himself is absorbed; but apart from him Melchizedek is unique. Who can equal this strange, mysterious priest, prophet, king, sent of the Most High God to bless the father of the faithful? He is altogether alone: he receives no commission from the hands of men, nor from God by men; and he does not transmit to a successor what he had not received from a predecessor. Melchizedek stands alone: one mighty crag, rising out of the plain; a long Alp, whose brow is swathed in cloud sublime. "Consider how great this man was" but think not to measure that greatness.

I shall leave you to that consideration; for my business this morning is not with Melchizedek, but with a greater than he. I shall take my text in its connection, but lift it up to a higher application. Beloved friends, if Melchizedek was so great, how much greater is that man whom Melchizedek represents! If the type is so wonderful what must the Antitype be! I invite you to consider "how great" is he of whom it is written, "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." I will not say "Consider how great this man *was*", for there is no verb: the "was" is inserted in italics by the translators. We are to consider "how great this man." Say "was" if you will, but read also "*is*," and "*shall be*." Consider how great this man was and is, and is to be, even the Man Christ Jesus.

And first, this morning, let me *exhort you to consider* how great this man is: then let me *assist you to consider* how great this man is: and then *let us practically improve our consideration* of how great this man is, trying to turn it to holy account as the Holy Ghost may enable us.

I. First, then, LET ME EXHORT YOU TO CONSIDER HOW GREAT THIS MAN, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, is.

This subject *claims* your consideration. I do not think it should be a matter of option with you whether you will now consider the greatness of your Lord or not; it is his due and right that you should consider his greatness. For he of whom we speak,—“this man,” is one well known among us. If you be true to your profession he is one most dear to you, to whom you owe all things, aye, owe your very selves. He is one between whom and you there is a troth plighted: you are espoused unto him, your hearts are his, even as his heart is yours. If *you* do not consider him, who will? He has loved you, and given himself for you. Strangers may listen to our teaching at this time, and in vain we may cry,

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

But you are no stranger, you are not even a guest in his house, but you are a child living at home with him. He is your brother, and much more; for he is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. All your interests are wrapped up in him. You are one with him: by an endless union, one. I claim, therefore, and I am sure you assent at once to the claim, that you should often consider your Lord, and the greatness of his nature, person, office, and work. His greatness should be your perpetual theme. I would urge that all other thoughts should now be banished, for this is your Lord's own day, and therefore to him it should be dedicated with glad consent. If you are in the Spirit on the Lord's day, you will, like John in Patmos, give all your thoughts to the Son of Man who walketh among the golden candlesticks. I urge it on you that you do now consider with your whole heart and mind, how great this man is. Do you not consent to the claim?

Certainly the subject *needs* consideration; for, dear friends, we shall never gain an idea of how great he is unless we do consider, and consider much. Here is a great deep, and it cannot be fathomed by the thoughtless. You think you know Christ, and, blessed be his name, you do know him in a sense; but do you know the thousandth part of him? When the apostle Paul had known Christ for many years he wrote to the Philippians, and he then expressed himself as desiring to know Christ; for though he knew him to his own personal salvation, yet he felt that he did not know him to the full. He owned that he knew the love of Christ, but he added, "it passeth knowledge." Well may each of us who has been for years a student at the Master's feet exclaim, "I find myself a learner yet." I suppose the saints who have been in heaven now for thousands of years, and have been evermore adoring him, are still students of him. This is the philosophy which the most cultured mind shall never fully compass,—"God manifest in the flesh." "Consider how great this man is!" This is a matter worthy of continual research, and calling for profound thought. You must weigh this subject, and turn it over, and meditate upon it the livelong day. You must let it lie both day and night upon your hearts as a bundle of camphor, perfuming the bosom in which it lies. You must look, and look, and look, and look again: still looking unto Jesus. The angels standing on the golden mercy-seat have ever their eyes bent downward, desiring to look within; and that must be your posture. Oh, you servants of the Lord, by looking to Jesus you began to live, by looking to him you shall continue to live, and your life shall find strength and growth. This sacred subject shall ever need more and more consideration from you. Oh the depths of the love, and wisdom, and glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ!

I go a little further, and say that not only does my subject claim your consideration and need your consideration, but it solemnly *commands* it. The text is not a mere piece of advice; it is by inspiration that the apostle bids you today out of this sacred page, "Consider how great this man was." He charges you to think of Melchizedek but much more would he have you remember

Melchizedek's Antitype. Oh, do not, my brethren, do not need to be pressed to this divine study: love it, never cease from it. Count every minute wasted in which you are not learning more about Jesus. Reckon all other knowledge to be as mere chaff and dog's meat as compared with the knowledge of Christ crucified. In these days of science, falsely so called, determine with the apostle to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified. It is imperative upon you that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind; and that God in Christ Jesus should call into exercise every faculty of your inner man, while, with blended intellect and emotion, you consider how great he was.

Follow out this meditation, I pray you, because there is an exceeding great *reward* for any man who will "consider how great this man was." I find for myself that the only possibility of my living is living in Christ and unto Christ. Look you about and try to live by the wisdom of man. Unstable as water and fickle as the wind is the product of human wisdom. The history of philosophy, from the beginning until now, is the history of fools; and never was folly so self-evident as in the philosophy which is now dominant. I believe that within a century it will be found impossible to make men believe that educated men were ever so degraded as to accept the philosophy of the present hour; it will seem to be so altogether absurd and contrary to all reason and common sense, that it will be rejected with scorn as a popular delusion of a dark age. Even today this generation is kicking about like footballs the philosophies of preceding ages, and we may rest assured that future generations will do the same with the doting of today. I find, therefore, that I must come back to the revelation of God. Here is a rock beneath my feet—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Certain great facts concerning God and his Christ have been made known to us by the Holy Ghost, and these are infallibly sure. God's revelation is true, whatever man's dreams may be. On the basis of revelation there is foothold. A personal knowledge of Christ revealed by the Spirit is also a sure matter. I get to Jesus, I speak to him, and meditate upon him, and he rises before me greater than ever, till in his presence all the learning of men condenses into folly. He is "God only wise." Ah, then I live when he is all in all! My heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth when I forget all else save Christ Jesus my Lord. Therefore, brethren, I say that you shall find a great reward in full often coming near to your Lord, and considering again and again how great he is.

Consider his greatness, and I again remind you that the blessing comes only by consideration. I may speak to you this morning about the greatness of my Master, but I shall not succeed in fully declaring it. I am never more vexed with myself than when I have done my very best to extol his dear name! What is it but holding a candle to the sun? What are my lisplings compared with the loud acclamations which such an one as he is might well expect from those who love him? You must carefully consider, or you will miss the blessing. It will not be enough for you to hear, or read; you must do your own thinking, and consider your Lord for yourselves. You may even read the Bible itself without profit, if you do not *consider* as well as read. The wine is not made by gathering the clusters, but by treading the grapes in the wine-vat: under pressure the red juice leaps forth. Not the truth as you read it, but the truth as you meditate upon it, will be a blessing to you. "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." "Consider how great this man was." Shut yourselves up with Jesus, if you would know him. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." In Christ there is shelter, and the more you consider him the greater your peace will be. Come and lay your finger

into the prints of the nails, and thrust your hand into his side. Commune with the personal Christ, who ever liveth; and evermore "consider how great this man was."

Thus have I exhorted you to this duty; now let me try to help you in it. But what help will mine be unless the Divine Spirit be with me, that the word spoken may be with power?

II. LET ME NEXT ASSIST YOU TO CONSIDER HOW GREAT THIS MAN WAS.

And first, lest the very use of the expression, "this man," should leave anybody for a moment in doubt as to our faith in his Godhead, I bid you consider how great this man was *in his relationship to God*. For though he was man, he was not merely man. He was assuredly and truly man in all respects, "man of the substance of his mother," bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and yet he was indeed and of a truth very God. Do not think of him as a divine man, or as a human God; he was neither the one nor the other. He was perfectly man, yet he was infinitely God. Think, then, into what a position of honour and dignity his manhood was uplifted by union with the Godhead in one person. Born, growing, gathering strength, coming to manhood, suffering, dying, in all this he was man; yet he was never at any time less divine. Our Lord's humanity is not to be thought of apart from his deity, for he is one and indivisible. I have sometimes heard objections made against certain expressions in Dr. Watt's hymns in which our Lord is spoken of as the God that bled and died, and so forth. I fear that the objection is frequently aimed less at the poet than at the truth of the deity of our Lord: the objector figures as a critic because he dares not avow himself a heretic. Take note that in the Scriptures you shall find frequent confusions of speech upon the person of our Lord, intentionally made, in order to show that although the natures were distinct, yet they were indissolubly united in the one person of Jesus. Of his one person might popularly be predicated that which in strict accuracy could only be true of his humanity, or only of his deity. To the one person of our Lord will be found to be ascribed what he did both as God and as man, and it is not needful for us to be wise or accurate above what is written by the Spirit of God. It is possible to be so true to the letter as to be false to the spirit. Cavillers have no monopoly of wisdom. My Lord Jesus is to me no less a man because he is God. Oh, how my heart loves him! He is to me fairest of the sons of men, chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. But he is to me because of his manhood none the less, but all the more, "God over all, blessed for ever." Into the dust my spirit bows before his majesty, and my soul adores him. I ask you, therefore, to consider the greatness of his manhood because it never was apart from his Godhead, and cannot be thought of except in connection therewith. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Inconceivable is the greatness of the man who is thus one with God.

You, my brethren, are not in doubt upon this vital matter; let me, therefore, ask you to consider "how great this man was" as to *his relationship to men*. Christ Jesus is the second man, the Lord from heaven. Adam, our first father, was the head of the race, and all men were in him as their representative: in him they stood in the garden; in him, alas, they fell when he broke the divine command, and the Lord took up the quarrel of his covenant, and cast him out of Paradise. "Oh, what a fall was there, my brethren: then you and I and all of us fell down." We inherit because of Adam's failure a nature whose tendencies are towards evil. Adam was a very great personage in relation to the race: he was the summary of all the generations, the fountain of the stream of humanity. To him we might apply the language of the prophet, "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God. . . . Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." As Adam came forth from God he was as a covering cherub, under whose wings

the race nestled down. But now comes in the Lord Jesus Christ as the greater man, the representative man, in whom none are made to fall, but multitudes arise. In this man the Lord is again well pleased with men. Time was when God looked on rebellious man, and it repented him that he had made him; but now that he turns his eye to this perfect man he feels no such repentance; but, on the contrary, we read that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." For the sake of the man Christ Jesus he deals with the innumerable race of sinners in a way of long-suffering and pity, and does not destroy them. Long ago had the flood-gates been pulled up again, and man been swept away by a deluge, not of water but of fire, if it had not been that the long-suffering Lord looks on the Well-Beloved Christ and therefore spares mankind. Yea, more; for his sake he sends the gospel of peace to men, and in the name of Jesus glad tidings are sent to every creature. It has sometimes happened that the illustrious deed of one man has served to elevate a class, or even a nation into honour. A grand, heroic deed has welded you not only to that one person but to all his kith and kin. Consider, then, how great this man was, that the divine mind which cannot look upon sin without indignation, nevertheless was so charmed to look upon the person and character of this glorious Man, that an amnesty was proclaimed to the race, and a message was sent to the sons of men bidding them repent and turn to him and live. "Consider," then, "how great this man was."

Come a little closer, and reach forward to that which will delight your hearts far more; consider *the relationship of Christ to his own people*. Now we get on sure ground, and feel a rock beneath our feet. Long before the heavens and the earth were made, God with prescient eye beheld the person of his Son as God in human nature, and he saw all his elect lying in him. The church is his body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." God the Father saw in the divine decree the mystical Christ, and he was well pleased with all his redeemed for Christ Jesus' sake. How wondrous was that transaction when in the council-chamber of eternity the covenant was made, and the Lord Jesus Christ became the surety of that covenant. He entered into covenant with the eternal God on the behalf of his chosen that he would make atonement for their sin, and would perfect the righteousness which should cover every one of them, and make them to be accepted in the Beloved. No actual sacrifice was offered for thousands of years; but see how great this man was, since on the strength of his bare promise the Lord continued to save men for thousands of years, admitting them to his infinite glory before the Mediator had appeared, or the Redeemer had put a hand to the work. Consider that you and I, and all of us who are in Christ, are this day beloved for his sake, accepted for his sake, justified for his sake. Still doth God embrace us in the arms of almighty love for his sake; for his sake heaven is being prepared for us; for his sake the treasures of the infinite are given to us; because we are the covenanted ones for whom he pledged his troth, and for whom in the fulness of time he poured out his heart's blood, that he might redeem us unto God. "Consider how great this man was." He is so great that all the saints are blessed in him. He is so great that we, as many as have believed, dwell evermore in the clefts of this great Rock, and find in him our castle and high tower. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. "Consider how great this man was."

Let me help you a little further, dear friends, to "consider how great this man was," by reminding you of *the surroundings of his first advent*. Thousands of years before his birth holy men had been speaking of him. Prophets and seers all pointed to him as The Coming One. "How great this man was," since the wisest and best of mankind all looked forward to his day with gladness. Think of that wonderful system of types, and emblems, and symbols which God ordained by his servant Moses; for the whole of this system was meant to set forth the Messiah, who would yet appear in

the fulness of time. To him witnessed each bleeding sacrifice, each censer of sweet incense, each golden vessel, each curtain and wall of tabernacle or temple: all spoke concerning him. Ay, and more than that, all the histories of all the empires were all but concentric rings of which he was the center; for the Lord Jesus is the center of history, the sum total of all God's doings and manifestations among the sons of men. That was an august Person towards whom all the past had been labouring, and for whom all the present was agonizing. "How great this man was," that when he came the saints were watching for him: Simeon and Anna could not depart till he appeared. Angels stood on tip-toe ready to descend and sing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Humble shepherds, as they watched their flocks, did but wait for the signal to hasten to adore him; and wise men from the east forgot the fatigues of a long journey that they might lay their gold and incense at his feet. How great this man was, when being born and laid in a manger, the whole earth was moved by his appearing.

Consider too, "how great this man was," not only as to the outward circumstances of his coming, but *as to the secret mystery of his birth*. For this man was not "born in sin," as we are; neither was he "shapen in iniquity." This is a thing to be thought of and considered in our privacy, but it cannot be omitted here. Thus said the angel to the blessed Virgin, "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." "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," he was truly a man, but not fallen man. The method by which the pure human nature of the man Christ Jesus was produced is a great mystery, but it serves to make us see "how great this man was." I will say no more than this, that we have here the fulfillment of the promise, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Think of that word of old: "When he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Let us, therefore worship. Reverently forbearing all idle intrusion into the deep things of God, let us go to Bethlehem, and "consider how great this man was."

Now, let us look at *his life*. After he emerged from the obscurity of his childhood, what a life was that of our Lord! His greatest adversaries, unless they have been mad, have never dared to speak against his character. If the Christian religion were supposed to be an invention, the existence of the narrative of the life of Jesus would be more wonderful than the facts themselves. The conception of a perfect character requires a perfect mind, and a perfect mind would never have prepared a fiction and imposed it upon men as a veritable history. If the life of Jesus be a fable, then a perfect being has deceived us; and this it is not possible for us to imagine. The life of Jesus Christ is great throughout. It is so tender and so gentle that it is never little and mean: it is so unselfish that it never ceases to be majestic; it is so condescending that it is pre-eminently sublime. Above all, it is full of truth, transparent, artless, natural. No one ever thought of Jesus as acting a part yet; he is reality itself. He is so simple, so unaffected, so truly the holy child Jesus, that in this he is great above all. Never was a man so wholly seen as the Christ; and yet never was man so little understood. You have read memoirs of departed worthies, and you have felt, The biographer did well to say no more upon this point; but you never felt that anything need be reserved as to the character of Jesus. If his chronicles had kept on writing till the world itself had been made a library of the lives of Christ they would never have recorded an unworthy act or a regrettable word. It is not only that his pursuits were majestic, for he came to save men; that his motives were divine, for he revealed the Father; but it is *himself* that is so great—I mean his soul, his spirit, the man himself. Look at Alexander, he is a great conqueror, but what a pitiful creature he appears when the drunkard's

bowl has maddened him. What a poor thing is Napoleon as seen in privacy! In his captivity he was as petulant as a spoiled child. Consider the Lord Jesus, and it does not matter where you view him: in the wilderness he is grandly victorious over temptation, in the crowd he is greatly wise in answering those who would entrap him. Behold him in his agony in the Garden; was there ever such an Agoniser? Behold him as the crucified; did ever cross hold such a sufferer? When Jesus is least he is greatest, and when he is in the direst darkness his brightness is best revealed. In death he destroys death; in the grave he bursts the sepulcher. "Consider how great this man was": the field of his life is ample; do not be slow to investigate it.

Beloved, I cannot speak as I would of him. The blaze of this Sun blinds me! Yet consider how great this man was *in his death*; for then he appeared as the great Sin-offering, putting away the sin of his people. The Lord had made to meet in him the iniquity of us all. What a weight was on him, yet he sustained it! The wrath of God on account of sin fell upon him who had never sinned, and he bore it all. A penalty which must have made a hell for us for ever was exacted of our Lord upon the cross, and he discharged it. He drank the whole of our bitter cup. He bore in himself all that was necessary to vindicate the divine justice until he could truly say, "It is finished." "Lama Sabachthani" is the most terrible word that ever came from human lips; and therefore "It is finished" is the greatest utterance that tongue ever gave forth. The work was colossal; what if I say it was infinite; and therefore our Lord Jesus when he cried "It is finished," had reached the summit of greatness. "Consider how great this man was."

Now, beloved, consider for a minute "how great this man was" when *he rose again*; for he could not be holden with the bonds of death, and his body could not see corruption. It was a great thing in itself for Christ to rise, but what I want you to remember is, that we all rose in him. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" and especially his covenanted people were raised up together with him. There was for his redeemed a death in his death and a rising again in his rising again; for we have been made partakers of his resurrection, and we live in newness of life by his rising from the dead. This is his cry as he rises from the tomb, "Because I live ye shall live also." "Consider how great this man was" whose life imparts life to all who are in him.

But *he has gone up on high*, and has led captivity captive. Think of the gifts which were showered down from heaven in consequence of this man's ascent into the highest. For the Holy Spirit descended never to return till the close of this dispensation, and now all the gifts that rest in the church of God, and all the works of regeneration, illumination, sanctification, and the like, which are wrought by the blessed Paraclete, are the effects of the entrance of this man into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. Every soul regenerated, every heart comforted, every mind quickened, every eye illuminated, every creature spiritually blessed, reflects glory upon this man. How great is he!

Beloved, I would we had time this morning to introduce you to this man as he now sits *at the right hand of God*, even the Father. There is no need for me to depict him; if there were it were impossible to me. What said the man who loved him best, and knew him best? "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." "Consider how great this man is" now, when every angel pays him homage, and at the name of Jesus every knee doth bow, of things in heaven; as by-and-by every knee shall bow of things on earth, and things that are under the earth, for Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. "Consider how great this man is," and then remember that he shall shortly come to be our Judge! Possibly, while I am yet speaking to you, he may appear; no man knoweth the day nor the hour; but "how great this man is" will be clearly seen when, in flaming fire, he shall take vengeance upon those that will not obey him. How "great" will he be when in the manifestation of

his glory all believers shall be glorified. I think I hear, even now, sounding out of my theme, shouts of "hallelujah, hallelujah," from assembled worlds. Yes, the music peals forth loud and long, "King of kings, and Lord of lords. HALLELUJAH. For he shall reign for ever and ever. HALLELUJAH!" Break forth with your loud hosannas, oh, ye waiting spirits of believing men, for the time is at hand when he shall be admired in all them that believe! Consider how great this man is. I have but reached the fringe of my subject. We see but the skirts of our Lord's garments; his actual glory is unspeakable, unsearchable. Oh, the depths! Oh, the depths!

III. This in a few words is THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of the whole subject, with which we must wind up. Consider how great this man was, and as you consider, believe in his infinite power to bless men. He is full of blessing as the sun is full of light, that he may shine upon his needy creatures. Christ is full of blessing that he may bless poor, needy, empty sinners. Dost thou say, poor sinner, "I am so great a sinner that he cannot save me"? Consider what this man did when he was here on earth; he went about and laid his hands on the diseased, and they were cured; he looked at devils, and they fled; he spoke to fevers and they disappeared. And he in heaven is, and if I may so say, greater than when he was here below, for here on earth he was veiled in humiliation, but now he is enthroned in infinite majesty, "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Believe in the infinite blessedness treasured up in Christ for every believing soul, and come and take your share of it this morning. All that you want, and all that wish—come and receive freely, for he doth graciously dispense it, and it is a part of his glory that he delights to enrich the children of men. Let faith in Jesus be one lesson—may God write it on each heart.

And then let us ascribe to our Lord Jesus Christ all the honour that our thoughts can compass. Let us give to him this day our very selves over again. Consider how great this man was, and go away feeling how greatly you are indebted to him, what great things you ought to do for him, and how little your greatest thing is when you have done it as compared with the greatness of his deservings.

"Let him be crowned with majesty
That bowed his head to death;
And be his honour sounded high
By all things that have breath."
Do not you feel that question pressing upon your heart?

"Oh what shall I do
My Saviour to praise!"

Do something; and having done it do more, and yet more. Give up your whole being to the showing forth of how great this Man is!

Once more, considering how great this Man is do not be afraid, nor troubled, nor tumbled up and down in your thoughts about anything that is happening, or is yet to happen. "Consider how great this man was." Our wise men are going to do away with the old faith; modern culture means to stamp out old-fashioned orthodoxy. Christianity itself is getting to be effete, and something better is to supersede it. Listen! "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed. He that sitteth in the heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." One said to me the other day, "The current of thought does not seem to run in the direction of evangelical religion." Well, I said I should not

believe in evangelical religion an atom the more if the current of thought did run that way. We do not believe according to the counting of heads. The currents of men's thoughts are so uncertain that you can better tell the flight of birds, or the changing of English weather. The gospel is perhaps the surer to be true because there are so few who believe it. It is according to our expectation that God's revealed truth should be abhorred and hated by the wise men of every generation. I shall not believe the gospel any the less if I am left alone, nor shall I believe it any the more if the whole world shall cry it up. Let God be true and every man a liar. He whose faith stands upon the consensus of popular opinion has placed his feet upon the sand, but he who has read his Bible and has been taught of the Spirit of God what truth is, will hold to it come what may. When you consider how great this man is, it seems to me that to be a fool for his sake is the highest wisdom, and that to cling to what he says is the best philosophy, and to believe him, and none beside is not alone a duty but a necessity of every Christian spirit. Be of good cheer, dear friends! Let no man's heart fail him because of modern doubt. Let no man be troubled because of the fierceness of the fight. I can hear already the sounding of the trumpets of the Lord's coming. He is not far away; even if thousands of years intervene before his feet touch the Mount of Olivet the victory will never be doubtful. All is done that is required for winning the battle, his blood has been shed, his life has been accepted as a ransom. The eternal decree has settled it, nothing can change it! "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 2:1-10; Hebrews 7:1-10, 17, 21, 22.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—72, 392, 60.

A pamphlet is being widely advertised as prefaced by "Mr. Spurgeon." I have written no such preface. My views on all subjects are as they were. It is disgraceful that an attempt should be made to propagate doctrines which I loathe, by leading the public to suppose that I have espoused them.

C. H. Spurgeon

April 15, 1885.

A Question for a Questioner

A Sermon

(No. 1843)

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, May 31st, 1885, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"—Psalm 77:9.

ASAPH was very grievously troubled in spirit. The deep waters were not only around his barque, but they had come in even unto his soul. When the spirit of a man is wounded, then is he wounded indeed; and such was the case with this man of God. In the time of his trouble he was attacked with doubts and fears; so that he was made to question the very foundations of things. Had he not taken to continual prayer he had perished in his affliction; but he cried unto God with his voice, and the Lord gave ear unto him. Nor did he only pray, but he used the fittest means for escaping from his despondency. Very wisely this good man argued with himself, and sought to cure his unbelief. He treated himself homoeopathically, meeting like with like. As he was attacked by the disease of questioning, he gave himself questions as a medicine. Observe how he kills one question with another, as men fight fire with fire. Here we have six questions, one after another, each one striking at the very heart of unbelief. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" If questions are raised at all let us go through with them; and as the Saviour answered one question of his opponents by another, so may we also silence the questions of unbelief by further questions which shall strip our doubt of all disguises.

The question which makes our text is meant to end other questions. You may carry truth as far as ever you like, and it will always be truth. Truth is like those crystals which, when split up into the smallest possible fragments, still retain their natural form. You may break truth in pieces, you may do what you like with it, and it is truth throughout; but error is diverse within itself, and evermore bears its own death within itself. You can see its falsehood even in its own light. Bring it forward, strip it of its disguises, behold it in its naked form, and its deformity at once appears. Carry unbelief to its proper consequences, and you will revolt from it, and be driven by the grace of God to faith. Sometimes our doubts assume appearances which are not their own, and so are hard to deal with; but if we make them take their own natural shapes, we shall easily destroy them. The question before us is what the logician would call a *reductio ad absurdum*; it reduces doubt to an absurdity; it puts into plain and truthful words the thought of an unbelieving mind, and at once it is seen to be a horrible notion. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?" One might smile while reading a suggestion so absurd, and yet there is grave cause for trembling in the profanity of such a question. "Hath God forgotten?" We stumble at the first word. How can God forget? "Hath God forgotten to be?" We snap the question at that point, and it is blasphemous. It is no better when we give it as a whole,— "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" The bare idea is both ridiculous and blasphemous. Again, I say, it is wise when we are vexed with evil questioning to put down the questions in black and white, and expose them to the daylight. Drive the wretched things out of their holes; hunt them in the open; and they will soon be destroyed. Let the light of God into the

dark cellar of your despondency, and you will soon quit the den in sheer disgust at your own folly. Make a thought appear to be absurd and you have gone a long way towards conquering it.

The question now before us is one of very wide application. I shall not attempt to suggest all the ways in which it may be employed, but I am going to turn it to three uses this morning. The first is for *the man of God in distress*. Let him take this question, and put it to his own reason and common sense, and especially to his own faith, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" When we have handled the question in that way, we will pass it over to *the seeking sinner who is despondent*, and we will ask him whether he really believes that God hath forgotten to be gracious. When this is done, we may have a moment or two left for *the Christian worker who is dispirited*, who cannot do his work as he would wish to do, and who mourns over the little result coming from it. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Will you be allowed to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and will you never come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you? We shall have quite enough matter to fill up our time, and many fragments remaining when the feast is over. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word!

I. TO THE MAN OF GOD IN DISTRESS, this question is commended, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

What kind of distress is that which suggests such a question? Where had Asaph been? In what darkness had he wandered? In what tangled wood had he lost himself? How came he to get such a thought into his mind?

I answer, first, this good man had been troubled by unanswered prayers. "In the day of my trouble," he says,— "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord"; and he seems to say that though he sought the Lord his griefs were not removed. He was burdened, and he cried unto God beneath the burden, but the burden was not lightened. He was in darkness, and he craved for light, but not a star shone forth. Nothing is more grievous to the sincere pleader than to feel that his petitions are not heeded by his God. It is a sad business to have gone up, like Elijah's servant, seven times, and yet to have seen no cloud upon the sky in answer to your importunity. It tries a man to spend all night in wrestling, and to have won no blessing from the covenant angel. To ask, and not to receive; to seek, and not to find; to knock, and to see no open door,—these are serious trials to the heart, and tend to extort the question, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Unanswered prayer is very staggering even to strong faith; but the weak faith of a tried believer is hard put to it by long delays and threatened denials. When the mercy-seat itself ceases to yield us aid, what can we do? You will not wonder, then, considering your own tendency to doubt, that this man of God, when his prayers did not bring him deliverance, cried out, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Besides that, he was enduring continued suffering. Our text says, "My sore ran in the night." His wound was bleeding ever: there was no cessation to his pain. At night he woke up and wished it were morning, and when the daylight came he wished for night again, if, perchance, he might obtain relief; but none came. Pain of body, when it is continuous and severe, is exceedingly trying to our feeble spirits; but agony of soul is worse still. Give me the rack sooner than despair. Do you know what it is to have a keen thought working like an auger into your brain? Has Satan seemed to pierce and gimlet your mind with a sharp, cutting thought that would not be put aside? It is torment indeed to have a worm gnawing at your heart, a fire consuming your spirit: yet a true child of God may be thus tormented. When Asaph had prayed for relief, and the relief did not come, the temptation came to him to ask, "Am I always to suffer? Will the Lord never relieve me? It is written,

'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds'; has he ceased from that sacred surgery? 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious?'"

In addition to this, the man of God was in a state of mind in which his depression had become inveterate. He says, "My soul refused to be comforted." Many plasters were at hand, but he could not lay them upon the wound; many cordials offered themselves, but he could not receive them—his throat seemed closed. The meadows were green, but the gate was nailed up, and the sheep could not get in; the brooks flowed softly, but he could not reach their margin to lie down and drink. Asaph was lying at the pool of Bethesda, and he saw others step in to be healed, but he had no man to put him into the pool when the waters were troubled. His mind had become confirmed in its despondency, and his soul refused to be comforted.

More than that, there seemed to be a failure of the means of grace for him. "I remembered God, and was troubled." Some of God's people go up to the house of the Lord where they were accustomed to unite in worship with delight, but they have no delight now; they even go to the communion-table, and eat the bread and drink the wine, but they do not receive the body and blood of Christ to the joy of their faith. Anon they get them to their chambers, and open their Bibles, and bow their knees, and remember God; but every verse seems to condemn them; their prayers accuse them, and God himself seems turned to be their enemy; and then it is little wonder that unbelief exclaims, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

At the back of all this there was another trouble for Asaph, namely, that he could not sleep. He says, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking." It seemed as if the Lord himself held up his eyelids, and would not let them close in sleep. Others on their beds were refreshed with "kind nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep"; but when Asaph sought his couch he was more unrestful there than when he was engaged in the business of the day. We may speak of sleeplessness very lightly, but among afflictions it is one of the worst that can happen to men. When the chamber of repose becomes a furnace of anguish it goes hard with a man. When the Psalmist could not find even a transient respite in sleep, his weakness and misery drove him to say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Moreover, there was one thing more: he lost the faculty of telling out his grief: "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." There are some people to whom we would not tell our trouble, for we know they would not understand it, for they have never been in deep waters themselves; there are others to whom we could not tell our trouble, though they might help us, because we feel ashamed to do so. To be compelled to silence is a terrible increase to anguish: the torrent is swollen when its free course is prevented. A dumb sorrow is sorrow indeed. The grief that can talk will soon pass away; that misery which is wordless is endless. The brook that ripples and prattles as it flows is shallow; but deep waters are silent in their flow. When a man falls under the power of a dumb spirit it needs Christ himself to come and cast the devil out of him, for he is brought into a very grievous captivity. We who know what a poor thing human nature is when it is brought into affliction, are not surprised that the man of God said in such a case, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Having thus, you see, put the doubt in the most apologetic style, and mentioned the excuses which mitigate the sin of the question, I am now going to expose its unreasonableness and sinfulness, by considering *what answers we may give to such a question?* I shall endeavour to answer it by making it answer itself—

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Answer: Hath God forgotten anything? If he could forget, could he be God? Is it not absurd to speak of him as short of memory, of whose understanding there is no searching? Shall we speak of him as forgetting, when to his mind all things are present, and

the past and the future are ever before him as in a map which lies open before the beholder's eye? Oh child of God, why doest thou talk thus? Oh troubled heart, wilt thou insult thy God, wilt thou narrow the infinity of his mind? Can God forget? Thou art forgetful. Perhaps thou canst scarce remember from hour to hour thine own words and thine own promises; but is the Lord such an one as thou art? Not even the least thing is passed over by him. He hath not forgotten the young ravens in their nests, but he heareth when they cry. He hath not forgotten a single blade of grass, but giveth to each its own drop of dew. He hath not forgotten the sea monsters down deep in the caverns of ocean. He hath not forgotten a worm that hides itself away beneath the sod; therefore banish the thought once for all, that thy God hath forgotten anything, much less that he hath forgotten to be gracious.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then hath he forgotten an old, long, ancient, aye, eternal habit of his heart. Hast thou not heard that his mercy endureth for ever? Did he not light up the lamps of heaven because of his mercy? Do we not sing, "To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever"? Since the creation hath he not in providence always been gracious? Is it not his rule to open his hand, and supply the want of every living thing? Did he not give his Son to redeem mankind? Hath he not sent his Spirit to turn men from darkness to light? After having been gracious all these myriads of ages, after having manifested his love and his grace at such a costly rate, hath he forgotten it? Thou, O man, takest up a practice, and thou layest it down; thou doest a thing now and then, and then thou ceasest from thy way, but shall the eternal God who has always been gracious forget to be gracious? Oh, Lord, forgive the thought.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Why, then, he must have forgotten his purpose! Hath thou not heard that or ever the earth was he purposed to redeem unto himself a people who should be his own chosen, his children, his peculiar treasure, a people near unto him? Before he made the heavens and the earth, had he not planned in his own mind that he would manifest the fulness of his grace toward his people in Christ Jesus, and dost thou think that he has turned from his eternal purpose, and rent up his divine decrees, and burned the book of life, and changed the whole course of his operations among the sons of men? Dost thou know what thou art at to talk so? Doth he not say, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"? Hath he said, and will he not do it? Hath he purposed, and shall it not come to pass? Banish, then, the thought of his forgetting to be gracious.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then he must have forgotten his own *covenant*; for what was the purport of his covenant with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, on the behalf of his people? Is it not called a covenant of grace? Is not grace the spirit and tenor and object of it? Of old he said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy"; and in his covenant he ordains to show this grace to as many as are in Christ Jesus. Now, if a man's covenant be confirmed it stands fast. Nothing that occurs after a covenant has been made can alter it; and God having once made a covenant turneth not from his promise and his oath. The law which was four hundred and thirty years after the covenant made with Abraham could not change the promises which the Lord had made to the believing seed, neither can any accident or unforeseen circumstance make the covenant of grace null and void; indeed, there are no accidents with God, nor any unforeseen circumstances with him. He hath lifted his hand to heaven and hath sworn; he hath declared, "If my covenant be not with day and night, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob."

The Lord hath not forgotten his covenant with day and night, neither will he cast off his believing people. He cannot, therefore, forget to be gracious.

More than that, when thou sayest, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" dost thou not forget that in such a case he must have forgotten *his own glory*? for the main of his glory lies in his grace. In that which he does out of free favour and love to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving men, he displays the meridian splendour of his glory. His power, his wisdom, and his immutability praise him; but in the forefront of all shines out his grace. This is his darling attribute; by this he is illustrious on earth and in heaven above. Hath God forgotten his own glory? Doth a man forget his honour? Doth a man turn aside from his own name and fame? He may do so in a moment of madness; but the thrice holy God hath not forgotten the glory of his name, nor forgotten to be gracious.

Listen, and let unbelief stand rebuked. If God hath forgotten to be gracious, then he must have forgotten *his own Son*, he must have forgotten Calvary and the expiatory sacrifice offered there; he must have forgotten him that is ever with him at his right hand, making intercession for transgressors; he must have forgotten his pledge to him that he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Canst thou conceive that? It is verging upon blasphemy to suppose such a thing; yet it must be that he has forgotten his own Son if he hath forgotten to be gracious.

Once more; if this were the case, the Lord must have forgotten *his own self*; for grace is of the essence of his nature, since God is love. We forget ourselves and disgrace ourselves, but God cannot do so. Oh beloved, it is part and parcel of God's own nature that he should show mercy to the guilty and be gracious to those who trust in him. Hast thou forgotten as a father thy children? Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? These things are barely possible, but it is utterly impossible that the great Father should forget himself by forgetting his children; that the great Lord who hath taken us to be his peculiar heritage and his jewels should cease to value us and forget to be gracious to us.

I think I hear some one say, "I do not think God hath forgotten to be gracious *except to me*." Doth God make any exceptions? Doth he not speak universally when he addresses his children? Remember, if God forgot to be gracious to one of his believing people he might forget to be gracious to them all. If there were one instance found in which his love failed, then the foundations would be removed, and what could the righteous do? The Good Shepherd doth not preserve some of his sheep, but all of them; and it is not concerning the strong ones of his flock that he saith, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;" but he has said it of all the sheep, aye, and of the smallest lamb of all the flock, of the most scabbed and wounded, of all that he has purchased with his blood. The Lord hath not forgotten himself in any one instance; but he is faithful to all believers.

Now, let us attend to *the amendment of the question*. Shall I tell thee, friend, thou who hast put this question, what the true question is which thou oughtest to ask thyself? It is not, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" but "Hast thou forgotten to be grateful?" Why, thou enjoyest many mercies even now. It is grace which allows thee to live after having asked such a vile question. Grace is all around thee, if thou wilt but open thine eyes, or thine ears. Thou hadst not been spared after so much sin if God had forgotten to be gracious.

Listen: Hast thou not forgotten to be believing? God's word is true, why dost thou doubt it? Is he a liar? Has he ever played thee false? Which promise of his has failed? Time was when thou didst trust him; then thou knewest he was gracious; but thou art doubting now without just cause;

thou art permitting an evil heart of unbelief to draw thee aside from the living God. Know this, and repent of it, and trust thy best Friend.

Hast thou not also forgotten to be reverent? Else how couldst thou ask such a question? Should a man say of God that he has forgotten to be gracious? Should he imagine such a thing? Should the keenest grief drive to such profanity? Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Shall anyone of us begin to doubt that grace, which has kept us out of the bottomless pit, and spared us to this hour? Oh, heir of glory, favoured as thou hast been to bathe thy forehead in the sunlight of heaven full often, and then to lean thy head on the Saviour's bosom,—is it out of thy mouth that this question comes,—"Hath God forgotten to be gracious"? Call it back and bow thine head unto the dust, and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon thy servant, that he hath even thought thus for an instant."

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Why, surely thou hast forgotten thyself, or thou wouldest not talk so: thou hast forgotten that thou owest everything to thy Lord, and art indebted to him even for the breath in thy nostrils. Thou hast forgotten the precious blood of Jesus; thou hast forgotten the mercy-seat; thou hast forgotten providence; thou hast forgotten the Holy Spirit; thou hast forgotten all that the Lord has done for thee: surely, thou hast forgotten all good things, or thou wouldest not speak thus. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and leave the dunghill of thy despair, and sing, "His mercy endureth for ever." Say in thy soul,—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Thus much to the child of God. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply it to every troubled heart.

II. Furthermore, I desire to talk a little with THE SEEKING SINNER IN DESPONDENCY. You have not yet found joy and peace through believing, and therefore I will first *describe your case*, and what it is that has made you say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

You labour under a sense of guilt; you know that you have transgressed against God, and you feel that this is a terrible thing, involving wrath to the uttermost. The arrows of God are sticking in your soul, and rankling there. You cannot trifle with sin as you once did; it burns like a fiery poison in your veins! You have been praying to get rid of that sense of sin, but it deepens. The case I am stating is very clear to every child of God; but it is not at all clear to the man who is enduring it. He cries, "The more I pray, the more I go to hear the word, the more I read the Bible, the blacker sinner I seem to be. 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious?'"

Moreover, a sense of weakness is increasing upon you. You thought that you could pray; but now you cannot pray. You thought it the easiest thing in the world to believe; but now the grappling-irons will not lay hold upon the promise, and you find no rest. You cannot now perform those holy acts which you once thought to be so easy. Your power is dried up, your glory is withered. Now you groan out, "I would but I can't repent, then all would easy be. Alas, I have no hope, no strength; I am reduced to utter weakness." *We* understand all this, but you do not; and we do not wonder at your crying,—"Hath God forgotten to be gracious." "Oh, but sir, I have been crying to God that he would be pleased to deliver me from sin, and the more I try to be holy the more I am tempted; I never knew such horrible thoughts before, nor discovered such filthiness in my nature before. When I get up in the morning I resolve that I will go straight all the day, and before long I am more crooked than ever. I feel worse rather than better. The world tempts me, the devil tempts me, the flesh tempts me, everything goes wrong with me. 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious'? I have prayed the Lord to give me peace, and he promises to give rest; but I am more uneasy than

ever, and cannot rest where I used to do. I used to be very happy when I was at chapel on Sunday; I thought I was doing well to be at public worship; but now I fear that I only go as a formalist, and therefore I mock God, and make matters worse. I rested once in being a teetotaler, in being a hard-working, honest, sober man; but now I see that I must be born again. I used to rest once in the idea that I was becoming quite religious; but now it seems to me that my betterness is a hollow sham, and all my old nests are pulled down.

My friend, I perfectly understand your case, and think well of it; for the like has happened to many of us. You must be divorced from self before you can be married to Christ; and that divorce must be made most clear and plain, or Jesus will never make a match with you. You must come clear away from self-righteousness, self-trust, self-hope, or else one of these days, when Jesus has saved you, there might be a doubt as to whether he is to have all the glory, or to go halves with self. He makes you nothing that he may be all in all to you. He grinds you to the dust that he may lift you out of it for ever. Meanwhile, I do not wonder that the question crosses your mind, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Let me *show how wrong the question is*. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" If he has, he has forgotten what he used to know right well. David was foul with his adultery—remember that fifty-first Psalm—but how sweet was the prophet's message to the penitent king: "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die!" "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," was a prayer most graciously answered in that royal sinner's case. Remember Jonah, and how he went down to the bottom of the mountains in the whale's belly, and was brought even to hell's door; yet he lived to sing "Salvation is of the Lord," and was brought out of the depths of the sea. Remember Manasseh, who shed innocent blood very much, and yet the grace of God brought him among thorns, and made him a humble servant of the Lord. Remember Peter, how he denied his Master, but his Master forgave him, and bade him feed his sheep. Forget not the dying thief, and how in the extremity of death, filled with all the agonies of crucifixion, he looked to the Lord, and the Lord looked on him, and that day he was with the King in paradise. Think also of Saul of Tarsus, that chief of sinners, who breathed out threatenings against the people of God, and yet was struck down, and, before long was in mercy raised up again, and ordained to be a chosen vessel to bear the gospel among the heathen. If God has forgotten to be gracious, he has forgotten a line of things in which he has wrought great wonders, and in which his heart delighted from of old. It cannot be that he will turn away from that which is so dear to him.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then why are all the old arrangements for grace still standing? There is the mercy-seat; surely that would have been taken away if God had forgotten to be gracious. The gospel is preached to you, and this is its assurance, "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." If the Lord had forgotten to be gracious he would not have mocked you with empty words.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is still living, and still stands as a priest to make intercession for transgressors. Would that be the case if God had forgotten to be gracious? The Holy Spirit is still at work convincing and converting; would that be so if God had forgotten to be gracious? Oh brothers, while Calvary is still a fact, and the Christ has gone into the glory bearing his wounds with him, there is a fountain still filled with blood wherein the guilty may wash. While there is an atoning sacrifice there must be grace for sinners. I cannot enlarge on these points, for time flies so rapidly; but the continuance of the divine arrangements, the continuance of the Son of God as living

and pleading, and the mission of the Holy Spirit as striving, regenerating, comforting—all this proves that God hath not forgotten to be gracious.

Remember that God himself must according to nature be ever gracious so long as men will put their trust in the great sacrifice. He has promised to be gracious to all who confess their sins and forsake them and look to Christ; and he cannot forget that word without a change which we dare not impute to him. God might sooner forget to be than forget to be gracious to those to whom he has promised his grace. He has promised to every poor, guilty, confessing soul that will come and put his trust in Christ that he will be gracious in pardoning sin, and so it must be.

I shall come to close quarters with you. I know your despair has driven you to the question, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" and I would silence it by putting other questions to you. Is it not you that have forgotten to believe in Christ? "I have been praying," says one. That is all very well, but the gospel is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," not "he that prays." "I have been trying to come to Christ." I know that, but I read nothing about this *trying* in Holy Scripture, and I fear your trying is that which keeps you from Jesus. You are told to believe in Christ, not to try to believe. A minister in America, some time ago, was going up the aisle of his church during a revival, when a young man earnestly cried to him, "Sir, can you tell me the way to Christ?" "No," was the answer, very deliberately given; "I cannot tell you the way to Christ." The young man answered, "I beg pardon; I thought you were a minister of the gospel." "So I am," was the reply. "How is it that you cannot tell me the way to Christ?" "My friend," said the minister, "*there is no way to Christ*. He is himself the way. All that believe in him are justified from all things. There is no way to Christ; Christ is here." O! my hearer, Christ himself is the way of salvation, and that way comes right down to your foot, and then leads right up to heaven. You have not to make a way to the Way, but at once to run in the way which lies before you. The way begins where you now are; *enter it*. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ now, and you are saved; and then you will no more ask the question, "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"

"Oh," says one, "but I have been looking to reform myself and grow better, and I have done a good deal in that way." That is not the gospel; it is all very right and proper, but the gospel is, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." The other day I saw my bees swarming; they hung on a branch of a tree in a living mass; the difficulty was to get them into a hive. My man went with his veil over his face and began to put them into the skep; and I noticed that he was particularly anxious to get the queen bee into it; for if he once had her in the hive the rest would be sure to follow, and remain with her. Now, faith is the queen bee. You may get temperance, love, hope, and all those other bees into the hive; but the main thing is to get simple faith in Christ, and all the rest will come afterwards. Get the queen bee of faith, and all the other virtues will attend her.

"Alas!" cries one, "I have been listening to the gospel for years." That is quite right, for "faith cometh by hearing"; but recollect, we are not saved by mere listening, nor even by knowing, unless we advance to believing. The letter of the word is not life; it is the spirit of it which saves. When tea was first introduced into this country a person favoured a friend with a pound of it. It was exceedingly expensive, and when he met his friend next, he enquired, "Have you tried the tea?" "Yes, but I did not like it at all." "How was that? Everybody else is enraptured with it." "Why," said the other, "we boiled it in a saucepan, threw away the water, and brought the leaves to table; but they were very hard, and nobody cared for them." Thus many people keep the leaves of form, and throw away the spiritual meaning. They listen to our doctrines, but fail to come to Christ. They throw away the true essence of the gospel, which is faith in Jesus. I pray you, do not act thus with

what I preach. Do not bury yourself in my words, or even in the words of Scripture; but pass onward to the life and soul of their meaning, which is Christ Jesus, the sinner's hope. All the aroma of the gospel is in Christ; all the essence of the gospel is in Christ, and you have only to trust him to enjoy eternal life. You guilty, worthless sinner, you at the gates of hell, you who have nothing to recommend you, you who have no good works or good feelings, simply trust the merits of Christ, and accept the atonement made by his death, and you shall be saved, your sin shall be forgiven, your nature shall be changed, you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and you shall never say again, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

III. The time has gone; therefore THE DISAPPOINTED WORKER must be content with a few crumbs. You have been working for Christ, dear brother, and have fallen in to a very low state of heart, so that you cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" I know what state you are in. You say, "I do not feel as if I could preach; the matter does not flow. I do not feel as if I could teach; I search for instruction, and the more I pull the more I cannot get it." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Can he not fill thine empty vessel again? Can he not give thee stores of thought, emotion, and language? He has used thee; can he not do so again? "Ah, but my friends have gone; I am in a village from which the people remove to London, and I lose my best helpers." Or, perhaps you say, "I work in a back street, and everybody is moving out into the suburbs." You have lost your friends, and they have forgotten you; but, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" You can succeed so long as the Lord is with you. Be of good courage; your best friend is left. He who made a speech in the Academy found that all his hearers had gone except Plato; but as Plato remained, the orator finished his address. They asked him how he could continue under the circumstances, and he replied that Plato was enough for an audience. So, if God be pleased with you, go on; the divine pleasure is more than sufficient. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Did not Wesley say when he was dying, "The best of all is, God is with us"? Therefore fear not the failure of friends.

"But, sir, the sinners I have to deal with are such tough ones: they reject my testimony; they grow worse instead of better; I do not think I can ever preach to them again." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" *You* cannot save them, but he can. "But I work in such a depraved neighbourhood, the people are sunk in poverty and drunkenness." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Does not he know the way to save drunkards? Does not he know how to rescue the harlot and the whoremonger, and make them clean and chaste?

"Ah, but the church in which I labour is in a wretched state; the members are worldly, lukewarm, and divided. I have no brethren around me to pray for me, as you have; they are always squabbling and finding fault with one another." That is a horrible business, but "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Cannot God put you right, and your church right? If he begins with you by strengthening your faith, may you not be the means of healing all these divisions, and bringing these poor people into a better state of mind, and then converting the sinners round about you? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

"Ah, well," saith one, "I am ready to give it all up." I hope you will not do so. If you have made up your mind to speak no more in the name of the Lord, I hope that word will be like fire in your bones; for if God has not forgotten to be gracious, provoked as he has been, how can you forget to be patient? Is it possible while God's sun shines on you that you will refuse to shine on the fallen? If God continues to be gracious, you ought not to grow weary in well-doing.

Perhaps I speak to some dear brother who is very old and infirm; he can hardly hear, and scarcely see, so that he reads his Bible with difficulty. He gets to the service now, but he knows that soon

he will be confined to his chamber, and then to his bed. His mind is sadly failing him; he is quite a wreck. Take this home with you, my aged brother, and keep it for your comfort if you never come out again: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Oh, no; the Lord hath said, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Having loved his own which were in the world, the Lord Jesus loved them unto the end; and he will love *you* to the end. When the last scene comes, and you close your eyes in death, blessed be his name, you shall know that he has not forgotten you. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is the Lord's promise, and his people's sheet-anchor. Therefore, let us not fear when our frail tabernacles are taken down, but let us rejoice that God hath not forgotten to be gracious. Though our bodies will sink into the dust, they will ere long rise again, and we shall be in glory for ever with the Lord. Blessed be his name. Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—Psalm 77.

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—196, 77, 502.

Israel And Britain. A Note of Warning

A Sermon

(No. 1844)

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, June 7th, 1885, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."—John 12:37-41.

THE BLINDNESS of Israel concerning our Lord was sadly remarkable. It was a blindness of the eyes, for they saw his many miracles, and yet believed not: their ears also seemed to be stopped, for they heard his words and did not understand them; and their hearts also were heavy, for they did not relent under the plaintive admonitions of a Saviour's love. Their hearts were cruel towards the Messiah; they hated him without a cause. No door was open to the heart of Israel; they had hardened their heart, they had shut their eyes, they had stopped their ears, and even he that spake as never man spake gained no access to their souls. They went so far as to crucify him, and cried as they did so, "His blood be on us, and our children,"—words so sadly verified when Jerusalem was destroyed, and her children slaughtered, sold as slaves, or scattered to the four corners of the earth. It was indeed, a terrible blindness which happened unto Israel.

Her rejection of the Lord Jesus is the more amazing because Isaiah gave so clear an account of the Messiah, and so clearly pictured Jesus of Nazareth. Descriptions of him could not have been more explicit than were the prophecies of Isaiah. It would be very easy to construct an entire life of Christ out of the book of Isaiah, beginning with "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," and ending with "he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death." Isaiah spake of John the Baptist as the "voice crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," and he foretold our Lord's ministry by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles, where the people who sat in darkness saw great light. The prophecy portrayed his Lord as "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Clearest of all is he upon his vicarious sufferings, concerning which he uses a variety of most definite expressions, such as,—"The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah saw so clearly the day of our Lord Jesus that he spake rather as an evangelist than as a prophet; as an eyewitness, rather than as one foretelling a far-off event. Yet all this clearness was lost upon the men of his generation, and upon those who followed after. The nation had so long been fickle towards God, and had trifled so long with God's truth, that it was at length given up to a judicial hardness of heart, so that it could not understand or perceive. They refused the plainest messages of grace, and were so confirmed in unbelief that all their prophets cried with one plaintive voice, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Nor was it alone grievous that Israel sinned against the light which shone in Isaiah's testimony; but, alas, she closed her eyes against the meridian splendour of our Lord's own life. Jesus bore his own witness in his person, teachings, works, and gifts. A sad wonder lies in the fact, that they did not know the Lord of glory although they saw his miracles, which were sure witnesses to his claims. He wrought among them works which none other man did. There is about our Lord a likeness to God: in all that he does the Godhead shines forth. He is so pure that he can say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" How like to him who is saluted as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!" His teaching is so full of tenderness and gentleness that since God is love, we conclude that Christ is God. His many miracles touch upon every point in the great circle of omnipotence. What is there that God can do which the Christ did not do? Was he not multiform and multitudinous in his works of power and grace? Herein lay the wonder, that though he did so many miracles before them, not in secret but actually before their eyes; though he fed them with bread which they could see, and handle, and eat; though he healed the sick and raised the dead, they yet believed not on him. How sadly far can men go in unbelief, prejudice, and hardness of heart! How dim can human eyes become when men refuse to see! How darkened the understanding when men are unwilling to comprehend! Let us tremble at this, lest ourselves by imitating the chosen people in their unbelief should fall into like bondage to prejudice and ignorance, lest we by tampering with truth should come at last to be incapable of perceiving it, lest we also by rejecting the testimony of God should be given up to our own willfulness, to believe a lie and refuse the truth. Such, then, as Isaiah had foreseen, was the state of Israel in our Lord's day: never clearer evidence, and never more obstinate refusal to see it; never truth more plain, and never rejection so determined. Woe to those who close their ears; for the day cometh when they shall no longer hear! Woe to those who shut their eyes to the light, for they shall ere long be made blind! Isaiah was informed that such would be the outcome of his ministry: the Lord bade him say to the people, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." This must have been a very sad business for so generous and tender-hearted a man of God. It was painful to him to be so clear and yet to be so little understood. He was the Paul of the Old Testament; to him belonged fulness of knowledge, clearness of vision, plainness of speech, and faithfulness of spirit, and yet none of these things could make the people understand his message and receive it into their hearts. He was sublime in thought, attractive in word, and affectionate in spirit, and yet they did not believe his testimony; so that he must often have been astonished and heart-broken as he spake in vain to a people who were determined that they would not hear.

This morning I shall draw certain lessons for ourselves from the great evangelical prophet, his ministry, and the people to whom he ministered so vainly. Our first meditation shall be *concerning Isaiah and his ministry*: and our second shall be *concerning the people to whom he spake*. Alas! I fear that we who speak in the name of the Lord in these last days have also to deal with hearts that are gross, ears that are heavy, and eyes that are dimmed. Upon this generation also there is falling a measure of judicial withdrawal of light and discernment; and we also have to cry, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

I. First, then, let me speak with you CONCERNING ISAIAH AND HIS MINISTRY. Oh, that the Spirit of God may speak with power through me. Our text says two things of Isaiah: first, that "he *saw* his glory," and secondly, that "he *spake* of him."

The first statement is that Isaiah *saw*. Isaiah was a great seer: his prophesy begins thus,—"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." All prophets

were more or less seers, and saw what they foretold; but Isaiah above others was endowed with the seeing and foreseeing faculty. He had the clearest sight, and for that reason he had the clearest speech. When a man speaks so that you cannot understand him, the usual reason is that he does not understand himself; and when a man speaks so as to be readily comprehended, it is because the thought in his own mind is well defined. He that would speak well must see well. Mark the two things in the text—"When Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him."

In what sense is Isaiah said to have seen that which he spake? Does it not mean that he realized his thoughts? that they stood out vividly, so as to make a deep impression upon his own mind? Things to come were already come in his apprehension: he beheld what he believed, he felt what he foretold. He was not a dreamy person, maundering about half-fashioned, undeveloped thoughts; but he was a person who knew, and perceived, and felt what he preached. He saw with his soul what he set forth with his lips.

But what did he see? It is a most important thing that in these days you and I should see the same, for the same work lies before us among a people who are a repetition of that disobedient and gainsaying nation. Read, then, with care the sixth chapter of Isaiah. Open your Bibles and refer to the passage verse by verse.

First, what Isaiah saw was *the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up*. When the prophet went abroad among the people he heard them speaking against the Lord God; some contending for our deity and some for another; some leaning upon an arm of flesh, and others despising the promise of Jehovah the God of Israel. All this, I say, he saw out of doors, and he was troubled. But when he went into the sanctuary of God he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne : still reigning, still glorious, undisturbed by opposition. He must then have felt like David when he said, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." As David saw Christ upon the throne amid the stirrings of the people, so did Isaiah see the Lord Jesus, not only upon the lowly mercy-seat, but upon a throne high and lifted up. I pray you, brethren, settle this in your hearts: our Lord is highly exalted as Lord of all. When you see evil occurrent, do not imagine that it defeats the eternal purposes of Jehovah: when you hear blasphemy and your blood runs cold, do not think that Christ has lost his glory: when men riot in sin, do not dream that the reins of affairs are out of Jesus' hands; for still he is "God over all, blessed for ever." My heart exalts this day, as, by undoubting faith, I am assured that he who died on Calvary is now exalted on high, far above all principalities and powers. "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!" To thee our spirits ascribe infinite honour, world without end. Though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, yet the Lord reigneth. He that died upon the tree is crowned with majesty, and all the angels of God worship him. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Let us have no question about this; for if we have, we shall not be prepared to speak in the Lord's name with this evil generation. Amid the anarchy of the ages we see the glorious high throne of our redeeming Lord unmoved, unmovable: this is the rock of our refuge when the unsettled times rage about us like the waters of the troubled sea. We cannot be afraid, for Christ is on the throne.

Observe that in Isaiah's vision he not only saw the Lord "upon a throne high and lifted up," but he saw that *"his train filled the temple."* so that in that temple there was room for no one else. The robes of this great King filled all the holy place; and neither priests nor offerers could there find

standing room. It is a great thing to see how Jesus fills the heavenly places; in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead. Let it be acknowledged to be so in heaven, for the glory of our Redeemer fills every street of the upper city, every mansion of the Father's house. In the church below, which is also his temple, among his spiritual people, the glory of the Lord Jesus engages and occupies every heart. They feel that there is none other in whom they can trust, none other whose words they will receive, none other in whom they glory; the Lord Christ is all in all to us, and we know no other Master or Saviour. His train fills the temple. I trust it is so among us. From Sabbath to Sabbath the one glory of this Tabernacle is the person and work of Jesus. What a glory hath God put upon the Only Begotten Son, whom he hath raised from the dead that he should be head over all things to his church, which he fills with his life, light, and love. Nor may we forget that all the things that exist are in a sense his temple, and the whole universe is filled with his train; for "he hath ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things." Glory be unto our ascended and reigning Lord.

In this vision Isaiah saw *the flaming spirits that wait upon Christ of God*. He calls them "seraphims." The best interpretation we can give is "burning ones:" they burn in the sense of consuming. They burn up that which ought to be consumed, namely, all kinds of evil. There are powers around our Lord which will destroy evil. You ask me to tell you something about these seraphim; how can I? They have covered their faces, and covered their feet. Since nothing is to be seen, what can I tell you? Neither would it be right for us to speak concerning them, for manifestly it is their desire to be hidden. Who will violate their wish to be concealed? They covered their faces, they covered their feet, and therein they did as good as they say, "Look not on us, but look on him who sits upon the throne, whose attendants we are." This much is all we know,—exalted intelligences are in waiting upon our Lord, and are able to fly swiftly at his bidding. Tremble not concerning this error, or that, it shall be burnt up by those agencies which are at the command of our exalted Lord. Spirits from God shall run to and fro, and smite, as with the fire of God, those powers of darkness which now oppress our race. God himself is a consuming fire: who can dwell with him but those that are like him? He maketh his ministers a flame of fire. Around our Lord are the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. His power knows no limit. His word runneth very swiftly; he speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. Glory be unto thee, O Christ! We will not fear nor be discouraged, since these thy servants are ready to flame forth at thy bidding. Truly thou art Jehovah of hosts.

This vision of the body-guard of the Prince of peace was enough to strengthen Isaiah: thus comforted, he would calmly confront that rebellious generation. If the prophet, when he opened the young man's eyes strengthened his heart by making him see horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, shall not we be comforted as we behold legions of burning ones surrounding our King, and standing ready to fulfil his decrees?

Further, we find that Isaiah saw in that vision *the perpetual adoration which is rendered unto Christ concerning his holiness*. Those bright spirits had never tasted of his mercy, for they had never sinned: they understood nothing of his grace, for they had not been guilty; but being pure in heart they gazed on the Lord with opened eye and adored his holiness. Their whole souls were filled with the contemplation of that one all-embracing attribute; and in responsive song they said each one to his fellow, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." They emphasized their words by repeating them three times; and perhaps they alluded also to the Trinity in Unity as they cried, "Holy, holy, holy." This is the supreme glory of Christ, that in him is seen the holiness of God. Oh

my friends, let us be like these seraphim, ravished with the holiness of the atonement, awe-struck with the justice of God in the great sacrifice. Reflect with reverence that God when he willed to save his elect would not commit a breach upon his laws; though he would redeem them from going down into the pit, yet he would not violate his word, nor change that most righteous penalty of death, which is the due desert of sin. Rather than stain his holiness he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. Consider the great love of holiness which must have been in the heart of the Father, that he would give up his Son to bleed sooner than his law should be dishonoured; and think of the great holiness of Christ, that he would rather give his back to the smiters and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair, yea, rather stretch out his hands to the nails and expire forsaken of his God, than suffer sin to go unpunished. God would not even for mercy's sake issue an unjust pardon to the souls he loved.

As I stand here this morning I also have visions of God, and the cross seems to me transformed into a burning throne, whereon justice is high and lifted up to the uttermost, as I see God himself in Christ Jesus bowing his head to death, that he might be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth. Around that cross I see troops of angels gathering, and I hear one crying unto another and saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah Jesus, the great sacrifice for sin." Do you not unite in their reverent homage? If you do you will go forth and tell of pardon bought with blood, and of the atonement finished once for all. With hallowed confidence you will tell it out among the people that the holy Lord reigneth from the tree, until all creatures fall down and worship him that was slain, because his holiness was thereby revealed in noontday splendour.

This was not all that was revealed to the prophet; for he heard the seraphim say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; *the whole earth is full of his glory.*" Even when men rejected Christ, even when hearts were fat, and eyes were dim, and ears were heavy, even then the whole earth was full of the glory of Christ. When scientists tell us that they cannot see God, I am amazed. To me it is impossible not to see him. Though I cannot pry with the scalpel into the anatomy of the human frame, yet when I look upon the mere skin of the human countenance I see the handiwork of God. Though I cannot dig into the lower strata of the earth and disentomb the fossil and decipher its stone preserved memorial, yet to me rock, and clay, and sand, and relic of the past, bear the sure hieroglyph of God. Though I cannot inform you of all the interesting details of insect life, or descant upon the secrets of botany, yet to me bees bring honeyed thoughts of God, and flowers breathe the perfume of his love. Where is God? Say rather, Where is he not? Not with these grosser senses, but by higher faculties I see and hear my God; yea, he doth surround me, and my faith embraceth him. I am no fool for this; the best authority declares that he is the fool who saith in his heart "There is no God." Yes, the whole earth is full of the glory of Christ, and above the earth in every cloud it is seen, and above the cloud every star shines out concerning him. Alas, for the blind-eyes that cannot see that which is evidently set forth in every place. Alas for the ears which cannot hear when earth, and sea, and heaven, and hell, are all echoing to the tread of the Omnipotent Christ of God. Oh brethren, have you ever seen this vision, have you ever seen God's glory filling the whole earth? If so, you are prepared for the times that are and are to be times of gloom, and darkness, and sin, and blasphemy—and yet your heart does not tremble for the ark of the Lord.

When all this was seen of the prophet, he noted that *the posts of the doors moved*. If I am rightly informed, there were two huge columns before the temple called Jachin and Boaz. These were made with singular skill, and were the wonder of the age. They were of brass, cast by Solomon; but in the course of ages they had no doubt mellowed into bronze, and there they stood, two

tremendous erections, upbearing massive doors. We are told, I know not whether it be correct, that the gates that swung upon these columns required at least twenty men either to open or to shut them; but as the prophet saw that vision he noticed that these massive columns trembled, and thus did obeisance to the God who was within their gates. Our Revised Version reads it, "The foundations of the thresholds were moved." Even to its foundations the house trembled with solemn awe of the divine presence. Brethren, heaven, and earth, and hell, and all created things reflect the glory of the Lord, and thus adore him. Oh Lord Jesus, thou art worthy of all honour. "All the earth doth worship thee." If it was so with posts and doors, shall not our hearts rejoice with trembling? shall not our souls be moved in the presence of the Most High? and will we not fall down before the glorified Christ, as John did, who wrote, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead?" Everything is filled with awe in his majestic presence, save only man, the impious rebel who dares defy his God.

Then came the best part of the vision for Isaiah. At the glorious sight, he felt, "Woe is me, for I am undone, I am stricken dumb. I can never speak again, for my lips are unclean, and I dwell among an unclean people." Then, swift as lightning flew a seraph, bringing a coal more burning than himself from off the altar of sacrifice, wherewith he touched the prophet's lip. Beloved, this is what *we* need. We need to feel the atonement laid home to us, to feel the power of the great sacrifice of Christ, to hear a voice saying within our spirit, "Thine iniquity is put away, and thy sin is purged." Though that live coal must have blistered the lip which it covered, yet it made it eloquent. Common fire would destroy the organs of speech, but the fire of sacrifice does not so, but it unlooses a grateful tongue, and helps a grateful heart to tell the love immense, unsearchable, which offered itself upon the altar of sacrifice, that holiness and love might save the sinner. Our peace comes from the Holy, Holy, Holy One, who is just, and yet forgives his people's sin. Brother, if you are to proclaim the glory of your Lord, you must feel the sacrificial coal applied to the place where your impurity is most seen, even to your lips; you must know that you are forgiven; for your conviction that you are clean before God will give you confidence in telling out to others the story of the cross. This is what Isaiah saw.

Listen for a minute to that further word that follows:—Isaiah when he saw his glory "*spake of him.*" He that hath seen this sight must speak.

He spake in deep humility. Never braver man than Isaiah, but never one who walked in lowlier reverence before his God. He never forgot to his dying day that "woe is me! for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Yet, observe that he spake with very willing obedience. "Here am I," he said, "send me." He offers himself to be God's mouth to the people, whatever the message may be. He seems to say, "Here am I in the entirety of my being, purchased to thee by thy great pardoning love; use me as thou wilt, and send me where thou wilt." He continued to report his Lord's message under constant rebuffs, and despite the ceaseless obduracy of Israel. Though he cried, "Who hath believed our report?" yet he continued that report. That chapter which begins with his complaint, has in it not only a continuation of the report, but a fuller version of it than he had ever given before. He was sad but resolute, grieved yet persevering, broken in heart, but not broken down in constancy. Brethren, it needs great grace to go upon a fruitless errand. One had need see the glory of the Lord to be enabled to fight a losing battle. I am sometimes afraid that I have to do this myself; but if it be so, it is not ours to bargain for success, but to yield implicit obedience. It is ours to abide faithful

to our commission, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Brethren, be it ours to serve the Lord gladly, and testify to what we have seen, even though no man should receive our witness.

But then it is said of Isaiah that he "spake of him," that is, of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all that Isaiah said he had an eye to Christ. It was all his business among men to speak of the glories of the coming Son of God. May the Lord give us such a sight of Christ in his glory that from this day forth we shall be absorbed in glorifying him. May our life be a perpetual ministry concerning Christ. Remember that word concerning John the Baptist, "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true." If we can do no miracle and achieve no success, let us at least cry without ceasing. "Behold the Lamb of God." Though *we* decrease, it matters not so long as he doth increase; we are glad to disappear, as the morning star is lost at the rising of the sun. It is our delight to imitate the seraphim, and with veiled face and covered feet to attend about the throne of Jehovah Jesus our Lord.

II. I now ask your kind attention to the second part of my subject, which is a very painful one, CONCERNING THE NATION TO WHICH ISAIAH SPAKE. Their terrible sin lay in this, that they were willingly blinded by the light which ought to have been to them a help to see Christ, and they were hardened by those very truths which ought to have melted them. They became more and more adverse to Christ through beholding in him such a character as ought to have won their hearts. To the prophet's teaching they were entirely dead. A specimen of this we find in the succeeding chapters of Isaiah. Israel and Syria attacked Ahaz, whose reign followed those of Uzziah and Jotham. The prophet came and said to Ahaz, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands." Ahaz was assured that God would help him if he would but trust in him; but instead of doing so, the king determined to petition for the help of the great king of Assyria, with the result in the long run that "the king of Assyria came unto him and distressed him, but helped him not." Isaiah, to confirm his message, bade the king choose any sign either in the depth or in the height above; but the infidel king replied, "I will not ask, neither will I test Jehovah." He had so defiantly cast off allegiance to the true God that he would not even accept a sign, though it was left to his own choice. Thus Isaiah's message was rejected though put in the most winning form, for the hearts of the people were blinded and hardened so as to choose the way of destruction. Ultimately, as you know, the Assyrians carried the whole people away; for they had rejected God's message willfully, and wrath came upon them. What a grievous task to be called to preach to such a people!

They went on from bad to worse as a nation; they turned aside grievously, but not in heart, so that when Christ came they were unable to discern him, for had they known him they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This blindness was in part a punishment for their long rebellion. If men willfully shut their eyes, do you wonder that they become blind? If men will not hear, do you wonder that they grow deaf? He that perverts truth shall soon be incapable of knowing the true from the false. If you persist in wearing glasses that distort, everything will be distorted to you.

"Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies!

He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies."

But although this blindness was a punishment for former sin, it was itself a sin. They willfully rejected the testimony of God against themselves; they refused the self-evident Christ who would so greatly have blessed them. This wilful rejection was carried out so effectually that it became impossible to convert and heal them; they could not be instructed, or reformed, and therefore they were given over to destruction. Nothing remained but to allow the Romans to burn the temple and

plough the site of the city. It was a dreadful thing that they should deliberately choose destruction, and obstinately involve themselves in the most tremendous of woes. Poor Israel, we pity thee! It was sad indeed to fall from so great a height! Yet we are bound to admit that God dealt with thee justly, for thou didst choose thine own delusions. The Lord cries, "Oh that my people had harkened unto me." Our Saviour weeps and cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

What I have to say this morning is this—that I am growingly fearful lest our own country should furnish a parallel to all this. Read the story of England, beginning where you will, and see how gracious God has been to us. Note well our great deliverances, from the destruction of the Spanish Armada to the overthrow of Napoleon. Do not forget how often this little country has been made victorious in wars against great peoples, who thought to swallow her up. Then reflect how God sent the light to us; how the gospel spread all over England, and how it has in many ways been rejected. How often since the days of Cromwell Rome has been allowed to dim the light of our Protestantism, and how it labours to do so still! See how this people have received the truth of heaven, but again and again have proved false to it, turning at one time to superstition and at another time to infidelity. At this moment we are rich, and despite depression in business, we are less tried by it than any other nation. And what comes of all this mercy but increased sin? Why, at this moment we have sin rampant among us almost beyond precedent. Think how the poor are oppressed and ground down with awful poverty in many parts of this great city. Shall not God avenge the cry of starving women? Worse still, if worse can be: those who dare walk our streets after sundown tell us that Sodom, in its most putrid days, could scarce exceed this metropolis for open vice. To our infinite disgust and horror, the names of certain of the greatest in the land are at this hour openly mentioned in connection with the filthiest debauchery. This is not the place for details, nor can I mention the matter, or even think of it without feeling my very soul on fire. Faithfulness requires plain speech; but it is a hideous evil that the dregs of vice should be the chosen luxury of certain of our hereditary legislators and rulers. Woe unto thee, Oh land, when thy great ones love the harlot's house! Deep is our shame when we know that our judges are not clear in this matter, but social purity has been put to the blush by magistrates of no mean degree; yea, it is said that the courts of justice have lent themselves to the covering and hushing up of the iniquities of the great. Shall not God be grieved by such a nation as this? He who has read a certain story, which is but too-well known, must have felt his ears tingle and his heart tremble. What is coming over us? What horrible clouds are darkening our skies? There were judges once who would not have suffered the laws to be trampled on by the great, but would have dealt out equal justice to rich and poor: I cannot persuade myself that it will be otherwise now, and yet I fear the worst. O God, have mercy upon the land whose judgment-seats and palaces are defiled with vice.

This is not all: a general indifference to all religion is creeping over the country; at least over this vast metropolis. Ask those who visit from door to door among our crowded populations, and they will tell you that never before in their life-time were there so few persons attendant upon the means of grace. Street after street of this city scarcely possesses more than one regular attendant upon the preaching of the word. The Sabbath is no longer a day of worship with millions. What continual efforts are made to rob us of the Sabbath-day; to degrade it into a common work-day, and to make a slave of the working-man. To-day the revelation of God is treated with indifference, or talked of as if it deserved no reverence or credit. Unbelief has sapped the foundations of the

social fabric. Worst of all,—I must not hold back the charge, many of the avowed ministers of Christ are no ministers of faith at all, but promoters of unbelief. The modern pulpit has taught men to be infidels. What truth is there which has not been doubted by divines, questioned by doctors of divinity, and at length been denounced by the priests of "modern thought?" Nothing remains upon which a certain school of preachers have not spit their scepticism. The experience of the unbelief of Germany is being repeated here. Among those who are ordained to be the preachers of the gospel of Christ, there are many who preach not faith but doubt, and hence they are servants of the devil rather than of the Lord. Think not that I am aiming at the Church of England. With all my objection to a state-church, I am not so unjust as to conceal my belief, that I see in the Episcopal Church at this time less of unbelief than among certain Dissenters: in fact, Nonconformity in certain quarters is eaten through and through with a covert Unitarianism, less tolerable than Unitarianism itself. So frequently are the fundamental doctrines of the gospel assailed, that it becomes needful, before you cross the threshold of many a chapel, to ask the question, "Shall I hear the gospel here to-day, or shall I come out hardly knowing whether the Bible is inspired or not? Shall I not be made to doubt the atonement, the work of the Holy Ghost, the immortality of the soul, the punishment of the wicked, or the deity of Christ?"

I know I shall stir a hornet's nest by these honest rebukes but I cannot help it. I am burdened and distressed with the state of religion; a pest is in the air; no truth is safe from its withering infection. No signs can be more alarming than the growing infidelity and worldliness which I see among those who call themselves Christians. Does this nation really intend to cast off the fear of God and the doctrines of Holy Scripture to follow the vain imaginings of the sophists and the fashionable follies of the great? Are we to see again unbelief and luxurious sin walking hand in hand? If so, there be some of us who mean to take up our sorrowful parable, and speak as plainly as we can for truth and holiness, whether we offend or please. Be it ours still to thunder out the law of God, and proclaim with trumpet clearness the gospel of Jesus, not bating one jot of firm belief in the revelation of God, nor winking at sin, nor toning down truth, even though we fear that the only result will be to make this people's hearts gross, and their ears heavy, and their eyes blind. If it must be so, my soul shall weep in secret; but still, Oh Lord, here am I, send me. Be of good courage, Oh my heart, for the faithful have not ceased from among men; other voices will cry aloud and spare not, if haply our land may be purged of its present defilement.

Hearken yet again while I press this subject personally home to you. Has not this word a personal bearing upon some of you? Certain of you have heard the gospel preached plainly and honestly, and yet you have never received it: is there not creeping over you a fatal indifference? Are not your hearts turning to stone? Possibly you are professors of religion, and yet you do not feel the power of it; what does this mean? If you are not a praying people, nor a holy people, and yet you are a professing people, what an awful doom awaits you! Shall my ministry be a savour of death unto you? It may be that my voice grows stale to you, and what I say seems common-place: but is this to be the reason for your refusing Christ and his salvation, refusing the power of his word, refusing holiness which we would work in you? Oh, shall it be so? Will you die? Dear hearers, I should not like to meet one of you at that day of judgment and have to feel that I preached you into a greater blindness than you might have known. Oh, be converted! Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? May God in infinite mercy speak to you that you may believe in Jesus now, lest that should come upon you which is spoken of by the prophet, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!"

Ere I have done, hear the sweet whisper which closes the sixth of Isaiah. Notwithstanding all the terrible work that Isaiah had to do he was not left without comfort; the Lord said to him, "In it there shall be a tenth." You know how the prophet cried, "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a seed we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah." The Lord has his sacred tithe and these he will not lose. The tree has lost its leaves, for it is winter time; but still it is alive, and the sap will flow again, for its substance is in it! The tree is leveled by the axe; but weep not despairing tears, for it shall sprout again, for life is still in it. Even so the Church must live; truth must be victorious; purity must conquer, the Christ must reign. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. Reject Christ if you will to-day, Oh ye who think yourselves so exceeding wise, but there is a people who love him, a secret people who cling to him; and when he comes, as come he must ere long, they will welcome him and partake in his glory. As for you that refuse him this day, how will you stand when he appeareth? Whither will you flee? You shall ask the hills to cover you, but they will refuse. You shall bid the mountains hide you, but they will not yield a cavern for your shelter. Be wise now, therefore, and no more resist your Lord. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" May you and I and all of us be of that blessed number. Amen and Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—John 12:37-50.

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—93, 12, 518.

Coming Judgment of the Secrets of Men

A Sermon

(No. 1849)

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, July 12th, 1885, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."—Romans 2:16.

IT IS impossible for any of us to tell what it cost the apostle Paul to write the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. It is a shame even to speak of the things which are done of the vicious in secret places; but Paul felt it was necessary to break through his shame, and to speak out concerning the hideous vices of the heathen. He has left on record an exposure of the sins of his day which crimson the cheek of the modest when they read it, and makes both the ears of him that heareth it to tingle. Paul knew that this chapter would be read, not in his age alone, but in all ages, and that it would go into the households of the most pure and godly as long as the world should stand; and yet he deliberately wrote it, and wrote it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He knew that it must be written to put to shame the abominations of an age which was almost past shame. Monsters that revel in darkness must be dragged into the open, that they may be withered up by the light. After Paul has thus written in anguish he bethought himself of his chief comfort. While his pen was black with the words he had written in the first chapter, he was driven to write of his great delight. He clings to the gospel with a greater tenacity than ever. As in the verse before us he needed to mention the gospel, he did not speak of it as "the gospel," but as "*my gospel*." "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to *my gospel*." He felt he could not live in the midst of so depraved a people without holding the gospel with both hands, and grasping it as his very own. "*My gospel*," saith he. Not that Paul was the author of it, not that Paul had an exclusive monopoly of its blessings, but that he had so received it from Christ himself, and regarded himself as so responsibly put in trust with it, that he could not disown it even for a instant. So fully had he taken it into himself that he could not do less than call it "my gospel." In another place he speaks of "our gospel;" thus using a possessive pronoun, to show how believers identify themselves with the truth which they preach. He had a gospel, a definite form of truth, and he believed in it beyond all doubt; and therefore he spoke of it as "my gospel." Herein we hear the voice of faith, which seems to say, "Though others reject it, I am sure of it, and allow no shade of mistrust to darken my mind. To me it is glad tidings of great joy: I hail it as 'my gospel.' If I be called a fool for holding it, I am content to be a fool, and to find all my wisdom in my Lord."

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

Is not this word "my gospel" the voice of love? Does he not by this word embrace the gospel as the only love of his soul—for the sake of which he had suffered the loss of all things, and did count them but dung—for the sake of which he was willing to stand before Nero, and proclaim, even in Caesar's palace, the message from heaven? Though each word should cost him a life, he

was willing to die a thousand deaths for the holy cause. "My gospel," saith he, with a rapture of delight, as he presses to his bosom the sacred deposit of truth.

"My gospel." Does not this show his courage? As much as to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He says, "my gospel," as a soldier speaks of "my colours," or of "my king." He resolves to bear this banner to victory, and to serve this royal truth even to the death.

"My gospel." There is a touch of discrimination about the expression. Paul perceives that there are other gospels, and he makes short work with them, for he saith, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let me be accused." The apostle was of a gentle spirit; he prayed heartily for the Jews who persecuted him, and yielded his life for the conversion of the Gentiles who maltreated him; but he had no tolerance for false gospellers. He exhibited great breadth of mind, and to save souls he became all things to all men; but when he contemplated any alteration or adulteration of the gospel of Christ, he thundered and lightened without measure. When he feared that something else might spring up among the philosophers, or among the Judaizers, that should hide a single beam of the glorious Sun of Righteousness, he used no measured language; but cried concerning the author of such a darkening influence, "Let him be accursed." Every heart that would see men blessed whispers an "Amen" to the apostolic malediction. No greater curse can come upon mankind than the obscuration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul saith of himself and his true brethren, "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God;" and he cries to those who turned aside from the one and only gospel, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" Of all new doctrines he speaks as of "another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you."

As for myself, looking at the matter afresh, amidst all the filthiness which I see in the world at this day, I lay hold upon the pure and blessed Word of God, and call it all the more earnestly, my gospel,—mine in life and mine in death, mine against all comers, mine for ever, God helping me: with emphasis—"my gospel."

Now let us notice what it was that brought up this expression, "My gospel." What was Paul preaching about? Certainly not upon any of the gentle and tender themes, which we are told nowadays ought to occupy all our time; but he is speaking of the terrors of the law, and in that connection he speaks of "my gospel."

Let us come at once to our text. It will need no dividing, for it divides itself. First, let us consider *that on a certain day God shall judge mankind*; secondly, on that day *God will judge the secrets of men*; thirdly, when he judges the secrets of men, *it will be by Jesus Christ*; and fourthly, *this is according to gospel*.

I. We begin with the solemn truth, that ON A CERTAIN DAY GOD WILL JUDGE MEN. A judgment is going on daily. God is continually holding court, and considering the doings of the sons of men. Every evil deed that they do is recorded in the register of doom, and each good action is remembered and laid up in store by God. That judgment is reflected in a measure in the consciences of men. Those who know the gospel, and those who know it not, alike, have a certain measure of light, by which they know right from wrong; their consciences all the while accusing or else excusing them. This session of the heavenly court continues from day to day, like that of our local magistrates; but this does not prevent but rather necessitates the holding of an ultimate great assize.

As each man passes into another world, there is an immediate judgment passed upon him; but this is only the foreshadowing of that which will take place in the end of the world.

There is a judgment also passing upon nations, for as nations will not exist as nations in another world, they have to be judged and punished in this present state. The thoughtful reader of history will not fail to observe, how sternly this justice had dealt with empire after empire, when they have become corrupt. Colossal dominions have withered to the ground, when sentenced by the King of kings. Go ye and ask to-day, "Where is the empire of Assyria? Where are the mighty cities of Babylon? Where are the glories of the Medes and Persians? What has become of the Macedonian power? Where are the Caesars and their palaces?" These empires were forces established by cruelty, and used for oppression; they fostered luxury and licentiousness, and when they were no longer tolerable, the earth was purged from their polluting existence. Ah me! what horrors of war, bloodshed, and devastation, have come upon men as the result of their iniquities! The world is full of the monuments, both of the mercy and the justice of God: in fact the monuments of his justice, if rightly viewed, are proofs of his goodness; for it is mercy on the part of God to put an end to evil systems when, like a nightmare, they weigh heavily upon the bosom of mankind. The omnipotent Judge has not ceased from his sovereign rule over kingdoms, and our own country may yet have to feel his chastisements. We have often laughed among ourselves at the idea of the New Zealander sitting on the broken arch of London Bridge amid the ruins of this metropolis. But is it quite so ridiculous as it looks? It is more than possible it will be realized if our iniquities continue to abound. What is there about London that it should be more enduring than Rome? Why should the palaces of *our* monarches be eternal if the palaces of Koyunjik have fallen? The almost boundless power of the Pharaohs has passed away, and Egypt has become the meanest of nations; why should not England come under like condemnation? What are we? What is there about our boastful race, whether on this side of the Atlantic or the other, that we should monopolize the favour of God? If we rebel, and sin against him, he will not hold us guiltless, but will deal out impartial justice to an ungrateful race.

Still, though such judgments proceed every day, yet there is to be a day, a period of time, in which, in a more distinct, formal, public, and final manner, God will judge the sons of men. We might have guessed this by the light of nature and of reason. Even heathen peoples have had a dim notion of a day of doom; but we are not left to guess it, we are solemnly assured of it in the Holy Scripture. Accepting this Book as the revelation of God, we know beyond all doubt that a day is appointed in which the Lord will judge the secrets of men.

By judging is here meant all that concerns the proceedings of trial and award. God will judge the race of men; that is to say, first, there will be a session of majesty, and the appearing of a great white throne, surrounded with pomp of angels and glorified beings. Then a summons will be issued, bidding all men come to judgment, to give in their final account. The heralds will fly through the realms of death, and summon those who sleep in the dust: for the quick and the dead shall all appear before that judgment-seat. John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;" and he adds, "The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." Those that have been so long buried that their dust is mingled with the soil, and has undergone a thousand transmutations, shall nevertheless be made to put in a personal appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ. What an issue will that be! You and I and all the myriad myriads of our race shall be gathered before the throne of the Son of God. Then, when all are gathered, the indictment will be read, and each one will be examined concerning things done in the body, according to that he hath done. Then the books shall be opened, and everything recorded there shall be read before the face of heaven. Every sinner shall then hear the story of his life published to his everlasting

shame. The good shall ask no concealment, and the evil shall find none. Angels and men shall then see the truth of things, and the saints shall judge the world. Then the great Judge himself shall give the decision: he shall pronounce sentence upon the wicked, and execute their punishment. No partiality shall there be seen; there shall be no private conferences to secure immunity for nobles, no hushing up of matters, that great men may escape contempt for their crimes. All men shall stand before the one great judgment-bar; evidence shall be given concerning them all, and a righteous sentence shall go forth from his mouth who knows not how to flatter the great.

This will be so, and it ought to be so: God should judge the world, because he is the universal ruler and sovereign. There has been a day for sinning, there ought to be a day for punishing; a long age of rebellion has been endured, and there must be a time when justice shall assert her supremacy. We have seen an age in which reformation has been commanded, in which mercy has been presented, in which expostulation and entreaty have been used, and there ought at last to come a day in which God shall judge both the quick and the dead, and measure out to each the final result of life. It ought to be so for the sake of the righteous. They have been slandered; they have been despised and ridiculed; worse than that, they have been imprisoned and beaten, and put to death times without number: the best have had the worst of it, and there ought to be a judgment to set these things right. Besides the festering iniquities of each age cry out to God that he should deal with them. Shall such sin go unpunished? To what end is there a moral government at all, and how is its continuance to be secured, if there be not rewards and punishments and a day of account? For the display of his holiness, for the overwhelming of his adversaries, for the rewarding of those who have faithfully served him, there must be and shall be a day in which God will judge the world.

Why doth it not come at once? And when will it come? The precise day we cannot tell. Man nor angel knoweth that day, and it is idle and profane to guess at it, since even the Son of man, as such, knoweth not the time. It is sufficient for us that the Judgment Day will surely come; sufficient also to believe that it is postponed on purpose to give breathing time for mercy, and space for repentance. Why should the ungodly want to know when that day will come? What is that day to you? To you it should be darkness, and not light. It shall be your day of consuming as stubble fully dry: therefore bless the Lord that he delayeth his coming, and reckon that his longsuffering is for your salvation.

Moreover, the Lord keeps the scaffold standing till he hath built up the fabric of his church. Not yet are the elect all called out from among the guilty sons of men; not yet are all the redeemed with blood redeemed with power and brought forth out of the corruption of the age into the holiness in which they walk with God. Therefore the Lord waiteth for a while. But do not deceive yourselves. The great day of his wrath cometh on apace, and your days of reprieve are numbered. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Ye shall die, perhaps, before the appearing of the Son of man: but ye shall see his judgment-seat for all that, for ye shall rise again as surely as he rose. When the apostle addressed the Grecian sages at Athens he said, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." See ye not, O ye impenitent ones, that a risen Saviour is the sign of your doom. As God hath raised Jesus from the dead, so shall he raise your bodies, that in these you may come to judgment. Before the judgment-seat shall every man and woman in this house give an account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. Thus saith the Lord.

II. Now I call your attention to the fact that "GOD WILL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN." This will happen to all men, of every nation, of every age, of every rank, and of every character. The Judge will, of course, judge their outward acts, but these may be said to have gone before them to judgment: their secret acts are specially mentioned, because these will make judgment to be the more searching.

By "secrets of men," the Scripture means those secret crimes which hide themselves away by their own infamy, which are too vile to be spoken of, which cause a shudder to go through a nation if they be but dragged, as they ought to be, into the daylight. Secret offences shall be brought into judgment; the deeds of the night and of the closed room, the acts which require the finger to be laid upon the lip, and a conspiracy of silence to be sworn. Revolting and shameless sins which must never be mentioned lest the man who committed them should be excluded from his fellows as an outcast, abhorred even of other sinners—all those shall be revealed. All that you have done, any of you, or are doing, if you are bearing the Christian name and yet practising secret sin, shall be laid bare before the universal gaze. If you sit here amongst the people of God, and yet where no eye sees you, if you are living in dishonesty, untruthfulness, or uncleanness, it shall all be known, and shame and confusion of face shall eternally cover you. Contempt shall be the inheritance to which you shall awake, when hypocrisy shall be no more possible. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; but he will bring the secrets of men into judgment.

Specially our text refers to the hidden motives of every action; for a man may do that which is right from a wrong motive, and so the deed may be evil in the sight of God, though it seem right in the sight of men. Oh, think what it will be to have your motives all brought to light, to have it proven that you were godly for the sake of gain, that you were generous out of ostentation, or zealous for love of praise, that you were careful in public to maintain a religious reputation, but that all the while everything was done for self, and self only! What a strong light will that be which God shall turn upon our lives, when the darkest chambers of human desire and motive shall be as manifest as public acts! What a revelation will that be which makes manifest all thoughts, and imaginings, and lustings, and desires! All angers, and envies, and prides, and rebellions of the heart—what a disclosure will these make!

All the sensual desires and imaginings of even the best-regulated, what a foulness will these appear! What a day it will be, when the secrets of men shall be set in the full blaze of noon!

God will also reveal secrets, that were secrets even to the sinners themselves, for there is sin in us which we have never seen, and iniquity in us which we have never yet discovered.

We have managed for our own comfort's sake to blind our eyes somewhat, and we take care to avert our gaze from things which it is inconvenient to see; but we shall be compelled to see all these evils in that day, when the Lord shall judge the secrets of men. I do not wonder that when a certain Rabbi read in the book of Ecclesiastes that God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, he wept. It is enough to make the best men tremble. Were it not for thee, O Jesus, whose precious blood hath cleansed us from all sin, where should we be! Were it not for thy righteousness, which shall cover those who believe in thee, who among us could endure the thought of that tremendous day? In thee, O Jesus, we are made righteous, and therefore we fear not the trial-hour; but were it not for thee our hearts would fail us for fear!

Now if you ask me why God should judge, especially the secrets of men—since this is not done in human courts, and cannot be, for secret things of this kind come not under cognizance of our short-sighted tribunals—I answer it is because there is really nothing secret from God. We make

a difference between secret and public sins, but he doth not; for all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. All deeds are done in the immediate presence of God, who is personally present everywhere. He knows and sees all things as one upon the spot, and every secret sin is but conceived to be secret through the deluded fantasy of our ignorance. God sees more of a secret sin than a man can see of that which is done before his face. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord."

The secrets of men will be judged because often the greatest of moral acts are done in secret. The brightest deeds that God delights in are those that are done by his servants when they have shut the door and are alone with him; when they have no motive but to please him; when they studiously avoid publicity, lest they should be turned aside by the praise of men; when the right hand knoweth not what the left hand doeth, and the loving, generous heart deviseth liberal things, and doeth it behind the screen, so that it should never be discovered how the deed was done. It were a pity that such deeds should be left out at the great audit. Thus, too, secret vices are also of the very blackest kind, and to exempt them were to let the worst of sinners go unpunished. Shall it be that these polluted things shall escape because they have purchased silence with their wealth? I say solemnly "God forbid." He does forbid it: what they have done in secret, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

Besides, the secret things of men enter into the very essence of their actions. An action is, after all, good or bad very much according to its motive. It may seem good, but the motive may taint it; and so, if God did not judge the secret part of the action he would not judge righteously. He will weigh our actions, and detect the design which led to them, and the spirit which prompted them.

Is it not certainly true that the secret thing is the best evidence of the man's condition? Many a man will not do in public that which would bring him shame; not because he is black-hearted enough for it, but because he is too much of a coward. That which a man does when he thinks that he is entirely by himself is the best revelation of the man. That which thou wilt not do because it would be told of thee if thou didst ill, is a poor index of thy real character. That which thou wilt do because thou wilt be praised for doing well, is an equally faint test of thy heart. Such virtue is mere self-seeking, or mean-spirited subservience to thy fellow-man; but that which thou doest out of respect to no authority but thine own conscience and thy God; that which thou doest unobserved, without regard to what man will say concerning it—that it is which reveals thee, and discovers thy real soul. Hence God lays a special stress and emphasis upon the fact that he will in that day judge "the secrets" of men by Jesus Christ.

Oh, friends, if it does not make you tremble to think of these things, it ought to do so. I feel the deep responsibility of preaching upon such matters, and I pray God of his infinite mercy to apply these truths to our hearts, that they may be forceful upon our lives. These truths ought to startle us, but I am afraid we hear them with small result; we have grown familiar with them, and they do not penetrate us as they should. We have to deal, brethren, with an omniscient God; with One who once knowing never forgets; with One to whom all things are always present; with One will conceal nothing out of fear, or favour of any man's person; with One who will shortly bring the splendour of his omniscience and the impartiality of his justice to bear upon all human lives. God help us, where'er we rove and where'er we rest, to remember that each thought, word, and act of each moment lies in that fierce light which beats upon all things from the throne of God.

III. Another solemn revelation of our text lies in this fact, that "GOD WILL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN BY JESUS CHRIST." He that will sit upon the throne as the Vice-regent of

God, and as a Judge, acting for God, will be Jesus Christ. What a name for a Judge! The Saviour-Anointed—Jesus Christ: he is to be the judge of all mankind. Our Redeemer will be the Umpire of our destiny.

This will be, I doubt not, first for the display of his glory. What a difference there will be then between the babe of Bethlehem's manger, hunted by Herod, carried down by night into Egypt for shelter, and the King of kings and Lord of lords, before whom every knee must bow! What a difference between the weary man and full of woes, and he that shall then be girt with glory, sitting on a throne encircled with a rainbow! From the derision of men to the throne of universal judgment, what an ascent! I am unable to convey to you my own heart's sense of the contrast between the "despised and rejected of men," and the universally-acknowledged Lord, before whom Caesars and pontiffs shall bow into the dust. He who was judged at Pilate's bar, shall summon all to his bar. What a change from the shame and spitting, from the nails and the wounds, the mockery and the thirst, and the dying anguish, to the glory in which he shall come whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and out of whose mouth there goeth a two-edged sword! He shall judge the nations, even he whom the nations abhorred. He shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel, even those who cast him out as unworthy to live among them. Oh, how we ought to bow before him now as he reveals himself in his tender sympathy, and in his generous humiliation! Let us kiss the Son lest he be angry; let us yield to his grace, that we may not be crushed by his wrath. Ye sinners, bow before those pierced feet, which else will tread you like clusters in the wine-press. Look ye up to him with weeping, and confess your forgetfulness of him, and put your trust in him; lest he look down on you in indignation. Oh, remember that he will one day say, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." The holding of the judgment by the Lord Jesus will greatly enhance his glory. It will finally settle one controversy which is still upheld by certain erroneous spirits: there will be no doubt about our Lord's deity in that day: there will be no question that this same Jesus who was crucified is both Lord and God. God himself shall judge, but he shall perform the judgment in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, truly man, but nevertheless most truly God. Being God he is divinely qualified to judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth.

If you ask again, Why is the Son of God chosen to be the final Judge? I could give as a further answer that he receives this high office not only as a reward for all his pains, and as a manifestation of his glory, but also because men have been under his mediatorial sway, and he is their Governor and King. At the present moment we are all under the sway of the Prince Immanuel, God with us: we have been placed by an act of divine clemency, not under the immediate government of an offended God, but under the reconciling rule of the Prince of Peace. "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." We are commanded to preach unto the people, and "to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." (Acts 10:42) Jesus is our Lord and King, and it is meet that he should conclude his mediatorial sovereignty by rewarding his subjects to their deeds.

But I have somewhat to say unto you which ought to reach your hearts, even if other thoughts have not done so. I think that God hath chosen Christ, the man Christ Jesus, to judge the world that there may never be a cavil raised concerning that judgment. Men shall not be able to say—We were judged by a superior being who did not know our weaknesses and temptations, and therefore he judged us harshly, and without a generous consideration of our condition. No, God shall judge the

secrets of men by Jesus Christ, who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He is our brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, partaker of our humanity, and therefore understands and knows what is in men. He has shown himself to be skilful in all the surgery of mercy throughout the ages, and at last he will be found equally skilful in dissecting motives and revealing the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nobody shall ever be able to look back on that august tribunal and say that he who sat upon it was too stern, because he knew nothing of human weakness. It will be the loving Christ, whose tears, and bloody sweat, and gaping wounds, attest his brotherhood with mankind; and it will be clear to all intelligences that however dread his sentences, he could not be unmerciful. God shall judge us by Jesus Christ, that the judgment may be indisputable.

But harken well—for I speak with a great weight upon my soul—this judgment by Jesus Christ, puts beyond possibility all hope of any after-interposition. If the Saviour condemns, and such a Saviour, who can plead for us? The owner of the vineyard was about to cut down the barren tree, when the dresser of the vineyard pleaded, "Let it alone this year also;" but what can come of that tree when that vinedresser himself shall say to the master, "It must fall; I myself must cut it down!" If your Saviour shall become your judge you will be judged indeed. If *he* shall say, "Depart, ye cursed," who can call you back? If he that bled to save men at last comes to this conclusion, that there is no more to be done, but they must be driven from his presence, then farewell hope. To the guilty the judgment will indeed be a

"Great day of dread, decision, and despair."

An infinite horror shall seize upon their spirits as the words of the loving Christ shall freeze their very marrow, and fix them in the ice of eternal despair. There is, to my mind, a climax of solemnity in the fact that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

Does not this also show how certain the sentence will be? for this Christ of God is too much in earnest to play with men. If he says, "Come, ye blessed," he will not fail to bring them to their inheritance. If he be driven to say, "Depart, ye cursed," he will see it done, and into the everlasting punishment they must go. Even when it cost him his life he did not draw back from doing the will of his Father, nor will he shrink in that day when he shall pronounce the sentence of doom. Oh, how evil must sin be since it constrains the tender Saviour to pronounce sentence of eternal woe! I am sure that many of us have been driven of late to an increased hatred of sin; our souls have recoiled within us because of the wickedness among which we dwell; it has made us feel as if we would fain borrow the Almighty's thunderbolts with which to smite iniquity. Such haste on our part may not be seemly, since it implies a complaint against divine long-suffering; but Christ's dealing with evil will be calm and dispassionate, and all the more crushing. Jesus, with his pierced hand, that bears the attestation of his supreme love to men, shall wave the impenitent away; and those lips which bade the weary rest in him shall solemnly say to the wicked, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." To be trampled beneath the foot which was nailed to the cross will be to be crushed indeed: yet so it is, God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

It seems to me as if God in this intended to give a display of the unity of all his perfections. In this same man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, you behold justice and love, mercy and righteousness, combined in equal measure. He turns to the right, and says, "Come, ye blessed," with infinite suavity; and with the same lip, as he glances to the left, he says, "Depart, ye cursed." Men will then see at one glance how love and righteousness are one, and how they meet in equal splendour in the person of the Well-beloved, whom God has therefore chosen to be Judge of quick and dead.

IV. I have done when you have borne with me a minute or two upon my next point, which is this: and ALL THIS IS ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL. That is to say, there is nothing in the gospel contrary to the solemn teaching. Men gather to us, to hear us preach of infinite mercy, and tell of the love that blots out sin; and our task is joyful when we are called to deliver such a message; but oh, sirs, remember that nothing in our message makes light of sin. The gospel offers you no opportunity of going on in sin, and escaping without punishment. Its own cry is, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Jesus has not come into the world to make sin less terrible. Nothing in the gospel excuses sin; nothing in it affords toleration for lust or anger, or dishonesty, or falsehood. The gospel is as truly a two-edged sword against sin, as ever the law can be. There is grace for the man who quits his sin, but there is tribulation and wrath upon every man that doeth evil. "If ye turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." The gospel is all tenderness to the repenting, but all terror to the obstinate offender. It has pardon for the very chief of sinners, and mercy for the vilest of the vile, if they will forsake their sins; but it is according to our gospel that he that goeth on in his iniquity, shall be cast into hell, and he that believeth not shall be damned. With deep love to the souls of men, I bear witness to the truth that he who turns not with repentance and faith to Christ, shall go away into punishment as everlasting as the life of the righteous. This is according to our gospel: indeed, we had not needed such a gospel, if there had not been such a judgment. The background of the cross is the judgment-seat of Christ. We had not needed so great an atonement, so vast a sacrifice, if there had not been an exceeding sinfulness in sin, an exceeding justice in the judgment, and an exceeding terror in the sure rewards of transgression.

"According to my gospel," saith Paul; and he meant that the judgment is an essential part of the gospel creed. If I had to sum up the gospel I should have to tell you certain facts: Jesus, the Son of God, became man; he was born of the virgin Mary; lived a perfect life; was falsely accused of men; was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God; from whence he shall also come to judge the quick and the dead. This is one of the elementary truths of our gospel; we believe in the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the life everlasting.

The judgment is according to our gospel, and in times of righteous indignation its terrible significance seemeth a very gospel to the pure in heart. I mean this. I have read this and that concerning oppression, slavery, the treading down of the poor, and the shedding of blood, and I have rejoiced that there is a righteous Judge. I have read of secret wickednesses among the rich men of this city, and I have said within myself, "Thank God, there will be a judgment day." Thousands of men have been hanged for much less crimes than those which now disgrace gentlemen whose names are on the lips of rank and beauty. Ah me, how heavy is our heart as we think of it! It has come like a gospel to us that the Lord will be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:8) The secret wickedness of London cannot go on for ever. Even they that love men best, and most desire salvation for them, cannot but cry to God, "How long! How long! Great God, wilt thou for ever endure this?" God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, and we sigh and cry until it shall end the reign of wickedness, and give rest to the oppressed. Brethren, we must preach the coming of the Lord, and preach it somewhat more than we have done; because it is the driving power of the gospel. Too many have kept back these truths, and thus the bone has been taken out of the arm of the gospel. Its point has been broken; its edge has been blunted. The doctrine of judgment to come is the power by which men are to be aroused. There is another life; the Lord will

come a second time; judgment will arrive; the wrath of God will be revealed. Where this is not preached, I am bold to say the gospel is not preached. It is absolutely necessary to the preaching of the gospel of Christ that men be warned as to what will happen if they continue in their sins. Ho, ho, sir surgeon, you are too delicate to tell the man that he is ill! You hope to heal the sick without their knowing it. You therefore flatter them; and what happens? They laugh at you; they dance upon their own graves. At last they die! Your delicacy is cruelty; your flatteries are poisons; you are a murderer. Shall we keep men in a fool's paradise? Shall we lull them into soft slumbers from which they will awake in hell? Are we to become helpers of their damnation by our smooth speeches? In the name of God we will not. It becomes every true minister of Christ to cry aloud and spare not, for God hath set a day in which he will "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." As surely as Paul's gospel was true the judgment will come. Wherefore flee to Jesus this day, O sinners. O ye saints, come hide yourselves again beneath the crimson canopy of the atoning sacrifice, that you may be now ready to welcome your descending Lord and escort him to his judgment-seat. O my hearers, may God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—John 12:37-50.

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—93, 12, 518.

Immeasurable Love

A Sermon

(No. 1850)

Intended for reading on Lord's-Day, July 26th, 1885,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On the evening of June 7th, 1885

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

I WAS very greatly surprised the other day, in looking over the list of texts from which I have preached, to find that I have no record of ever having spoken from this verse. This is all the more singular, because I can truly say that it might be put in the forefront of all my volumes of discourses as the sole topic of my life's ministry. It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. I heard lately of an aged minister of whom it was said, "Whatever his text, he never failed to set forth God as love, and Christ as the atonement for sin." I wish that much the same may be said of me. My heart's desire has been to sound forth as with a trumpet the good news that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We are about to meet around the communion table, and I cannot preach from this text anything but a simple gospel sermon. Can you desire a better preparation for communion? We have fellowship with God and with one another upon the basis of the infinite love which is displayed in Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel is the fair white linen cloth which covers the table on which the Communion Feast is set. The higher truths, those truths which belong to a more enlightened experience, those richer truths which tell of the fellowship of the higher life—all these are helpful to holy fellowship; but I am sure not more so than those elementary and foundation truths which were the means of our first entrance into the kingdom of God. Babes in Christ and men in Christ here feed upon one common food. Come, ye aged saints, be children again; and you that have long known your Lord, take up your first spelling-book, and go over your A B C again, by learning that God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to die, that man might live through him. I do not call you to an elementary lesson because you have forgotten your letters, but because it is a good thing to refresh the memory, and a blessed thing to feel young again. What the old folks used to call the Christ-cross Row contained nothing but the letters; and yet all the books in the language are made out of that line: therefore do I call you back to the cross, and to him who bled thereon. It is a good thing for us all to return at times to our starting place, and make sure that we are in the way everlasting. The love of our espousals is most likely to continue if we again and again begin where God began with us, and where we first began with God. It is wise to come to him afresh, as we came in that first day when, helpless, needy, heavy-laden, we stood weeping at the cross, and left our burden at the pierced feet. There we learned to look, and live, and love; and there would we repeat the lesson till we rehearse it perfectly in glory.

To-night, we have to talk about the love of God: "God so loved the world." That love of God is a very wonderful thing, especially when we see it set upon a lost, ruined, guilty world. What was there in the world that God should love it? There was nothing lovable in it. No fragrant flower grew in that arid desert. Enmity to him, hatred to his truth, disregard of his law, rebellion against his commandments; those were the thorns and briars which covered the waste land; but no desirable thing blossomed there. Yet, "God loved the world," says the text; "so" loved it, that even the writer of the book of John could not tell us how much; but so greatly, so divinely, did he love it that he gave his Son, his only Son, to redeem the world from perishing, and to gather out of it a people to his praise.

Whence came that love? Not from anything outside of God himself. God's love springs from himself. He loves because it is his nature to do so. "God is love." As I have said already, nothing upon the face of the earth could have merited his love, though there was much to merit his displeasure. This stream of love flows from its own secret source in the eternal Deity, and it owes nothing to any earth-born rain or rivulet; it springs from beneath the everlasting throne, and fills itself full from the springs of the infinite. God loved because he would love. When we enquire why the Lord loved this man or that, we have to come back to our Saviour's answer to the question, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." God has such love in his nature that he must needs let it flow forth to a world perishing by its own wilful sin; and when it flowed forth it was so deep, so wide, so strong, that even inspiration could not compute its measure, and therefore the Holy Spirit gave us that great little word SO, and left us to attempt the measurement, according as we perceive more and more of love divine.

Now, there happened to be an occasion upon which the great God could display his immeasurable love. The world had sadly gone astray; the world had lost itself; the world was tried and condemned; the world was given over to perish, because of its offenses; and there was need for help. The fall of Adam and the destruction of mankind made ample room and verge enough for love almighty. Amid the ruins of humanity there was space for showing how much Jehovah loved the sons of men; for the compass of his love was no less than the world, the object of it no less than to deliver men from going down to the pit, and the result of it no less than the finding of a ransom for them. The far-reaching purpose of that love was both negative and positive; that, believing in Jesus, men might not perish, but have eternal life. The desperate disease of man gave occasion for the introduction of that divine remedy which God alone could have devised and supplied. By the plan of mercy, and the great gift which was needed for carrying it out, the Lord found means to display his boundless love to guilty men. Had there been no fall, and no perishing, God might have shown his love to us as he does to the pure and perfect spirits that surround his throne; but he never could have commended his love to us to such an extent as he now does. In the gift of his only-begotten Son, God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The black background of sin makes the bright line of love shine out the more clearly. When the lightning writes the name of the Lord with flaming finger across the black brow of the tempest, we are compelled to see it; so when love inscribes the cross upon the jet tablet of our sin, even blind eyes must see that "herein is love."

I might handle my text in a thousand different ways to-night; but for simplicity's sake, and to keep to the one point of setting forth the love of God, I want to make you see how great that love is by five different particulars.

I. The first is the GIFT: "God so loved the world, that *he gave his only begotten Son.*" Consider, then, *what this gift* was that God gave. I should have to labour for expression if I were to attempt to set forth to the full this priceless boon; and I will not court a failure by attempting the impossible. I will only invite you to think of the sacred Person whom the Great Father gave in order that he might prove his love to men. It was his only-begotten Son—his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. None of us had ever such a son to give. Ours are the sons of men; his was the Son of God. The Father gave his other self, one with himself. When the great God gave his Son he gave God himself, for Jesus is not in his eternal nature less than God. When God gave God for us he gave himself. What more could he give? God gave his all: he gave himself. Who can measure this love?

Judge, ye fathers, how ye love your sons: could ye give them to die for your enemy? Judge, ye that have an only son, how your hearts are entwined about your first-born, your only-begotten. There was no higher proof of Abraham's love to God than when he did not withhold from God his son, his only son, his Isaac whom he loved; and there can certainly be no greater display of love than for the Eternal Father to give his only-begotten Son to die for us. No living thing will readily lose its offspring; man has peculiar grief when his son is taken; has not God yet more? A story has often been told of the fondness of parents for their children how in a famine in the East a father and mother were reduced to absolute starvation, and the only possibility of preserving the life of the family was to sell one of the children into slavery. So they considered it. The pinch of hunger became unbearable, and their children pleading for bread tugged so painfully at their heart-strings, that they must entertain the idea of selling one to save the lives of the rest. They had four sons. Who of these should be sold? It must not be the first: how could they spare their first-born? The second was so strangely like his father that he seemed a reproduction of him, and the mother said that she would never part with *him*. The third was so singularly like the mother that the father said he would sooner die than that this dear boy should go into bondage; and as for the fourth, he was their Benjamin, their last, their darling, and they could not part with *him*. They concluded that it were better for them all to die together than willingly to part with any one of their children. Do you not sympathize with them? I see you do. Yet God so loved us that, to put it very strongly, he seemed to love us better than his only Son, and did not spare him that he might spare us. He permitted his Son to perish from among men "that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

If you desire to see the love of God in this great procedure you must consider *how he gave his Son*. He did not give his Son, as you might do, to some profession in the pursuit of which you might still enjoy his company; but he gave his Son to exile among men. He sent him down to yonder manger, united with a perfect manhood, which at the first was in an infant's form. There he slept, where horned oxen fed! The Lord God sent the heir of all things to toil in a carpenter's shop: to drive the nail, and push the plane, and use the saw. He sent him down amongst scribes and Pharisees, whose cunning eyes watched him, and whose cruel tongues scourged him with base slanders. He sent him down to hunger, and thirst, amid poverty so dire that he had not where to lay his head. He sent him down to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, to the giving of his back to the smiters and his cheeks to those that plucked off the hair. At length he gave him up to death—a felon's death, the death of the crucified. Behold that cross and see the anguish of him that dies upon it, and mark how the Father has so given him, that he hides his face from him, and seems as if he would not own him! "Lama sabachthani" tells us how fully God gave his Son to ransom the souls of the sinful.

He gave him to be made a curse for us; gave him that he might die "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Dear sirs, I can understand your giving up your children to go to India on her Majesty's service, or to go out to the Cameroons or the Congo upon the errands of our Lord Jesus. I can well comprehend your yielding them up even with the fear of a pestilential climate before you, for if they die they will die honourably in a glorious cause; but could you think of parting with them to die a felon's death, upon a gibbet, execrated by those whom they sought to bless, stripped naked in body and deserted in mind? Would not that be too much? Would you not cry, "I cannot part with my son for such wretches as these. Why should he be put to a cruel death for such abominable beings, who even wash their hands in the blood of their best friend"? Remember that our Lord Jesus died what his countrymen considered to be an accursed death. To the Romans it was the death of a condemned slave, a death which had all the elements of pain, disgrace, and scorn mingled in it to the uttermost. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Oh, wondrous stretch of love, that Jesus Christ should die!

Yet, I cannot leave this point till I have you notice *when God gave his Son*, for there is love in the time. "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son." But when did he do that? In his eternal purpose he did this from before the foundation of the world. The words here used, "He gave his Only Begotten Son," cannot relate exclusively to the death of Christ, for Christ was not dead at the time of the utterance of this third chapter of John. Our Lord had just been speaking with Nicodemus, and that conversation took place at the beginning of his ministry. The fact is that Jesus was always the gift of God. The promise of Jesus was made in the garden of Eden almost as soon as Adam fell. On the spot where our ruin was accomplished, a Deliverer was bestowed whose heel should be bruised, but who should break the serpent's head beneath his foot.

Throughout the ages the great Father stood to his gift. He looked upon his Only Begotten as man's hope, the inheritance of the chosen seed, who in him would possess all things. Every sacrifice was God's renewal of his gift of grace, a reassurance that he had bestowed the gift, and would never draw back therefrom. The whole system of types under the law betokened that in the fulness of time the Lord would in very deed give up his Son, to be born of a woman, to bear the iniquities of his people, and to die the death in their behalf. I greatly admire this pertinacity of love; for many a man in a moment of generous excitement can perform a supreme act of benevolence, and yet could not bear to look at it calmly, and consider it from year to year; the slow fire of anticipation would have been unbearable. If the Lord should take away yonder dear boy from his mother, she would bear the blow with some measure of patience, heavy as it would be to her tender heart; but suppose that she were credibly informed that on such a day her boy must die, and thus had from year to year to look upon him as one dead, would it not cast a cloud over every hour of her future life? Suppose also that she knew that he would be hanged upon a tree to die, as one condemned; would it not embitter her existence? If she could withdraw from such a trial, would she not? Assuredly she would. Yet the Lord God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, doing it in his heart from age, to age. Herein is love: love which many waters could not quench: love eternal, inconceivable, infinite!

Now, as this gift refers not only to our Lord's death, but to the ages before it, so it includes also all the ages afterwards. God "so loved the world that he gave"—and still gives—"his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The Lord is giving Christ away to-night. Oh, that thousands of you may gladly accept the gift unspeakable! Will anyone

refuse? This good gift, this perfect gift,—can you decline it? Oh, that you may have faith to lay hold on Jesus, for thus he will be yours. He is God's free gift to all free receivers; a full Christ for empty sinners. If you can but hold out your empty willing hand, the Lord will give Christ to you at this moment. Nothing is freer than a gift. Nothing is more worth having than a gift which comes fresh from the hand of God, as full of effectual power as ever it was. The fountain is eternal, but the stream from it is as fresh as when first the fountain was opened. There is no exhausting this gift.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
 Shall never lose it power
 Till all the ransomed church of God
 Be saved to sin no more."

See, then, what is the love of God, that he gave his Son from of old, and has never revoked the gift. He stands to his gift, and continues still to give his dear Son to all who are willing to accept him. Out of the riches of his grace he has given, is giving, and will give the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the priceless gifts which are contained in him, to all needy sinners who will simply trust him.

I call upon you from this first point to admire the love of God, because of the transcendent greatness of his gift to the world, even the gift of his only begotten Son.

II. Now notice secondly, and, I think I may say, with equal admiration, the love of God in THE PLAN OF SALVATION. He has put it thus: "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The way of salvation is extremely simple to understand, and exceedingly easy to practise, when once the heart is made willing and obedient. The method of the covenant of grace differs as much from that of the covenant of works as light from darkness. It is not said that God has given his Son to all who will keep his law, for that we could not do, and therefore the gift would have been available to none of us. Nor is it said that he has given his Son to all that experience terrible despair and bitter remorse, for that is not felt by many who nevertheless are the Lord's own people. But the great God has given his own Son, that "whosoever believeth in him" should not perish. Faith, however slender, saves the soul. Trust in Christ is the certain way of eternal happiness.

Now, what is it to believe in Jesus? It is just this: it is to trust yourself with him. If your hearts are ready, though you have never believed in Jesus before, I trust you will believe in him now. O Holy Spirit graciously make it so.

What is it to believe in Jesus?

It is, first, to give your *firm and cordial assent to the truth*, that God did send his Son, born of a woman, to stand in the room and stead of guilty men, and that God did cause to meet on him the iniquities of us all, so that he bore the punishment due to our transgressions, being made a curse for us. We must heartily believe the Scripture which saith,—"the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes ye are healed." I ask for your assent to the grand doctrine of substitution, which is the marrow of the gospel. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to give a cordial assent to it at once; for wonderful as it is, it is a fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Oh that you may rejoice that this is true, and be thankful that such a blessed fact is revealed by God himself. Believe that the substitution of the Son of God is certain; cavil not at the plan, nor question its validity, or efficacy, as many do. Alas! they kick at God's great sacrifice, and count it a sorry invention. As for me, since God has ordained to save man by a substitutionary sacrifice, I joyfully agree to his method, and see no reason to do anything else but admire it and adore the Author of it. I joy and rejoice that such a plan should

have been thought of, whereby the justice of God is vindicated, and his mercy is set free to do all that he desires. Sin is punished in the person of the Christ, yet mercy is extended to the guilty. In Christ mercy is sustained by justice, and justice satisfied by an act of mercy. The worldly wise say hard things about this device of infinite wisdom; but as for me, I love the very name of the cross, and count it to be the centre of wisdom, the focus of love, the heart of righteousness. This is a main point of faith—to give a hearty assent to the giving of Jesus to suffer in our place and stead, to agree with all our soul and mind to this way of salvation.

The second thing is that you do *accept this for yourself*. In Adam's sin, you did not sin personally, for you were not then in existence; yet you fell; neither can you now complain thereof, for you have willingly endorsed and adopted Adam's sin by committing personal transgressions. You have laid your hand, as it were, upon Adam's sin, and made it your own, by committing personal and actual sin. Thus you perished by the sin of another, which you adopted and endorsed; and in like manner must you be saved by the righteousness of another, which you are to accept and appropriate. Jesus has offered an atonement, and that atonement becomes yours when you accept it by putting your trust in him. I want you now to say,

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While, like a penitent, I stand,
And here confess my sin."

Surely this is no very difficult matter. To say that Christ who hung upon the cross shall be my Christ, my surety, needs neither stretch of intellect, nor splendor of character; and yet it is the act which brings salvation to the soul.

One thing more is needful; and that is *personal trust*. First comes assent to the truth, then acceptance of that truth for yourself, and then a simple trusting of yourself wholly to Christ, as a substitute. The essence of faith is trust, reliance, dependence. Fling away every other confidence of every sort, save confidence in Jesus. Do not allow a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a confidence in anything that you can do, or in anything that you can be; but look alone to him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. This I do at this very moment; will you not do the same? Oh, may the sweet Spirit of God lead you now to trust in Jesus!

See, then, the love of God in putting it in so plain, so easy a way. Oh, thou broken, crushed and despairing sinner, thou canst not work, but canst thou not believe that which is true? Thou canst not sigh; thou canst not cry; thou canst not melt thy stony heart; but canst thou not believe that Jesus died for thee, and that he can change that heart of thine and make thee a new creature? If thou canst believe this, then trust in Jesus to do so, and thou art saved; for he that believes in him is justified. "He that believeth in him *hath* everlasting life." He is a saved man. His sins are forgiven him. Let him go his way in peace, and sin no more.

I admire, first, the love of God in the great gift, and then in the great plan by which that gift becomes available to guilty men.

III. Thirdly, the love of God shines forth with transcendent brightness in a third point, namely, in THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS PLAN IS AVAILABLE, and for whom this gift is given. They are described in these words—"Whosoever believeth in him." There is in the text a word which has no limit—"God so loved the world"; but then comes in the descriptive limit, which I beg you to notice with care: "He gave his Only Begotten Son *that whosoever believeth in him* might not perish." God did not so love the world that any man who does not believe in Christ shall be

saved; neither did God so give his Son that any man shall be saved who refuses to believe in him. See how it is put—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." Here is the compass of the love: while every unbeliever is excluded, every believer is included. "Whosoever believeth in him." Suppose there be a man who has been guilty of all the lusts of the flesh to an infamous degree, suppose that he is so detestable that he is only fit to be treated like a moral leper, and shut up in a separate house for fear he should contaminate those who hear or see him; yet if that man shall believe in Jesus Christ, he shall at once be made clean from his defilement, and shall not perish because of his sin. And suppose there be another man who, in the pursuit of his selfish motives, has ground down the poor, has robbed his fellow-traders, and has even gone so far as to commit actual crime of which the law has taken cognisance, yet if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he shall be led to make restitution, and his sins shall be forgiven him. I once heard of a preacher addressing a company of men in chains, condemned to die for murder and other crimes. They were such a drove of beasts to all outward appearances that it seemed hopeless to preach to them; yet were I set to be chaplain to such a wretched company I should not hesitate to tell them that "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O man, if thou wilt believe in Jesus as the Christ, however horrible thy past sins have been they shall be blotted out; thou shalt be saved from the power of thine evil habits; and thou shalt begin again like a child newborn, with a new and true life, which God shall give thee. "Whosoever believeth in him,"—that takes you in, my aged friend, now lingering within a few tottering steps of the grave. O grey-headed sinner, if you believe in him, you shall not perish. The text also includes you, dear boy, who have scarcely entered your teens as yet: if you believe in him, you shall not perish. That takes you in, fair maiden, and gives you hope and joy while yet young. That comprehends all of us, provided we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can all the devils in hell find out any reason why the man that believes in Christ shall be lost, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Do they say, "Lord, he has been so long in coming"? The Lord replies,—"Has he come? Then I will not cast him out for all his delays." But, Lord, he went back after making a profession. "Has he at length come? Then I will not cast him out for all his backsliding." But, Lord, he was a foul-mouthed blasphemer. "Has he come to me? Then I will not cast him out for all his blasphemies." But, says one, "I take exception to the salvation of this wicked wretch. He has behaved so abominably that in all justice he ought to be sent to hell." Just so. But if he repents of his sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, whoever he may be, he shall not be sent there. He shall be changed in character, so that he shall never perish, but have eternal life.

Now, observe, that this "whosoever" makes a grand sweep; for it encircles all degrees of faith. "Whosoever believeth in him." It may be that he has no full assurance; it may be that he has no assurance at all; but if he has faith, true and childlike, by it he shall be saved. Though his faith be so little that I must needs put on my spectacles to see it, yet Christ will see it and reward it. His faith is such a tiny grain of mustard seed that I look and look again but hardly discern it, and yet it brings him eternal life, and it is itself a living thing. The Lord can see within that mustard seed a tree among whose branches the birds of the air shall make their nests.

"My faith is feeble, I confess,
I faintly trust thy word;
But wilt thou pity me the less?"

Be that far from thee, Lord!"

O Lord Jesus, if I cannot take thee up in my arms as Simeon did, I will at least touch thy garment's hem as the poor diseased woman did to whom thy healing virtue flowed. It is written, "God so loveth the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That means me. I cannot preach at length to you to-night; but I would preach with strength. Oh that this truth may soak into your souls. Oh you that feel yourselves guilty; and you that feel guilty because you do not feel guilty; you that are broken in heart because your heart will not break; you that feel that you cannot feel; it is to you that I would preach salvation in Christ by faith. You groan because you cannot groan; but whoever you may be, you are still within the range of this mighty word, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Thus have I commended God's love to you in those three points—the divine gift, the divine method of saving, and the divine choice of the persons to whom salvation comes.

IV. Now fourthly, another beam of divine love is to be seen in the negative blessing here stated, namely, in THE DELIVERANCE implied in the words, "that whosoever believeth in him should *not perish*."

I understand that word to mean that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, though he is ready to perish. His sins would cause him to perish, but he shall never perish. At first he has a little hope in Christ, but its existence is feeble. It will soon die out, will it not? No, his faith shall not perish, for this promise covers it—"Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish." The penitent has believed in Jesus, and therefore he has begun to be a Christian; "Oh," cries an enemy, "let him alone: he will soon be back among us; he will soon be as careless as ever." Listen. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish," and therefore he will not return to his former state. This proves the final perseverance of the saints; for if the believer ceased to be a believer he would perish; and as he cannot perish, it is clear that he will continue a believer. If thou believest in Jesus, thou shalt never leave off believing in him; for that would be to perish. If thou believest in him, thou shalt never delight in thine old sins; for that would be to perish. If thou believest in him, thou shalt never lose spiritual life. How canst thou lose that which is everlasting? If thou wert to lose it, it would prove that it was not everlasting, and thou wouldst perish; and thus thou wouldst make this word to be of no effect. Whosoever with his heart believeth in Christ is a saved man, not for to-night only, but for all the nights that ever shall be, and for that dread night of death, and for that solemn eternity which draws so near. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish;" but he shall have a life that cannot die, a justification that cannot be disputed, an acceptance which shall never cease.

What is it to perish? It is to lose all hope in Christ, all trust in God, all light in life, all peace in death, all joy, all bliss, all union with God. This shall never happen to thee if thou believest in Christ. If thou believest, thou shalt be chastened when thou dost wrong, for every child of God comes under discipline; and what son is there whom the Father chasteneth not? If thou believest, thou mayest doubt and fear as to thy state, as a man on board a ship may be tossed about; but thou hast gotten on board a ship that never can be wrecked. He that hath union with Christ has union with perfection, omnipotence and glory. He that believeth is a member of Christ: will Christ lose his members? How should Christ be perfect if he lost even his little finger? Are Christ's members to rot off, or to be cut off? Impossible. If thou hast faith in Christ thou art a partaker of Christ's life, and thou canst not perish. If men were trying to drown me, they could not drown my foot as

long as I had my head above water; and as long as our Head is above water, up yonder in the eternal sunshine, the least limb of his body can never be destroyed. He that believeth in Jesus is united to him, and he must live because Jesus lives. Oh what a word is this, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them to me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

I feel that I have a grand gospel to preach to you when I read that whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish. I would not give two pins for that trumpety, temporary salvation which some proclaim, which floats the soul for a time and then ebbs away to apostasy. I do not believe that the man who is once in Christ may live in sin and delight in it, and yet be saved. That is abominable teaching, and none of mine. But I believe that the man who is in Christ will not live in sin, for he is saved from it; nor will he return to his old sins and abide in them, for the grace of God will continue to save him from his sins. Such a change is wrought by regeneration that the newborn man cannot abide in sin, nor find comfort in it, but he loves holiness and makes progress in it. The Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots, but only grace divine can work the change; and when divine grace has done the deed the blackamore will remain white, and the leopard's spots will never return. It would be as great a miracle to undo the work of God as to do it; and to destroy the new creation would require as great a power as to make it. As only God can create, so only God can destroy; and he will never destroy the work of his own hands. Will God begin to build and not finish? Will he commence a warfare and end it before he has won the victory? What would the devil say if Christ were to begin to save a soul and fail in the attempt? If there should come to be souls in hell that were believers in Christ, and yet did perish, it would cast a cloud upon the diadem of our exalted Lord. It cannot, shall not, be. Such is the love of God, that whosoever believeth in his dear Son shall not perish: in this assurance we greatly rejoice.

V. The last commendation of his love lies in *the positive*—IN THE POSSESSION. I shall have to go in a measure over the same ground again, let me therefore be the shorter. God gives to every man that believes in Christ everlasting life. The moment thou believest there trembles into thy bosom a vital spark of heavenly flame which never shall be quenched. In that same moment when thou dost cast thyself on Christ, Christ comes to thee in the living and incorruptible word which liveth and abideth for ever. Though there should drop into thy heart but one drop of the heavenly water of life, remember this,—he hath said it who cannot lie,—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When I first received everlasting life I had no idea what a treasure had come to me. I knew that I had obtained something very extraordinary, but of its superlative value I was not aware. I did but look to Christ in the little chapel, and I received eternal life. I looked to Jesus, and he looked on me; and we were one for ever. That moment my joy surpassed all bounds, just as my sorrow had aforetime driven me to an extreme of grief. I was perfectly at rest in Christ, satisfied with him, and my heart was glad; but I did not know that this grace was everlasting life till I began to read in the Scriptures, and to know more fully the value of the jewel which God had given me. The next Sunday I sent to the same chapel, as it was very natural that I should. But I never went afterwards, for this reason, that during my first week the new life that was in me had been compelled to fight for its existence, and a conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on. This I knew to be a special token of the indwelling of grace in my soul; but in that same chapel I heard a sermon upon "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had that experience. Babe as I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a

statement. What but divine grace could produce such a sighing and crying after deliverance from indwelling sin? I felt that a person who could talk such nonsense knew little of the life of a true believer. I said to myself, "What! am I not alive because I feel a conflict within me? I never felt this fight when I was an unbeliever. When I was not a Christian I never groaned to be set free from sin. This conflict is one of the surest evidences of my new birth, and yet this man cannot see it; he may be a good exhorter to sinners, but he cannot feed believers." I resolved to go into that pasture no more, for I could not feed therein. I find that the struggle becomes more and more intense; each victory over sin reveals another army of evil tendencies, and I am never able to sheathe my sword, nor cease from prayer and watchfulness.

I cannot advance an inch without praying my way, nor keep the inch I gain without watching and standing fast. Grace alone can preserve and perfect me. The old nature will kill the new nature if it can; and to this moment the only reason why my new nature is not dead is this—because it cannot die. If it could have died, it would have been slain long ago; but Jesus said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life"; "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life"; and therefore the believer cannot die. The only religion which will save you is one that you cannot leave, because it possesses you, and will not leave you. If you hold a doctrine which you can give up, give it up; but if the doctrines are burnt into you so that as long as you live you must hold them, and so that if you were burnt every ash would hold that same truth in it, because you are impregnated with it, then you have found the right thing.

You are not a saved man unless Christ has saved you for ever. But that which has such a grip of you that its grasp is felt in the core of your being is the power of God. To have Christ living in you, and the truth ingrained in your very nature—O sirs, this is the thing that saves the soul, and nothing short of it. It is written in the text, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is this but a life that shall last through your three-score years and ten; a life that shall last you should you outlive a century; a life that will still flourish when you lie at the grave's mouth; a life that will abide when you have quitted the body, and left it rotting in the tomb; a life that will continue when your body is raised again, and you shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; a life that will outshine those stars and yon sun and moon; a life that shall be co-eval with the life of the Eternal Father? As long as there is a God, the believer shall not only exist, but live. As long as there is a heaven, you shall enjoy it; as long as there is a Christ, you shall live in his love; and as long as there is an eternity, you shall continue to fill it with delight.

God bless you and help you to believe in Jesus.—Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—John 3.

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—291, 538, 539.

The True Tabernacle, and Its Glory of Grace and Peace

A Sermon

(No. 1862)

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, September 27th, 1885, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."—John 1:14.

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—John 1: 17.

THERE WAS A TIME when God freely communed with men. The voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day. With unfallen Adam the great God dwelt in sweet and intimate fellowship; but sin came and not only destroyed the garden, but destroyed the intercourse of God with His creature man. A great gulf opened between man as evil, and God as infinitely pure; and had it not been for the amazing goodness of the most High, we must all of us forever have been banished from His presence, and from the glory of His power. The Lord God in infinite love resolved that He Himself would bridge the distance, and would again dwell with man; and in token of this He made Himself manifest to His chosen nation Israel when they were in the wilderness. He was pleased to dwell in type and symbol among His people, in the very center and heart of their camp. Do you see yonder tent with its curtains of goats' hair in the center of the canvas city? You cannot see within it; but it was all glorious within with precious wood, and pure gold, and tapestry of many colors. Within its most sacred shrine shone forth a bright light between the wings of cherubim, which light was the symbol of the presence of the Lord. But if you cannot see within, yet you can see above the sacred tent a cloud, which arises from the top of the Holy of Holies, and then expands like a vast tree so as to cover all the host, and protect the chosen of God from the intense heat of the sun, so apt to make the traveler faint when passing over the burning sand. If you will wait till the sun is down, that same cloud will become Alimonies, and light up the whole camp. Thus it was both shade and light; and by its means was enjoyed that safety which was afterwards set forth in the promise, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." Over all the glory was a defense and a comfort. The Lord dealt not so with any nation, save only His people Israel, of whom He said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The day of the type is over; we see no more a nation secluded from all others and made to be as "the church in the wilderness." God doth not now confine His abode to one people; for "The God of the whole earth shall he be called." There is now no spot on earth where God dwells in preference to another. Did not our Lord say, at the well of Sychar, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." "But . . . the true worshipers shall worship the Father it spirit and in truth"? Wherever true hearts seek the Lord, He is found of them. He is as much present on the lone mountain's side as in the aisles of yonder above, or in the galleries of this tabernacle. "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"

Yet there is a true house of, a real temple of the infinite, a living abode of the Godhead. The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." There is still a trysting-place where God doth still meet with man, and hold fellowship with him. That place is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "The manhood of Christ is become to us the anti-type of that tent in the center of the camp. God is in Christ Jesus; Christ Jesus is God; and in His blessed person God dwells in the midst of us as in a tent; for such is the force of the original in our text. "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled, or tented, among us." That is to say, in Christ Jesus the Lord dwelt among men, as God of old dwelt in His sanctuary in the midst of the tribes of Israel. This is very delightful and hopeful for us: the Lord God doth dwell among us through the incarnation of His Son.

But the substance far excels the shadow; for in the wilderness the Lord only dwelt in the abode of man, but now His approach to us is closer, for He dwells in the flesh of man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Note that word "flesh." It doth not say, "The Word was made man": it means that, but the use of the word "flesh brings the Lord Jesus still closer to us, and shows that He took on Him the very nature and substance of manhood: He did not merely assume the name and notion, and appearance, of manhood, but the reality: the weakness, the suffering, the mortality of our manhood He actually took into union with Himself. He was no phantom, or apparition, but He had a human body and a human soul. "The Word was made flesh." When the Lord became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, His incarnation in a human body brought Him far nearer to man than when He only abode within curtains, and occupied a tent in the midst of Israel.

Moreover, it is to be noted that God does in the person of Jesus not merely dwell among men; but He hath joined Himself unto men—the Word not only dwelt in flesh, but "was made flesh." It is impossible to use words which are exactly accurate to describe the wonderful incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh; but these words are used to show that our Lord is as truly and as really man as He is God. Not only does God dwell in the body of man; but our Lord Jesus is God and man in one person. He is not ashamed to speak of men as His brethren. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same with us. This approach to us is exceeding close. God was never one with the tabernacle, but in Christ Jesus He is one with us. This union hath in it a sweetness of sympathy, a tenderness of relationship, and a condensation of fellowship greatly to be admired. Now we listen to the music of that blessed name Emmanuel, "God with us." In the person of the only begotten, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we see God reconciling the world unto Himself. Let us rejoice and be glad that we have in Jesus more than Israel had in the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. The ancient believer gazed upon the sacred tent, he thought of the holy place of sacrifice, and the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine of the Lord's indwelling; but we have unfeignedly more, we have God in our nature, and in Him "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

In and around the tent wherein the Lord dwelt in the center of the camp there was a manifestation of the presence of God. This was the glory of that house: but how scanty was the revelation! A bright light which I have already mentioned, the Shekinah, is said to have shone over the mercy-seat; but the high priest only could see it, and he only saw it once in the year when he entered with blood within the veil. Outside, above the holy place, there was the manifest glory of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. This sufficed to bear witness that God was there; but still, cloud and fire are but physical appearances, and cannot convey a true appearance of God, who is a spirit. God

cannot be perceived by the senses; and yet the fiery, cloudy pillar could appeal to the eyes only. The excellence of the indwelling of God in Christ is this—that there is in Him a glory as of the only begotten of the Father, the moral and spiritual glory of Godhead. This is to be seen, but not with the eyes; this is to be perceived, but not by the carnal senses: this is seen, and heard, and known, by spiritual men, whose mental perceptions are keener than those of sight and hearing. In the person of the Lord there is a glory which is seen by our faith, which is discerned of our renewed spirits, and is made to operate upon our hearts. The glory of God in the sanctuary was seen only by the priest of the house of Aaron; the glory of God in the face of Christ is seen by all believers, who are all priests unto God. That glory the priest beheld but once in the year; but we steadily behold that glory at all times, and are transformed by the sight. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not a thing of outward appearance, to be beheld with the eyes, like the pillar of cloud and fire; but there is an abiding, steady luster of holy, gracious, truthful character about our Lord Jesus Christ, which is best seen by those who by reason of sanctification are made fit to discern it. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; yea, they do see Him in Christ Jesus. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Many of us besides the apostles can say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We have not seen Jesus raise the dead; we have not seen Him cast out devils; we have not seen Him hush the winds and calm the waves, but we do see, with our mind's eye, His spotless holiness, His boundless love, His superlative love and truth, His wondrous heavenliness; in a word, we have seen, and do see, His fullness of grace and truth; and we rejoice in the fact that the tabernacling of God among men in Christ Jesus is attended with a more real glory than the mere brilliance of light and the glow of flame. The condescension of Christ's love is to us more glorious than the pillar of cloud, and the zeal of our Lord's self-sacrifice is more excellent than the pillar of fire. As we think of the divine mysteries which meet in the person of the Lord, we do not envy Israel the gracious manifestation vouchsafed her when "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord covered the tabernacle"; for we have all this and more in our incarnate God, who is with us always, even to the end of the world.

As the Holy Spirit shall help me, I shall at this time say, first of all, *Let us behold this tabernacling of God; and secondly, Let us avail ourselves of this tabernacling of God in all the ways for which it was intended.*

1. First, then, LET US BEHOLD THIS 'TABERNACLING OF GOD WITH US. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. "In Jesus Christ all the attributes of God are to be seen; veiled, but yet verily there. You have only to read the gospels, to look with willing eyes, and you shall behold in Christ all that can possibly be seen of God. It is veiled in human flesh, as it must be; for the glory of God is not to be seen by us absolutely; it is toned down to these dim eyes of ours; but the Godhead is there, the perfect Godhead in union with the perfect manhood of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Two divine things are more clearly seen in Jesus than aught else. Upon these I would speak at this time, considering the two together, and then each one separately—"Full of grace and truth."

Observe the two glorious qualities, joined inseparably—grace and truth—and observe that they are spoken of *in the concrete*. The apostle says that the only begotten is "full of grace and truth." He did not come to tell us about grace, but actually to bring us grace. He is not full of the news of grace and truth, but of grace and truth themselves. Others had been messengers of gracious tidings, but He came to bring grace. Others teach us truth, but Jesus is the truth. He is that grace and truth

whereof others spoke. Jesus is not merely a teacher, an exhorter, a worker of grace and truth; but these heavenly things are in Him: He is full of them. I want you to note this. It raises such a difference between Christ and others: you go to others to hear of grace and truth, but you must go to Christ to see them. There may be, there is, grace in other men; but not as it is in Christ: they have take it as water flowing through a pipe, but He has it as water in its fountain and source. He has grace to communicate to the sons of men, grace without measure, grace essential and abiding. There is truth in others where God has wrought it, by His Spirit; but it is not in them as it is in Christ. In Him dwell the depth, the substance, the essence of the fact. Grace and truth come to us by Him, and yet they evermore abide in Him. I say again, our Lord did not merely come to teach grace and truth, or to impress them upon us; but He came to exhibit in His own person, life, and work, all the grace and truth which we need. He has brought us grace in rivers and truth in streams: of these He has an infinite fullness; of that fullness all His saints receive.

This grace and truth are *blended*. The "and" between the two words I would treat as more than a common conjunction. The two rivers unite in one fullness—"Full of grace and truth": that is to say. The grace is truthful grace, grace not in fiction nor in fancy, grace not to be hoped for and to be dreamed of, but grace every atom of which is fact; redemption which does redeem, pardon which does blot out sin, renewal which actually regenerates, salvation which completely saves. We have not here blessings which charm the ear and cheat the soul; but real, substantial favors from God that cannot lie. Then blend these things the other way. "Grace and truth": the Lord has come to bring us truth, but it is not the kind of truth which censures, condemns, and punishes; it is gracious truth, truth steeped in love, truth saturated with mercy. The truth which Jesus brings to His people comes not from the judgment-seat, but from the mercy-seat; it hath a gracious drift and aim about it, and ever tends unto salvation. His light is the life of men. If thou art overshadowed with a dark truth which seems to deepen thy despair, look thou to it again and thou wilt perceive within it a hidden light which is sown for the righteous. The darkness of convincing and humbling truth maketh for light: by engendering despair of self, heart-searching truth is meant to drive thee to the true hope. There is grace to God's people in everything that falls from the lips of Jesus Christ. His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh; myrrh in itself is bitter, but such is the grace of our Lord Jesus that His lips impart sweetness to it. See how grace and truth thus blend, and qualify each other! The grace all true, and the truth is all gracious, This is a wondrous compound made according to the art of the divine Apothecary. Where else is grace so true, or truth so gracious?

Furthermore, it is grace and truth *balanced*. I wish I were able to communicate my thoughts this morning as they came to me when I was meditating upon this passage; but this thought almost speaks for itself. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace; but then He has not neglected the other quality which is somewhat sterner, namely, that of truth. I have known many in this world very loving and affectionate, but they have not been faithful: on the other hand, I have known men to be sternly honest and truthful, but they have not been gentle and kind: but in the Lord Jesus Christ there is no defect either way. He is full of grace which doth invite the publican and the sinner to Himself; but He is full of truth which doth repel the hypocrite and Pharisee. He does not hide from man a truth however terrible it may be, but He plainly declares the wrath of God against all unrighteousness. But when He has spoken terrible truth, He has uttered it in such a gracious and tender manner, with so many tears of compassion for the ignorant and those that are out of the way, that you are much won by His grace as convinced by His truth. Our Lord's ministry is not truth alone, nor grace alone; but it is a balanced, well-ordered system of grace and truth. The Lord Himself

is in His character "just and having salvation." He is both King of righteousness and King of peace. He does not even save unjustly, nor does He proclaim truth unlovingly. Grace and truth are equally conspicuous in Him.

Beloved, notice here that these qualities in our Lord are *at the full*. He is "full of grace." Who could be more so? In the person of Jesus Christ the immeasurable grace of God is treasured up. God has done for us by Christ Jesus exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think. It is not possible even for imagination to conceive of any person more gracious than God in Christ Jesus. You cannot desire, certainly you cannot require, anything that should exceed what is found of grace in the person, offices, work, and death of the only begotten. Come, ye that have large minds, and intellects that are creative, and see if ye can devise anything that should be mentioned in the same day with what God, in the infinite glory of His grace, has given us in the person of His Son. And there is an equal fullness of truth about our Lord. He Himself, as He comes to us as the revelation and manifestation of God, declares to us, not some truth, but all truth. All of God is in Christ; and all of God means all that is true, and all that is right, and all that is faithful, and all that is just, all that is according to righteousness and holiness. Christ Jesus has brought to us the justice, truth, and righteousness of God to the full: He is the Lord our righteousness. There are no reserves of disagreeable faith in Christ. There is nothing hidden from us of truth that might alarm us, nor anything that might have shaken our confidence; nor, on the other hand, is any truth kept back which might have increased our steadfastness. He says, "If it were not so I would have told you." Admire the full-robed splendor of the Sun of Righteousness. Ask not with Pilate, "What is truth?" but behold it in God's dear Son. Oh, I know not how to speak to you upon themes so full and deep! How shall I, that am but as a twinkling dewdrop on a blade of grass, reflect the full glory of this Sun of Righteousness? But all truth and all grace dwell in Christ in all their fullness beyond conception, and the two lie in each other's bosoms forever, to bless us with boundless, endless joy and glory.

Thus have I taken the two together. Now I want to dwell briefly on each one by itself.

Grace is put first. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace." Jesus Christ is the Son of God; He is His only begotten Son. Others are begotten of God, but no other was ever begotten of God as Christ was; consequently, when He came into this world the glory that was about Him was a glory as of the only begotten. A very singular, and very special, and incommunicable glory abides in the person of our Lord. Part of this was the glory of His grace. Now, in the Old Testament, in that thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, which we read in part this morning, you notice that the glory of God lay in His being "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The glory of the only begotten of the Father must lie in the same things as the glory of the Father, namely, in longsuffering and truth. In Christ there is a wonderful gentleness, patience, pity, mercy, and love of God. Not merely did He teach the grace of God, and invite us to the grace of God, but in Himself He displayed the grace of God.

This is seen, first, in His incarnation, It is a wonderful instance of divine grace that the word should be made flesh and dwell among us, and reveal His glory to us. Apart from anything that springs out of the incarnation of Christ, that incarnation itself is a wondrous act of grace. There must be hope for men now that man is next akin to God through Jesus Christ. The angels were not mistaken when they not only sang, "Glory to God in the highest," but also, "on earth peace, goodwill towards men," because in Bethlehem the Son of God was born of a virgin. God in our nature must mean God with gracious thoughts towards us. If the Lord had meant to destroy the race, He never

would have espoused it and taken it into union with Himself. There is fullness of grace in the fact of the Word made flesh tabernacling among us.

More than this, there is fullness of grace in the life of Christ when we consider that He lived in order to perfect Himself as our High Priest. Was He not made perfect through His sufferings, that He might sympathize with us in all our woes? He was compassed with infirmities, and bore our sorrows, and endured those crosses of the human life which press so heavily on our own shoulders; and all this to make Himself able to deal graciously with us in a tender and brotherly way. Apart from that which comes wonderful brotherhood, there is a bottomless depth of grace about the fellowship itself. The Lord Jesus cannot curse me, for He has borne my curse: He cannot be unkind to me, for He has shared my sorrows. If every pang that tends my heart has also rent His heart, and if into all my woes He has descended even deeper than I have gone, it must mean love to me, it cannot mean anything else; and it must mean truth, for Jesus did not play at fellowship, His griefs were real. I say then that this manifestation of God in the person of Christ Jesus is seen in His sorrowing life to be full of grace and truth.

Then think for a minute of what He did. He was so full of grace that when He spoke His words dropped a fatness of grace, the dew of His own love was upon all His discourses; and when He moved about and touched men here and there, virtue went out of Him, because He was so full of it. At one time He spoke and pardoned a sinner, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; at another moment He battled with the consequences of sin, raising men from sickness and from death: He again He turned Himself and fought with the prince of darkness himself, and cast him out from those whom he tormented. He went about like a cloud which is big with rain, and therefore plentifully waters waste places. His life was boundless compassion. There was a power of grace about His garments, His voice, His look; and in all He was so true that none ever thought Him capable of subterfuge. Everywhere He went He scattered grace among the children of men; and He is just the same now; fullness of grace abides in Him still.

When it came to His death, which was the pouring out of His soul, then His fullness of grace was seen. He was full of grace indeed, forasmuch as He emptied Himself to save men. He was Himself not only man's Saviour, but his salvation. He gave Himself for us. He was indeed full of grace when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. His was love at its height, since He died on the cross, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," pronounce the word "Substitution," and you cannot help feeling that the Substitute for a guilty man was full of grace; or use that other word, "representative," and remember that whatever Jesus did, He did as the covenant Head of His people. If He died, they died in Him; if He rose again, they rose in Him; if He ascended up on high, they ascended in Him; and if He sits at the right hand of God, they also sit in the heavenly places in Him. When He shall come a second time it shall be to claim the kingdom for His chosen as well as for Himself; and all the glory of the future ages is for them, and not for Himself alone. He saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Oh, the richness of the grace and truth that dwell in our Lord as the representative of His people! He will enjoy nothing unless His people enjoy it with Him. "Where I am, there also shall my servant be." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in Thy throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

There is yet another word higher than "substitution," higher than "representation," and that is "union." We are one with Christ, joined to Him by a union that never can be broken. Not only does He do what He does, representing us, but we are joined unto Him in one spirit, members of His

body, and partakers of His glory. Is it not a miracle of love that worms of earth should ever be one with incarnate Deity, and so one that they never can be separated throughout the ages?

Thus I have shown you that there is in our Lord a fullness of grace. Your own thoughts will dig deeper than mine.

But then it is said there is in Him also a fullness of *truth*, by which I understand that in Christ Himself, not merely in what He said, and did, and promised, there is a fullness of truth. And this is true, first, in the fact that He is the fulfillment of all the promises that went before concerning Him. God had promised great things by His prophets concerning the coming Messiah, but all those predictions are absolutely matters of fact in the person of the Well-beloved. "All the promises of God are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." Verily He hath bruised the serpent's head. Verily He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Verily He hath proclaimed liberty to the captives. Verily He hath proved Himself a prophet like unto Moses.

According to my second text, in verse seventeen, I understand our Lord Jesus to be "truth" in the sense of being the substance of all the types. The law that was given by Moses was but symbolical and emblematical; but Jesus is the truth. He is really that blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel; He is in very deed the Paschal lamb of God's Passover: He is the burnt-offering, the sin-offering, and the peace-offering—all in one! He is the true scapegoat, the true morning and evening Lamb; in fact, He is in truth what all the types and figures were in pattern. Blessed by God, brethren, whenever you see great things in the Old Testament in the type, you see the real truth of those things in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jew had nothing that we have not; he had nothing even in outline and shadow which we have not obtained in substance. The covenant in its fullness is in Christ: the prophecy is in Moses, the fulfillment is in Jesus: the foreshadowing is in the law, the truth is in the Word made flesh.

Further than that, our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be grace and truth in this sense, that He truthfully deals with matters of fact in the case of our salvation. I know the notion of the world is that the salvation of Christ is a pretty dream, a handsome piece of sentiment. But there is nothing dreamy, about it: it is no fiction; it is fact upon fact. The Lord Jesus Christ does not gloss over or conceal the condition of man in his salvation; He finds man condemned, and takes him as condemned in the very worst sense, condemned of a capital offense; and as man's substitute He endures the capital penalty, and dies in the sinner's stead. The Lord Jesus views the sinner as depraved, yea, as dead in trespasses and sins, and He quickens him by His resurrection life. He does not wink at the result of the fall and of actual sin; but He comes to the dead sinner and quickens him; He comes to the diseased heart and heals it. To me the gospel is a wonderful embodiment of omnipotent wisdom and truth. If the gospel had said to men, "The law of God is certainly righteous, but it is too stern, too, exacting, and therefore God will wink it at many sins, and make provision for salvation by omitting to punish much of human guilt," why, my brethren, we should always have been in jeopardy. If God could be unjust to save us, He could also be changeable, and cast us away. If there was anything rotten in the state of our salvation, we should fear that it would fail its at last. But our foundation is sure, for the Lord has excavated down to the rock; He has taken away every bit of mere sentiment and sham, and His salvation is real throughout. It is a glorious salvation of grace and truth, in which God takes the sinner as God is, on the principles of true righteousness; and yet saves him.

But it means more than that. The Lord deals with us in the way of grace, and that grace encourages a great many hopes, but those hopes are all realized, for He deals with us in truth. Our

necessities demands great things, and grace actually supplies those great things. The old law could never make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to the conscience, but the grace of God makes believers perfect as pertaining to the conscience. If I were to sit down and try to imagine a flaw in the ground of my salvation by Christ, I could not do it. Believing as I do in Him who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, I feel that by no possibility can His atonement fail me. I have not imagination strong enough to feign a reason for distrust: I do not see hole or corner in which any charge could lurk against the man that believes in Jesus Christ. My conscience is satisfied, and more than satisfied. Sometimes it even seems to me that my sins could not have deserved that the Son of God should die. The atonement is greater than the sin. Speak of the vindication of the law!—not the vindication even greater than the dishonor? Does not the law of God shine out more lustrous in its indescribable glory through the sacrifice of Christ as the penalty for sin, than it would have done had it never been broken, or had all the race of law-breakers been swept into endless destruction? O brothers in the salvation of Jesus there is a truth of grace unrivaled! There is a deep verity, a substantiality, an inward soul-satisfaction in the sacrifice of Christ, which makes us feel it is a full atonement—a fountain of "grace and truth."

Nor have I yet quite brought out all the meaning, even if I have succeeded so far. Christ has brought to us "grace and truth"; that is to say, He works in believers both grace and truth. We want grace to rescue us from sin; He has brought it: we need truth in the inward parts; He has wrought it. The system of salvation by atonement is calculated to produce truthful men. The habit of looking for salvation through the great sacrifice fosters the spirit of justice, begets in us a deep abhorrence of evil, and a love for that which is right and true. By nature we are all liars, and either love or make a lie: for this cause we are content with refuges of lies, and we compass ourselves with deceit. In our carnal state we are as full of guile as an egg is full of meat; but when the Lord comes to us it Christ, no longer imputing our trespasses to us, then He takes out of our heart that deceit and desperate wickedness which had else remained there. I say it, and dare avow it, that the system of salvation by the indwelling of God in Christ and the atonement offered by Him for men has a tendency in it to infuse grace into the soul and to produce truth in the life. The Holy Ghost employs it to that end. I pray that you and I may prove it so by the grace which causes us to love both God and man, Santa and the truthfulness with which we deal in all the affairs of life.

Thus has our Lord displayed the glory of God in the grace and truth with which He is filled. I am sorry have spoken so feebly on a theme so grand. May the Spirit bless you even through the infirmities of my speech!

II. Now I want a few minutes to say to you, Come brothers and sisters, LET US AVAIL OURSELVES OF THIS TABERNACLING OF GOD AMONG US.

First, then, if God has come to dwell among men by the Word made flesh *let us pitch our tent around this central tabernacle*; do not let us live as if God were a long way off. To the Israelites God was equally near from every near from every quarter of the camp. The tabernacle was in the center, and the center is equally near to every point of the circumference. No true Israelite could say, "I must go across the sea, or soar up into the air, or dive into the depths to find my God." Every Israelite could say "He dwelleth between the cherubim: I have but to go to His tabernacle to be in His presence and speak with Him." Our God is not far from any one of His people this day. We are made nigh by the blood of Christ. God is everywhere present, but there is a higher presence of effectual grace in the person of the only begotten. Do not let us feel as if we worshiped a far-off God. Let us not repine as if we were deserted. Let us not feel alone, for the Father is with us.

God is near thee, therefore cheer the sad soul.

Open thy window towards Jerusalem, as Daniel did; pray, with thine eye upon Christ, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily the greatest nearness to us. God is never far away since Christ has come to dwell among men.

Next, *let us resort to this central tabernacle to obtain grace to help in time of need.* Let us come to Christ without fear, for He hath grace to give, and He will give it to us abundantly whenever we need it. I like to think of the wording of my text. Leave out the parentheses, and it runs, "He dwelt among us full of grace." He could not have dwelt among such provoking ones if he had not been full of grace." But if He dwells among us full of grace, we need not fear that He will cast us away because of our sins and failings. I invite you, therefore to come boldly to Him who is full of forgiving love. I beg you to come and receive of His fullness, for grace is truly grace when it is communicated: grace which is not distributed is grace in name only. "Alas!" you say, "I want so much grace." Brother, it is treasured up in Christ for you without measure. It is placed in Him that you may have it. Do we not try to persuade the sinner that there is life in a look? Shall I need to persuade saints that grace is equally free to them? Do we tell the sinner that God is not to be sought for as far away, but that He is waiting to be gracious? Must I tell the believer the same? You may at this moment obtain all the grace you need. The door is open; enter and take what you will. Do not stop till you reach home and go through a set of religious exercises; but here, and now, believe in Jesus to the full. In the center of the camp is the incarnate God; Israel had but to go the central tent to find present help in time of trouble. In the person of Christ, who hath said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," there is, in truth, all the grace you can possibly need. Come to this well and drink. Receive of His fullness, and go on your way rejoicing.

What next shall we do? Brethren, since God in Christ is in the midst of us, *let us abide in joyful, peaceful confidence in Him who is grace and truth to us.* Do not let us wander to other sources. To whom should we go? Shall we leave our God? Shall we leave His grace, His truth? Do not let us dream that He has changed, for He is God. Do not imagine that He has removed, for He hath said, "This my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Do not let us conceive that His grace and truth are exhausted; for His fullness is eternal. Let us receive strong consolation, and remain steadfast, unmovable. Let us quietly rest in the firm belief that all we can want between here and heaven, all that we need this moment and in all moments yet to come, is treasured up in Christ Jesus, who is abidingly the center of His church and the manifestation of God.

Once more: if this be so, and God really in Christ dwell in the midst of His people "full of grace and truth," *let us tell everybody of it.* I am sure if I had been an Israelite in the wilderness, and had met an Amalekite or an Edomite, I should have gloried in the privileges which His presence secured me. We know that Amalekites and Edomites could not have come into the house of the Lord: but nowadays, if we meet with one who is a stranger, we can tell him of our privilege, with sweet persuasion that the stranger can be brought nigh through the blood of the Lamb. Therefore let us abundantly speak of the dwelling of God with men. Let us tell to all that the Lord has come to man, not in wrath, not in judgment, but "full of grace and truth." O my unconverted hearer, come to Jesus! He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Draw nigh to the meek and lowly Jesus, and you draw nigh to God. He saith, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Publish the invitation of grace to the four winds. Ring out your silver trumpets, or if you have them not, sound your ram's horns; but somehow let all people know that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He doth dwell among them. Tell out his news in the far country, that the wandering

prodigal son may hear it, and cry, "I will arise, and go to my Father." God has come to men' will not come to receive grace and truth?

One more lesson remains, And that is—*what manner of people ought we to be among whom Jehovah dwells?* It must have been a very solemn thing to be a member of that great camp of two million in the wilderness of Sinai. God's presence in the midst of the camp must have made every tent sacred. As we walked through the streets of that canvas city, if we had been Israelites, and in our right minds, we should have said, "These tents are none other than the house the house of God and the very gate of heaven; for see, Jehovah is in the midst of us. Mark you not the bright light that shines about His sanctuary?" We should have felt that in such in such a camp all should be holy. The pollution of sin should be unknown there. In such a camp constant prayer and praise should be presented to Him whose presence was its glory and defense. Today let our congregation be a holy convocation; and as for ourselves, let us be holiness unto the Lord. We are consecrated men and women, seeing the Lord has come so very near to us. I spoke of solemnity; I meant not dread and sorrow, but a solemnity full of joy. It is a solemn thing to have God so near, but the joy is equal to the solemnity. Glory be unto God most high, for He is here! Let us spend our days and nights in gladness and delight. God is reconciled to us in the person of His dear Son, and we have fellowship with God in Christ Jesus; Wherefore let us rejoice evermore. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE THE SERMON—Exodus 34:1-8; 40:34-38; JOHN 1:1-18.

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