



# **Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 42: 1896**

by

*Charles Spurgeon*

## About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 42: 1896* by Charles Spurgeon

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## Solitude, Silence, Submission

A Sermon

(No. 2468)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, June 7th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Lord's-day Evening, June 13th, 1886.*

"He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope."—Lamentations 3:28, 29.

THUS the prophet describes the conduct of a person in deep anguish of heart. When he does not know what to do, his soul, as if by instinct, humbles itself. He gets into some secret place, he utters no speech, he gives himself over to moaning and to tears, and then he bows himself lower and yet lower before the Divine Majesty, as if he felt that the only hope for him in the extremity of his sorrow was to make complete submission to God, and to lie in the very dust before him.

It seems to me that such conduct as this, which is characteristic of every truly gracious man in his hour of trouble, should also be the mark of all who are seeking God's grace, those who are not yet saved, but who are conscious of their need of salvation. I must, surely, be speaking right into the heart of some who are feeling the crushing weight and heavy burden of their guilt. If you cannot do anything else, dear friends, do what these two verses say, in order that, afterwards, you may be able to take that grand gospel step of faith in Jesus Christ which will certainly bring you into peace and joy.

Those of you who have the Revised Version will notice a correction which has been made long ago by all competent scholars:—"Let him sit alone and keep silence, because he hath laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." It does not matter which way you read the passage, because the conduct of one gracious man is virtually a precept to another; yet it is satisfactory to find that, if we are under the burden of sin, we are here commanded to do as the prophet did in his time of need.

My object just now is to explain this line of conduct, in the hope that some who are in trouble will at once heartily follow it.

I. First, then, observe that, in the time of great trouble HOLY SOLITUDE is commended to us: "Let him sit alone."

I earnestly advise you who are under concern of soul to seek to get alone, and to be quiet and thoughtful in your solitude; not merely to be alone, but to sit by yourself like a person in the posture of thought. When a soul is under a deep sense of sin, the more it can be alone, the better. That sense of sin will be increased by the loneliness; and when it becomes intolerable, it is highly probable that, in that loneliness, the way of its removal will be discovered in this age, we all live too much in company; and in a great city like this, we are busy from morning to night, and we do not get the opportunities for quiet reflection which our forefathers were wont to take. I am afraid, therefore, that our religion is likely to become very superficial and flimsy for the want of solitary, earnest thought. Men, nowadays, usually go in flocks; someone leads the way, and the rest follow him like

sheep that rush through a gap in the hedge. It would be better for us if we deliberated more, if we used our own judgment, if we drew near to God in our own personality, and were resolved that, whatever others might do, we would seek to be personally guided by the Lord himself.

I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may *study well your case as in the sight of God*. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a looking-glass, but there is another looking-glass, which gives true reflections, into which few men look. To study one's own self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins, and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures, would be a very healthy exercise; but how very few care to go through it! Yet, beloved friends, if it be a wise thing to look well to your business, how much more ought you to look to the business which concerns your immortal souls! If a true shepherd will not neglect his flocks and his herds, should not a wise man care about his thoughts, his feelings, and his actions? Must it not be a wretched condition not to know whether one is saved or not? I sometimes hear people express surprise if they are asked whether they are saved; yet in what ignorance of your own soul's state must you be if you have never put that question to yourself, or if, when it is put, you feel inclined to give no answer to it! I press this matter home upon you, and if you would be saved, you must know first that you are lost. If you would seek to be healed, you must first learn that you are sick. It is not possible that you will repent unless you are aware of your sin; it is not likely that you will look to Christ unless you first know what it is for which you are to look to him. Therefore, I pray you, set apart some season every day, or at least some season as often as you can get it, in which the business of your mind shall be to take your longitude and latitude, that you may know exactly where you are. You may be drifting towards the rocks, and you may be wrecked before you know your danger. I implore you, do not let your ship go at full steam through a fog; but slacken speed a bit, and heave the lead, to see whether you are in deep waters or shallow. I am not asking you to do more than any kind and wise man would advise you to do; do I even ask you more than your own conscience tells you is right? Sit alone a while, that you may carefully consider your case.

Get alone again, dear friend,—especially dear young friend,—that you may *diligently search the Scriptures*. I am often astounded at the ignorance there still is of what is written in God's Word. Many persons who have even been in Sunday-schools for years, seem to be totally unaware of the plainest truths of the gospel of God's grace; but how can we know what is revealed unless we read and study it for ourselves? Alas, the dust upon many men's Bibles will condemn them! God has been pleased, in this Book, to give us the revelation of the way of salvation, and we ought to rush to the Book with eager anxiety to know what God has said in it; but, instead of doing so, though we can get a Bible for sixpence, and perhaps have a copy in every room in our house, how little do we read it! If you truly desire to be saved, get alone for the earnest and hearty study of the Word of God. How often you may meet with persons who profess to be infidels, yet if you press them closely enough, you will find that they have never even read the New Testament through. There are many more who are in doubt and anxiety, yet they have never gone to see what are the promises of God, and what the Lord is ready to do for them that seek him. I beseech you, as sensible and reasonable beings, do not let God speak to you, and you refuse to hear. You need to be saved from sin, in this Book God has revealed the way of salvation, therefore do not shut up the Book, and fasten the clasps, and leave it neglected. Oh, Book of books, the map of the way to glory; that man invokes a terrible curse upon his own head who refuses to study thee! He does, in effect, shut the

gate of heaven against himself, and bar the road to everlasting bliss. If you would be saved, dear friend, sit alone, and consider your case, and then study God's thoughts concerning it.

Get alone, further, that you may *commune with your God*. After we have once learnt the way, we can commune with God anywhere,—amidst the roar and turmoil of the crowded city, or on the top of the mast of a ship; but, to begin with, it is best to be alone with the Lord. My dear hearer, have you ever spoken to God in all your life? Have you ever realized that there is such a King in the room with you? There is such a King; it is he who made you, and who has preserved you up to this good hour. You are, surely, not prepared to deny his existence; and if you are not, I beseech you, do not ignore that existence, and live as if there were no God. Oh, speak with him at once! Perhaps five minutes' earnest speech with him may be the turning-point of your life. "I will arise and go to my Father," was the turning-point with the prodigal; and it may be the same with you. "Oh, but I feel so guilty!" Then get alone, and say that to the Lord. "But I do not feel as I ought." Then get alone, and tell that to God. "Oh! but I—I am such an unbelieving being." Get alone, and tell out all the truth to the Lord; do not entertain a thought or a feeling which you dare not tell to him. Do not imagine that you can hide anything from him, for he reads your inmost heart. Then take that heart, and lay it bare before him, and say with the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." As one of God's creatures, I could not bear to think that I had seen the glory of the midnight stars, or warmed myself in the brightness of the noonday sun, and yet had never spoken to him who made them all and myself as well. One of our sweetest joys on earth is to speak with him in prayer and praise, to call him Friend, and to be on terms of sweet familiarity with the Most High. I do pray you, then, get alone for these three purposes, first, to consider your case, next, to study the Scriptures concerning your case, and then, that you may speak with God in prayer.

Get alone also for one other reason, and that is, that you may *avoid distraction*. I think that, on the Lord's-day, when people go home, after service, they sometimes make a mistake in talking with those who do not feel as they feel. If the arrows of God have entered your heart, go home alone. If there has been anything in the sermon which has been for your comfort as a Christian, go home alone. If there was anything in the sermon which has been for your warning as a sinner, go home alone. How often may even godly and gracious people talk upon some theme that may rob their fellow-believers of all the good they have received in God's house; and, as for unconverted persons, I am sure that, if they ever feel impressed under the Word, it will be their utmost wisdom to take care of that first impression, and not let it be driven away by foolish or frivolous conversation.

Some of us are old enough to recollect the day before there were matches of the kind we now use, and early on a frosty morning some of us have tried to strike a light with flint and steel, and the old-fashioned tinder-box. How long we struck, and struck, and watched, and waited, and at last there was a little spark in the tinder, and then we would hold the box up, and blow on it very softly, that we might keep that little spark alight till we had kindled the fire that we wanted. That tenderness over the first spark is what I invite everyone to practice in spiritual matters. If you would be saved, if there is anything like feeling in your heart, if there is any good desire in your soul, do not begin to talk as soon as you get out of the Tabernacle; that would be like placing the lid on the tinder, and putting the spark out; but get alone, blow on that spark, for peradventure it may come to a flame, and you may find salvation. I advise all persons under sorrow of soul somehow or other to break right away from their companions; when the day's work is done, let them each one say to themselves, "I am not going out with that frivolous person, nor shall I sit in the house with those

who will be talking of trifling matters; I have a soul that needs salvation, and I must have my soul saved now. I cannot afford to be in this giddy company."

"Let him sit alone." That is good advice which the prophet gives in the text, and I desire to press it upon every awakened person who desires to find the Savior.

II. The text goes on to say, in the next place, that we should practice SUBMISSIVE SILENCE: "Let him sit alone and keep silence."

In what respects should seeking souls keep silence? I answer, first, if the burden of sin is pressing upon thee, be sure to abstain from all *idle talk*; for if the idle talk of others, as I have reminded thee, can distract thy thoughts, how much more would thine own! It ill becomes a man, who is on the brink of hell, to be laughing and jesting. When God is angry with thee, canst thou make mirth? I can understand how thou canst be merry when once thou hast come back to the great Father's house, and the fatted calf is killed, and thy Father rejoices over thee; but whilst thou art still covered with thy sins, and art not yet sure of God's forgiveness, sit silent. It is the best thing thou canst do; quietness becomes thee. Lay thy finger on thy lip till thou hast something better to speak of than thou hast as yet. Keep silence, then, from all idle talk.

Keep silence also in another respect. Do not attempt to make any *excuse for your sin*. Oh, how ready sinners are with their excuses! A man says, "But, sir, I have a besetting sin." Do you not think that a great many people make a mistake about besetting sins? There was a negro who used to get drunk, and he said that it was his besetting sin; but his brother negro said, "No, Sambo, it is your upsetting sin;" and so it was. If I were to go to-night across Clapham Common, and half-a-dozen men were to surround me, and rob me of my purse, then I should be beset; but if I were to know that there were thieves there, and yet I walked across the common on purpose to meet with them, you could not say that they had beset me, you would say that I was a fool to walk into their hands. The besetting sin is that which a man fights against, and wars against with all his soul, yet he is overcome by it. Do not lay any stress upon that, as though thy being beset by sin was any excuse to thee, especially if thou goest into the ways of sin. You go and sit with those who drink, and then wonder that you get drunk! You go and associate with those who swear or sing lewd songs, and then you wonder that, the next time you try to pray, a nasty verse of a bad song comes up! It is your own fault; if you go and wilfully mingle with sinners, how can you be a child of God? No, when you know that anything is a sin, keep out of the temptation. He that does not want to get wet should not go out into the rain. Instead of your excuse making your case any better, it makes it worse; therefore, keep silence before thy God.

And next, keep silence from all *complaining of God*. No man is truly saved while he sets himself up as the judge of God; yet this is the practice of many men. If you give them the Word of God, they begin to pull it to pieces. They ask, "Is God so severe that he will mark our faults? Does he even take notice of our evil thoughts? Can it really be true that, for every idle word that a man shall speak, he will have to give an account in the day of judgment?" And then, after judging God to be austere, and too harsh in his dealings with poor fallible flesh and blood, they go on to snatch from his hand the balance and the rod, and sit upon their little throne, and dare to impugn the decrees of the great Judge of all. "It would be wrong," they say, "to cast men into hell, and to punish with eternal wrath the sins of a short life." And then they begin to traverse all the teaching of Scripture, and to cavil at this and object to that. O sirs, if you would be saved, you must give up this wickedness! This kind of conduct will damn you as surely as you live.

When prisoners are tried by an earthly judge, and are condemned to die, if they are permitted to speak, they can have no hope of obtaining mercy by criticising the judge, and cavilling at the law. Of course they are not guilty, poor innocents!" It is the harsh law," they say, "that is to blame." But the law must maintain its majesty against such cavillers, and it cannot stoop to mercy, or sheath its sword, while a man is in that humor. So, sinner, sit thou alone, and keep thou silence; presume not to judge thy God. Behold, he cometh with clouds! The trumpet will soon proclaim his appearing, and they who were so free to judge their Maker will cry in another tone when that great day has at last come. With the earth reeling beneath their feet, and the heavens themselves on fire, they will beg the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Go, thou guilty one, sit thee still, and hold thy tongue, and bring thy rebellious heart to submission. Shall the flax contend with the fire, or the stubble fight with the flame? What canst thou do in warring with thy Maker?

Sit thou alone, and keep silence, next, from all *claims of merit*. I know that the tendency of the human heart is to say, "I am no worse than other people, I am a good chapel-going, church-going, psalm-singing person. I give to the poor, I say my prayers, and attend to all that sort of thing." Thou wilt never obtain mercy whilst thou hast a word of that kind to plead. Till thou art like a vessel turned upside down, and drained of every drop of human merit, there is no hope of salvation for thee. Thou must sit alone, and keep silence about those good works of thine, for they are all a lie, and thou knowest it. Thou hast never done a good work in thy life; thou hast either spoilt it by thy selfish motives before it, or by some carelessness in it, or else by some vainglorious pride after it. At the best, thou art nothing but a boasting Pharisee; and though thou mayest wash the outside of thy cup and platter, yet thine heart is full of wickedness, thy soul is steeped in sin. O man, talk no more so exceeding proudly, but sit thou still, and hold thy tongue about merit and deservings before the holy God. There is no way of mercy for any one of us until we shut our mouths, and utter not a single boastful word, but stand guiltily silent before the Lord.

I think it is well, too, when a poor sin-burdened soul is silent before God, and unable to make any *bold speeches*. I recollect that, when I first was seeking the Lord, I heard some good people talking about their confidence in God. I had to hold my tongue then, for I could not say a word about that matter. I heard a young friend say that he had found Christ; but I had to hold my tongue then, for I knew that I had not found him, and even after I had found him, there were times when I dared not say so. I felt in my spirit the question, "Am I self-deceived, or am I not? And if I have spoken pretty boldly since that time, even now, occasionally, I feel that same silence creeping over me. It would have been well if Peter had been silent when he said to his Lord, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." I like a man who knows, not only how to speak, but how to sit still; but that latter part is hard work to many. There came a young man to Demosthenes to learn oratory; he talked away at a great rate, and Demosthenes said, "I must charge you double fees." "Why?" he asked. "Why," said the master, "I have first to teach you to hold your tongue, and afterwards to instruct you how to speak." The Lord teaches true penitents how to hold their tongues. They open not their mouth when he has laid trouble upon them, and even in the company of good people they are sometimes dumb with silence, and they hold their tongue even from good. It is not an ill thing that they should act thus, for often the will of the Lord is not done with words; and sometimes, that silence which is frost of the mouth is thaw of the soul, and the heart flows best before God when even praise sits silent on our tongues. O beloved, in thine hour of darkness because of thy sin, sit thou still, and hold thy tongue, for it is oftentimes the way of peace to the soul!

III. Now I shall ask your special and patient attention for just a few minutes to the third point, which is, PROFOUND HUMILIATION: "Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." Upon this matter, I would earnestly address those who are not yet saved, but who desire to be.

Dear friends, it often happens that men do not obtain peace with God because they have not come low enough. The gate of heaven, though it is so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, is nevertheless so low that pride can never pass through it. Thou must stoop if thou wouldst enter heaven. "Let him put his mouth in the dust." I do believe that this precept is needed by very many; and That, when they obey it, they will get peace, but never till then. "Let him put his mouth in the dust." Oriental monarchs require very lowly reverence from their subjects; it is out of keeping with our manners and customs, but the similitude holds good in our relation to the Lord God. When we come before him, we must prostrate ourselves till we bow our mouths in the dust. What can this expression mean? "Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope."

It means, first, that there must be *true, humble, lowly, confession of sin*. You say that you have been praying, yet you have not found peace; have you confessed your sins? This is absolutely necessary, confess your sins to me? you ask. No, thank you; I do not want to hear your confession. It would do me much harm, and it could do you no good to tell them to me; it is to God alone that this confession should be made. Some men have never really made a confession of their sin to God at all; they have done it in such general and insincere terms that it did not amount to a confession. Go you, enter your chamber, shut the door, and get alone; and there, with words or without words, as you find it best, acknowledge before God your omissions and commissions, what you have done and what you have not done. Pour out the whole story before God, and cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do not cloak or dissemble before the Almighty. Let all your sins appear. Take a lowly place; not simply be a sinner in name, but confess that thou art a sinner in fact and deed. I do believe that some of you are in darkness much longer than you need to be, because you do not stoop to a humble confession of your sin. Let the lances into this ugly gathering of yours that brings you so much inflammation of mind and pain of spirit. Let your confession flow like water before God; pour out your heart before him. Own to your sins, take the place of a sinner, for this is a great way towards finding salvation: "If so be there may be hope."

Further than that, dear friends, when it is said that we are to put our mouths in the dust, it means that we are to give up the habit of *putting ourselves above other people*, and finding fault with others. How often is the value of our penitence destroyed because we have looked at Mistress Somebody, and said, "Well, I am guilty, but still,—well, I am not such a hypocrite as Mrs. So-and-so." What have you to do with her? "Oh!" says another, "I know I have been a bad man, but then I—I—I have never been as bad as old So-and-so." What have you to do with him? Here are you pretending to be humble, yet you are as proud as Lucifer. I know you; you are like that man who went up to the temple, and pretended that he was going to pray, and then he said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," and so forth;" nor even as this publican;" turning his eye in disdain towards the true penitent. There is many a man who says, "I am a sinner, but then I am a total abstainer and wear the blue ribbon; that is a good thing, is it not?" Yes, it is, but not if you trust in it for salvation. "Oh, but!" says another, "I know that I have not lived as I ought, but I have always paid 20s. in the pound." So ought every honest man, but what is there to be proud about in that? Are you going to get to heaven by paying 20s. in the pound to a man, and not a penny in the pound to God? Yet that is often the way of men. Or else perhaps we are accusing others while

we pretend that we are ourselves humble. We must get rid of all such bad habits if we want the Lord to have mercy upon us. I believe a sincere penitent thinks himself to be the worst man there is, and never judges other people, for he says in his heart, "That man may be more openly guilty than I am, but very likely he does not know as much as I do, or the circumstances of his case are an excuse for him." A woman, convinced of sin, says, "It is true, that woman has fallen, and her life is full of foulness; but perhaps if I had been tempted as she was, and had been deceived as she was, I should have been even worse than she is." Oh, that we might all give up that habit of cavilling at other people, and put our mouths in the dust in self-abasement before God!

I think that putting our mouths into the dust also means that we realize *our own nothingness in the presence of God*. We have nothing to say, nothing to claim, nothing to boast of; if the Lord should never look upon us in mercy, yet we could not complain of him. If he were to banish us from his presence for ever, yet could we not open our mouths to accuse him, but must say, "Thou art just when thou judges; thou art clear when thou condemnest." That, dear friends, is putting your mouth in the dust; feeling that, in God's sight, you are only like the dust. If you have sought the Lord, and have not found him, I do exhort you to sink yourself lower. Believe that you have no strength, that you have no righteousness, that you are truly lost and ruined and undone, that you are nothing but a mass loathsomeness before the thrice-holy God; and bow before him with this conviction in your heart, "if so be there may be hope."

I am not going to preach upon that last part of the text, because the time has almost gone, and also for another reason, because I have not to say to you, "*If so be there may be hope.*" There *is* hope for any man, or woman, or child here,—I like to say "child" as well as "man, or woman," because I believe that children are often the best part of my congregation. Last Monday week, we had five children before the church, one after the other, whose testimony for Christ was quite as clear as that of any of the elders among us. What an important part of the congregation the boys and girls make up! I believe that there are almost as many saved among the little ones now in this congregation as there are of grown-up people, perhaps even more. Well now, if any of you who are guilty,—whether old or young,—come before the Lord, and confess your sin, and trust in Christ for mercy, you shall have mercy. I do not know who you are, and I do not care who you are; but whosoever shall come, and confess his sin in all lowliness of heart, and in faith believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall have mercy. Christ sits on his throne of grace, and stretches out the silver scepter. Bow before him, and he will forgive your sin. The fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness; if thou art sinful and unclean, come to the fountain that Christ has opened, and which the devil cannot close, and wash and be clean this very hour. God in infinite mercy is ready to forgive, his heart yearns over the wanderers. He stretches out his hands, and entreats thee to come back, and he is grieved until thou dost return. If there be in thy heart any sorrow for having sinned against thy God, if there be any anxiety to come back to him, come back. If thou dost but turn thy face towards him, whilst thou art yet a great way off, he sees, he has compassion upon thee, he runs to thee, he embraces thee. Fall into his arms now. Believe thou in his Son; trust thyself with Jesus, for he never yet failed any who trusted him. Make him the Trustee of thy soul, for he is a Trustee who can be trusted. Deposit in his hands thy spirit, for he is able to keep that which thou committest unto him against that day.

We are getting into summer, and I feel very anxious that none of my hearers should have to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Then, before the harvest comes, now that the summer is just beginning, may the Lord incline your hearts to come and put

your trust in Jesus! Many of you are from the country; you have come to see London. Of all the sights possible to you, the best will be first to see yourselves, and then to see your Savior. There is no exhibition like the exhibition of the love of God in Jesus Christ to guilty sinners. May this be the best day you have ever lived because it shall be the first day you have ever truly lived with the life of God in your soul! I pray the Lord to bless my words to every one of you without exception. Surely, there is not anybody here who would wish to be left out. God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Lamentations 3:1-33, AND 55-58.

We are about to read a chapter which is very full of sorrow; while you are listening to it, some of you may be saying, "We are not in that condition." Well then, be thankful that you are not, and while you hear of the sorrows of others, bless God for the joys you yourself experience. At the same time, remember that there is a way of sorrow which leads at last to rest and peace. There is truth in the words of the poet Cowper,—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

If you have never known the sorrows of the weeping prophet, or anything like them, I am not sure that you should congratulate yourselves, for there is a brokenness of heart that is worth more than the whole world, there is a crushed and bruised spirit in which the Lord delights, and which is a token for good to the one who possesses it.

Verses 1, 2. *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.*

Some of us recollect when we used to go into our own room, and shut the door, and read such a chapter as this, and say, "Here is a description of my true condition." We were once broken in pieces, torn asunder, through a terrible sense of sin. Our thoughts were like a case of knives perpetually pricking us, and, at such a time, these were our words as well as the words of Jeremiah, "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light."

3, 4. *Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.*

Conviction of sin seems to dry up the very sap of our life till we become withered with age. Worse than the agony of a broken bone is the pain of a broken heart. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, believe me, it is no child's play; in the case of some of us, it was sore wounding.

5. *He hath builded against me,—*

"As if he deliberately built walls to stop up my way, and erected castles from which to attack my soul, 'He hath builded against me,'"—

5. *And compassed me with gall and travel.*

"He has shut me up in a circle of bitterness."

6, 7. *He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.*

Like a prisoner in his dungeon, who has to wear manacles and fetters.

8. *Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.*

That is the worst trial of all, for there is comfort in prayer; but when even that seems denied you, into what a terrible state of sorrow is your heart brought!

9-11. *He hath inclosed my ways with hewn Stone, he hath made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear Iying in wait, and so a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.*

You who remember that experience, bless God that you have passed through it, that you have gone over that rough road into the place of peace and rest in Christ. You who have never known this path, it will be well for you when you do, trying as you may find it.

12. *He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.*

"Every sermon I hear seems a shot at me, every text of Scripture seems an arrow aimed at me."

13. *He hath caused the arrow of his quiver to enter into my reins.*

"They are not merely shot at me, but they have actually hit me; they have wounded me; they have pierced me in vital parts."

14-17. *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.*

"It seems so long ago since I was prosperous that I forget what it was like. I have been so troubled that I do not remember what it was to be at ease."

18-21. *And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.*

Notice that, in all his sorrow, this man still had hope. His soul was humbled, and therefore he had hope. I think that, in the New Zealand language, the word for hope is "swimming thought"—the thought that swims when everything else is drowned. Oh, what a mercy it is that hope can live on when all things else appear to die!

22. *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

Hear that, troubled heart; you are not yet destroyed, you are still in the land of the living,—as we say "on praying ground and pleading terms with God." "It is of Jehovah's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

23, 24. *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

"With all my troubles, and losses, and griefs, I still have a God; therefore will I hope in him."

25. *The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

Even though it be out of the depths of the utmost distress that you seek God, you shall find him to be good to you. He is hard to none, unkind to none. Only go thou, and test him and try him, and thou shalt find that it is even as I say.

26, 27. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

And it is not bad for him if he keeps on bearing it in his old age. Our shoulders ever need the yoke; we are such uncertain creatures that we cannot bear too much freedom, even from sorrow.

28-31. *He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever:*

What music there is in that line! He may put thee away for a while, and seem to leave thee; but "the Lord will not cast off for ever." God may seem to put us away from him, but it is written, "He

hateth putting away "There is no divorcement between Christ and the soul that is once espoused to him, their separation shall not be perpetual, for nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

32, 33. *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.*

Now notice, in the 55th verse, what came to the prophet after all this sorrow.

55, 56. *I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.*

Sometimes our prayers get to be so very weak that they are only a breathing; yet we must never forget that "Prayer is the breath of God in men, returning whence it came," and "Praying breath is never spent in vain."

57, 58. *Thou drewest near in the day that I railed upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul;*

What a comfort it is that Christ's in heaven is our great Advocate, and that he has pleaded the causes of our soul before the throne of God!

58. *Thou hast redeemed my life.*

He who is our Advocate is also our Redeemer, and therefore we are doubly safe. Glory be to his name!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—492, 584, 556.

## The Incomparable Bridegroom and His Bride

A Sermon

(No. 2469)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, June 14th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Lord's-day Evening, June 10th, 1886.*

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"—Song of Solomon 5:9.

THIS morning, we had the great privilege of preaching the doctrine of substitution, and of directing the minds of God's people to the solid rock of the meritorious sacrifice of Christ whereon all their hopes of heaven must be built. What we have to say to-night is less doctrinal, and more practical; therefore let us guard ourselves at the outset. If we should, with very much earnestness, urge believers to good works, let nobody suppose that, therefore, we imagine that men are saved by works. Let no one for a moment dream that, in urging the believer to bring forth fruit unto righteousness, we are at all teaching that salvation is the work of man. I have no doubt that all of us who know anything of true religion are of the same opinion as that celebrated Scotch divine, old David Dickson, who was asked, when dying, what was the principal subject on which his thoughts were engaged, and he answered, "I am gathering up all my good works, and all my bad works, tying them into one bundle, and throwing them all alike down at the foot of the cross, and am resting alone upon the finished work of Jesus." It is related of that mighty master in Israel, James Durham, that his experience at the last was very much akin to that of his friend Dickson, for he said, "Notwithstanding all my preaching, and all my spiritual experiences, I do not know that I have anything to hang upon excepting this one sentence spoken by Christ, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" "Ah!" replied someone who stood by Mr. Durham at the time, "you might well hazard a thousand souls, if you had them, upon the strength of that one precious text."

Having said so much by way of caution, I want to address some earnest words to the people of God upon certain practical truths that arise out of our text; and the first thing I have to say is this, that the daughters of Jerusalem recognized in the spouse an exceeding beauty, which dazzled and charmed them, so that they could not help calling her the "fairest among women." This was not her estimate of herself; for she had said, "I am black, but comely." Nor was it the estimate of her enemies; for they had smitten her, and wounded her. But it was the estimate of fair, candid, and impartial onlookers.

I. This leads me to remark, first, that **OUR CHARACTER SHOULD GIVE WEIGHT TO OUR PROFESSION OF RELIGION.**

You will observe that it was in consequence of thinking her the "fairest among women" that they asked the spouse, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" They thought that one so fair might well have her choice of a Bridegroom, that one so lovely herself would be likely to have an eye to loveliness in her Husband, and consequently they considered her judgment to be worth some attention, and they put to her the question why her Beloved was more than another

beloved. Take it for granted, dear friends, as a truth which your own observation and experience will make every day more and more clear, that your power to spread religion in the world must mainly depend upon your own personal character, of course, in absolute reliance upon the Holy Spirit. I suppose it is the earnest wish of every Christian to win for Christ some new converts, to bring some fresh province under the dominion of the King of kings. I will tell you how this may be accomplished.

Your power to achieve this noble purpose must largely depend upon your own personal *consistency*. It little availeth what I say if I do the reverse. The world will not care about my testimony with the lip, unless there be also a testimony in my daily life for God, for truth, for holiness, for everything that is honest, lovely, pure, and of good report. There is that in a Christian's character which the world, though it may persecute the man himself, learns to value. It is called consistency,—that is, the making of the life stand together, not being one thing in one place and another thing in another, or one thing at one time and quite different on another occasion. It is not consistency to be devout on Sunday and to be dishonest on Monday. It is not consistency to sing the songs of Zion to-day, and to shout the songs of lustful mirth tomorrow. It is not consistency occasionally to wear the yoke of Christ, and yet frequently to make yourself the serf of Satan. But to make your life all of a piece is to make it powerful, and when God the Holy Ghost enables you to do this, then your testimony will tell upon those amongst whom you live. It would be ludicrous, if it were not so sorrowful a thing, to be spoken of even with weeping, that there should be professed Christians who are through inconsistency among the worst enemies of the cross of Christ. I heard, the other day, a story which made me laugh. A poor creature, in a lunatic asylum, had got it into his head that he was some great one, and he addressed a person who was visiting the asylum in the following words:—"I am Sir William Wallace; give me some tobacco!" What a ridiculous contrast between his proud assertion and his poor request! Who but a lunatic would have said such a thing? Yet alas! we know people who say, by their actions, if not in words, "I am a Christian, but I will take advantage of you when I can; I am one of the blood-royal of heaven, my life is hid with Christ in God, and my conversation is in heaven, but—but—I like worldliness, and sensual pleasure, and carnal mirth quite as well as other men!" I say again, that this kind of thing would be superlatively ludicrous if it were not ineffably sorrowful, and it is, anyhow, utterly contemptible. If your life be not all of a piece, the world will soon learn how to estimate your testimony, and will count you to be either a fool or a knave, and perhaps both.

But it is not enough to be barely consistent; what the world expects in Christians is real *holiness* as well as consistency. Holiness is something more than virtue. Virtue is like goodness frozen into ice, hard and cold; but holiness is that same goodness when it is thawed into a clear, running, sparkling stream. Virtue is the best thing that philosophy can produce, but holiness is the true fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and of that alone. There must be about us an unworldliness, a something out of the common and ordinary way, or else, mark you, that uncommon gospel, that heavenly gospel, which we hold, will not seem to be bringing forth its legitimate fruit. If you are just barely honest, and no more, if you are barely moral, and no more, it is of no service that you should try to speak of Christ; the world will not reckon you as the fairest among women, and it will not enquire anything about your Well-beloved.

But, brethren and sisters, I feel as if, instead of exhorting you thus, I might better turn to confession myself, and ask you to join me in confessing how far short we come of being anything like the fairest among women as to character. We do hope that we have something Christ-like about

us; but oh, how little it is! How many imperfections there are! How much is there of the old Adam, and how little of the new creature in Christ Jesus! Archbishop Usher was once asked to write a treatise upon Sanctification; this he promised to do, but six months rolled away, and the good Archbishop had not written a sentence. He said to a friend, "I have not begun the treatise, yet I cannot confess to a breach of my promise, for, to tell you the truth, I have done my best to write upon the subject; but when I came to look into my own heart, I saw so little of sanctification there, and found that so much which I could have written would have been merely by rote as a parrot might have talked, that I had not the face to write it." Yet, if ever there was a man renowned for holiness, it was Archbishop Usher; if ever there was a saintly man who seemed to be one of the seraphic spirits permitted to stray beyond the companionship of his kind among poor earth-worms here, it was Usher; yet this is the confession that he makes concerning himself! Where, then, shall we hide our diminished heads? I am sure we may all say, with good Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, who was another bright example of seraphic holiness, that what we want is more grace. He had written a pamphlet on some political matter, and Lord North wrote to know what he could give him in return. His answer was, "I want what your lordship cannot give me,—more grace." That is also true of us, we want more grace. It is to be had; and if we had it, and it transformed us into what we should be, oh, what lives of happiness and of holiness we might lead here below, and what mighty workers should we be for our Lord Jesus Christ! How would his dear name be made to sound to the utmost ends of the earth! I fear me it is but a dream; but just conceive that all of you, the members of this church, were made to be truly saintly, saints of the first water, saints who had cast off the sloth of worldliness, and had come out in the full glory of newness of life in Christ Jesus, oh, what a power might this church become in London, and what a power to be felt the wide world over! Let us seek it, let us strive after it, recollecting that it is a truth never to be denied that only in proportion to the sanctity and spirituality of our character will be our influence for good amongst the sons of men.

II. Advancing now a step, our second remark will be, that **WE SHOULD CHARGE OTHERS CONCERNING CHRIST**. "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

The "fairest among women" was asked why she had so spoken: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love." By this "charge" is meant, I suppose, that the spouse adjured them, and spoke solemnly to them about her Beloved. *Christians, be troublesome to the world!* O house of Israel, be like a burdensome stone to the world! You are not sent here to be recognized as honorable citizens of this world, to be petted and well-treated. Even Christ himself, the peaceable One, said, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" What I mean is this, we are not to be quiet about our religion. The world says to us, "Hold your tongue about religion, or at least talk about it at fit times; but do not introduce it at all seasons so as to become a pest and a nuisance." I say again, and you know in what sense I mean it, *be a nuisance to the world*; be such a man that worldlings will be compelled to feel that there is a Christian in their midst. An officer was walking out of the royal presence on one occasion, when he tripped over his sword. The king said to him, "Your sword is rather a nuisance." "Yes," was the officer's reply, "your majesty's enemies have often said so." May you be a nuisance to the world in that sense, troublesome to the enemies of the King of kings! While your conduct should be courteous, and everything that could be desired as between man and man, yet let your testimony for Christ be given without any flinching and without any mincing of the matter.

This afternoon, I was reading a sermon by a certain divine, whose subject of discourse was, why the working-classes do not go to a place of worship, and the preacher seems to have made up his mind that, whatever is preached in this Tabernacle, is especially obnoxious to laboring men and women. The reason he gives why the working-classes do not attend places of worship is that we preach such dreadful doctrines. It is very remarkable that places where these truths are preached are crowded, while places where the opposite things are proclaimed are often empty! It is curious, if the doctrine of the gospel is such a very horrible thing that it drives people away, that at the places where it is preached there are more people than can get in, whereas where some of the modern doctrines are declared, you may see more spiders than people! It is a singular circumstance, certainly, yet one for which we can easily account. A Socinian minister was once asked by one who preached Evangelical truth, "If I, who proclaim doctrines which you say are obnoxious to common reason, have my place full, and you, who preach such pretty, reasonable doctrines, can get nobody to hear you, do you not think it is because the people have an idea that what I teach is true, and that what you preach, though it is very pleasant and palatable, is not true, and therefore they do not care to hear it?" It is not by altering our testimony that we are to hope to win an audience, and it is not by hiding the light of the gospel under a bushel that you or I shall discharge our obligations to our Lord. We must speak up for Christ, and so speak up for Him that men will be moved to ask us the question, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

I have read that Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, had every pew in the chapel where he preached sketched out on a plan, and the names of all the occupants of the pews written on it, so that he might *pray for every one, and, if possible, speak to everyone*. Such a plan might not be practicable in so large a building as this, but it is an excellent method; and if we cannot adopt it, let this place be mapped out in your own mind, and let every believer, wherever he sits, consider that there is a little district allotted to him, and let him seek to have a word of courteous Christian conversation about divine things with all who sit near him. I suggest this as a very excellent mode of beginning to "charge" others about Christ; and then in your daily business, in the workshop, at fit times and seasons, at periods when Christian prudence and Christian zeal would give their voice together, introduce Christ, and begin to talk of him, and hold him up as the great cure-all for human diseases, the great staff and support for human weakness. We shall never see as much blessing as we might until the work of the Church becomes far more general than it is at present. There is something which every believer can do for his Lord. He must be able to tell of what he has tasted and handled of the Word of Life, and if he has not tasted and handled it, then he is not a child of God at all. The best teaching in the world is experimental; nothing wins upon men like personal witnessing, not merely teaching the doctrine as we find it in the Book, but as we have felt it in its living power upon our own hearts. When we begin to tell of its effect upon ourselves, it is wonderful what power there is upon others in that testimony. A person talks to me about a certain medicine, how it is compounded, what it looks like, how many drops must be taken at a dose, and so on. Well, I do not care to hear all that, and I soon forget it; but he tells me that for many months he was bed-ridden, he was in sore distress and in great pain, and like to die; and, looking at him as he stands before me in perfect health, I am delighted with the change, and he says that it was that medicine which restored him. If I am a sick man in the same state as he was, I say to him, "Give me the name and address, for I must try that medicine for myself." I believe that the simple witness of converted boys and girls, converted lads and lasses, especially the witness of converted fathers and mothers and friends beloved, the witness that comes of the grey head that is backed up by years of godly living, has a wonderful power for

the spread of the gospel, and we cannot expect that God will give us any very large blessing until the whole of us shall be at work for our Lord. We need not all climb up the pulpit stairs, but each one of us can proclaim Christ according to our ability, and according to the circumstances in which he has placed us. When we shall do that, then we may expect to see "greater things than these." Days that shall make us laugh for very joy of heart, and well nigh make us dance like David did before the ark, will come when all the rank and file of the army, and even those who halt upon their crutches, shall march unanimously against the foe.

III. Thirdly, it is important for us to **MAKE ALL WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH US FEEL THAT CHRIST JESUS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST WITH US.**

You perceive that the question of the text is not, "What is thy Beloved that he should be equal to others?" It is, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" The idols of the heathen are all made to stand in the Pantheon face to face, and there is no quarrelling among them; but as soon as you introduce Christ there, they must all go down, or he will not stay. The principle of the toleration of every form of doctrine—I mean not, of course, civil toleration, which we hold to be always necessary and right, but I mean mental toleration,—the principle of the mental toleration of all forms of doctrine, and all forms and shades of action, is heathenish, for where Christ comes he comes to reign; and when once he enters the soul of a man, it is down, down, down with everything else.

There is a text which is often misunderstood. I heard it read thus only last Sunday: "No man can serve *two* masters." I very much question whether he cannot; I believe he could serve, not only two, but twenty. That is not the meaning of the text; the true reading of it is, "No man can serve *two masters.*" They cannot both be masters; if two of them are equal, then neither of them is really master. It is not possible for the soul to be subject to two master-passions. If a man says, "I love Christ," that is well; but if he says, "I love Christ, and I love money, and I love them both supremely," that man is a liar, for the thing is not possible. There is only one that can be the master-passion; and where Jesus enters the soul, love to him must be the master-passion of the heart.

It strikes me that a Christian, living fully up to his privileges, would be such a man as this;—if he had, on one side, the opportunity to enjoy pleasure, and, on the other side, a painful opportunity of honoring Christ, he would prefer to honor Christ rather than to enjoy himself. If, on the one hand, there were gain, even lawfully to be had, and on the other hand, Christ could be honored in a way that would bring no monetary gain, the man would prefer the glorifying of his Master to the obtaining of the advantage in cash which was held out to him. And if it comes to this, that by soft speeches he may get himself into good repute, and that by sternly speaking out and rebuking error he may honor his Master but bring much contempt upon himself, if he be a genuine Christian he will always take the latter course. The first question he will ask will be, "How can I most honor my Lord? How can I best glorify him?"

It is clear that *Christ is not first in every nominal Christian's heart.* No, alas! he is not first, and he is not even second, he is very far down in the scale. Look at them,—good honest tradespeople, perhaps, but from the first dawn of Monday morning to the putting up of the shutters on Saturday night, what is the main business of their life? It is only, "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Now, where is Christ in such a case as that? Look at others; with them the question is, "Where shall I invest such-and-such an amount of spare cash? How shall I best lay by such-and-such a sum? What field shall I buy next? What house shall I add to my estate?" As for the Lord Jesus, he is put off with the cheese-parings and the candle-ends; he gets a

little now and then dropped into the offering-box, but it is only a mere trifle compared with what he ought to receive. The man's words are nine hundred and ninety-nine for himself, and perhaps not much more than half a one for Christ; almost all his time goes to the world, and not to his Lord; his whole self goes to himself, and not to the Savior to whom he professes to belong.

This is not the case with *the truly Christ-like man*. With him, Christ is first, Christ is last, Christ is midst, Christ is all in all; and when he speaks about anything connected with Christ, his words come with such a solemn earnestness, that men are impressed with what he says, and they turn round to him, and ask, as the daughters of Jerusalem enquired of the spouse, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

IV. Our last thought is this; if ever, through the grace of God, we should possess such a character, and bear such a testimony as we have been talking about, so that men shall ask us the question of the text, **IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER IT.**

This is an age in which the world asks many questions, and from some Christians it cannot get an answer. I will say one thing which some of you may not like to hear, perhaps, but I cannot help that. There are some of you who are Baptists; but why? Well, I suppose, because I happen to be one, and you have followed me without carefully studying the teaching of the New Testament upon the question. I fear it is so with some of you, and there are others of you who are Wesleyans, or Independents, or Church people, but the only reason you can give for being so, is that your grandmother, or your mother, happened to be of that denomination. This is an age in which people do not estimate truth as they should do. A good earnest controversy seems to me to be a very healthy thing, because it turns men's attention somewhat more than usual to divine things; but you know how it is, even with many professing Christian people. They think it would be wicked to read a novel; but if it is written upon a religious subject, it is a very proper thing then. There is hardly a weekly newspaper, nowadays, or even a penny magazine, that can live without having a novel in it; and there must be a market for all this rubbish or it would not be supplied so plentifully. Why, sirs, in Puritanic times, men read solid books like John Owen "On the Mortification of Sin"; they studied such works as Richard Gilpin "On Satan's Temptations", or Stephen Charnock on "The Divine Attributes"; but, in these days, people who ought to read these solid books, so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, are often wasting their time over poor stuff which only addles the brain, and does the soul no good. I would to God that we could again see a race of sturdy believers, who would hold to nothing but what they had tested by the Word of God; who would receive nothing merely because it was taught by their minister, or by their parents, or by any human authority, but who would accept with unquestioning faith everything that is revealed in the Inspired Book. Our motto still should be, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We want to breed again—and oh, may God give us grace to do so!—a race of men who shall be rooted and grounded in the faith, and who, when they are asked for a reason for the hope that is in them, shall be able to give it, not with fear and trembling and hesitation, but with holy boldness and determination, because they have tested and tried the matter for themselves.

See how the spouse does; she does not pause a minute before she gives her reply. She is asked, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" and she has the answer, as we say, at her fingers' ends, and why was this? Why, because she had it in her heart. So she says, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." She does not say, "Stop a bit, I must read up on that question; I must get myself well-instructed upon it," but it is such a vital point, had one so dear to

her, as it touches the person of her Lord, that she answers at once, "Is my Beloved better than any other beloved? Certainly he is, and here are the reasons." She puts them together one after another without a pause, so that the daughters of Jerusalem must have been convinced; and I commend her example to you also, my beloved in Christ Jesus, Do study the Word, that your faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. I beseech you, if I have taught you anything that is not revealed in the Scriptures, or if you have received anything only as by my authority, give it up until you have tested and tried it by the Word of the Lord. I am not afraid what the result will be, for if in anything I have erred, I pray the Lord to teach me and also to teach you, so that we may grow together in the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of the faith. Do let us all seek to be taught of God; and then, with a holy life added to this divine instruction, and a clear testimony for Jesus Christ constantly borne by us, our witnessing must tell upon the age in which we live.

Oh, that the Lord would send us times of true revival once again! Run your finger down the page of history till you come to the Reformation; what was there in Luther, in Calvin, in Zwingle, that they should have been able to shake the world any more than there is in men who are living nowadays? Nothing but this, that they believed what they did believe, and they spoke with an awful earnestness, like men who meant what they said, and straightway there arose a noble race of men, men who felt the power of faith, and lived it out, and the world was made to feel that "there were giants in those days." Then, again, in later times, when the Church had fallen into a fatal slumber, there came the age of Whitefield and Wesley. What was the power of the early Methodists? Why, simply the power of true sincerity combined with holiness! What if I say that it was the power of intruding religion upon men, of forcing men to hear God's voice, of compelling a sleeping world to wake out of its slumbers? As I sat, last week, in the hall of the Free Church Assembly in Edinburgh, just beneath the Castle, I started in my seat, I thought the whole hall was going to fall, for at one o'clock the gun on the Castle was fired from Greenwich by electricity. It startled every one of us, and I noticed that nearly everybody took out his watch to see whether it was right by the gun. I thought to myself, "That is just what the Christian Church ought to do. It ought, at the proper time, to give a loud, clear, thundering testimony for God and for truth, so that every man might examine his own conscience, and get himself put right where he is wrong." Our testimony for Christ ought not to be like the ticking of an ordinary clock, or as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, but a mighty booming noise that commands and that demands a hearing. Let our soul be but linked with heaven, let the Spirit of the Lord flash the message along the wires, and our life may be just as accurate and just as startling as that time-gun at Edinburgh. So, when men ask us, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" we shall have an answer ready for them, which may God bless to them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 807, 802.

Song of Solomon 1.

We will this evening read in the one Book of the Bible which is wholly given up to fellowship; I allude to the Book of Canticles. This Book stands like the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and no man shall ever be able to pluck its fruit, and eat thereof, until first he has been brought by Christ past the sword of the cherubim, and led to rejoice in the love which hath delivered him from death. The Song of Solomon is only to be comprehended by the men whose standing is within the veil. The outer-court worshippers, and even those who only enter the court of the priests, think the Book a very strange one; but they who some very near to Christ can often see in this Song of Solomon the only expression which their love to their Lord desires.

Verses 1-2. *The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*

The Person here alluded to is not named; this omission is very common and usual to all-absorbing love. The spouse is thinking so much of Christ Jesus her Lord that it is not necessary for her to name him; she cannot make a mistake, and she is so oblivious of all besides, that she does not think of them, nor of those who would ask, "Who is this of whom you speak?" The communion is so close between herself and her Lord that his name is left out: "Let *him* kiss me." By the kiss is to be understood that strange and blessed manifestation of love which Christ gives from himself to his children. Inasmuch as the word "kisses" is in the plural, the spouse asks that she may have the favor multiplied; and inasmuch as she mentions the "mouth" of her Bridegroom, it is because she wishes to receive the kisses fresh and warm from his sacred person.

"For thy love is better than wine." It is better in itself, for it is more costly. Did it not flow out in streams of blood from a better winepress than earth's best wine hath ever known? It is better, too, in its effects; more exhilarating, more strengthening, and it leaves no ill results.

3. *Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*

The spouse surveys all the attributes of Christ, and she compares them to separate and precious ointments. Christ is anointed as Prophet, Priest and King, and in each of these anointings he is a source of sweetness and fragrance to his people. But as if jealous of herself for having talked of the "ointments" when she should have spoken of him, she seems to say, "Thy very name is as an alabaster box when it is opened, and the odour of the precious spikenard fills the room."

"Jesus, the very thought of thee

With sweetness fills my breast."

"Thy name is as ointment poured forth," and the spouse addeth, as a note of commendation, "therefore do the virgins love thee."

4. *Draw me, we will run after thee:*

She feels, perhaps, as you do now, beloved brethren, heavy of heart; she cannot fly, nor go to reach her Lord; but her heart longs after him, so she cries, "Draw me, we will run after thee." While she prays the prayer others feel it suitable to them also, so they join with her. When Christ draws us, we do not walk, but "run" after him; there is no heavy going then. When Christ draws us, how swiftly do we fly, as the dove to the dove-cote, when Jesu's grace enticeth us.

Running soon brings the spouse to her Lord; for notice the next clause:—

4. *The king hath brought me into his chambers:*

It is done: "The King hath brought me into his chambers." Come you to him in prayer, and mayhap, while you are yet speaking, he will hear; while you are musing, the fire shall burn, and you shall be able to say, "Yes, he has brought me near to himself, to the retired chamber where I may be alone with him, to the chamber of riches and delights, where I may feast with him."

4. *We will be glad and rejoice in thee,*

This is the sure result of getting into the inner chamber with Christ.

4. *We will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.*

Not only the just in heart, those pure and lowly ones who, whithersoever the Lamb doth lead, from his footsteps ne'er depart, but the upright, those who love moral excellence and virtue, they must love Christ.

Now the singer's note changeth:—

5. *I am black,*

Ah, my soul, how true is that of thee! "I am black,"—

5. *But comely,*

Oh, glorious faith, that can, through the blackness, still see the comeliness! We are comely when covered with the righteousness of Christ, though black in ourselves. "I am black, but comely,"—

5. *O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar,  
Smoke-dried, foul, filthy, poverty-stricken.*

5. *As the curtains of Solomon.*

Bedecked with embroidery made with gold and silver threads, and fit for a king's tent, so strangely mixed is the nature of the believer: "black but comely," . . . "as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon."

6. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me:*

Perhaps you are afraid, beloved, that the Master should look at you, for you feel yourself so unworthy.

6. *My mother's children were angry with me;*

You have been persecuted until your spirit is broken.

6. *They made me the keeper of the vineyards;*

Perhaps you have been put to some ignoble work; you have toiled under the whip of the law; but you have a worse sorrow even than this, for you have to add:—

6. *But mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

You are conscious that you have restrained prayer, that you have neglected searching the Word, that you have not lived as near to God as you ought to have done; and all this seems to make you feel as if you could not come into close communion with Christ. Come, my brother, my sister, shake off your unbelief, may the Master shake it off from you! Then once again you can change the note, as the spouse does here:—

7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?*

There are other shepherds, though they are false ones, and these pretend to be companions of Christ; but why should we turn aside to them? And yet we shall, O our Beloved One, unless thou dost tell us where to follow thee, and how to abide close by thy side, or dost tell us where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon! Here comes the answer:—

8. *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,—*

Just note that; she said that she was black, but Christ says that she is the fairest among women; in fact, there is a passage in the Song where he twice over calls her fair; as Erskine puts it,—

"Lo! thou art fair, lo! thou art fair,

Twice fair art thou, I say;

My grace, my righteousness becomes

Thy doubly-bright array."

O ye faithful ones, what joy is contained in this encomium which your Lord gives to you!" If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,—

8. *Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

There are two ways of finding Christ; first, follow after true believers; most of you know some experienced Christians; follow their footsteps, and you shall so find their God. Or else, go to the

shepherds' tents; wait on the ministry of the Word; the Lord is often pleased to manifest himself to his people when they are willing to hear what messages he sends through his ambassadors.

9. *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

True believers are as strong, as noble, as beautiful as the horses in Pharaoh's chariot, which were renowned throughout all the world. Let us be like those horses, let us all pull together, let us draw the great chariot of our King behind us, let us be content to wear his harness, that we may be partakers of his splendid triumph.

10. *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

Christ here praises his Church. Orientals were in the habit of wearing jewels in such abundance that their cheeks were covered with them, and then they multiplied the chains of gold upon their necks; and the graces which Christ gives to his people, and especially the various parts of his own finished work, become to them like rows of jewels and chains of gold.

11. *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*

As if Father, Son, and Holy Ghost would all work together to make the believer perfectly beautiful.

12-13. *While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me;*

Not a sprig, mark you, but a bundle of myrrh.

13. *He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

Christ, as a bundle of myrrh, shall always be near our hearts, so that every life-pulse shall come from him.

14. *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.*

He is not, I say again, one sprig or spray of camphire, but a cluster of it. The spouse, you see, multiplies figures to describe her Bridegroom, and even when she has done so, she cannot reach the height of his glory.

"Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears;  
His beauties we can never trace,  
Till we behold him face to face."

16. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.*

So Christ speaks of his Church, she has the soft, mild, tender eyes of a dove. Besides, she has the discerning eye by which the dove can distinguish between carrion and fit food; and then she has a clear eye like that of the dove. You know that the dove, or pigeon, when it is taken far away from home, and wants to reach its cote, flies round and round till it gets up high, and then it looks for miles, perhaps for hundreds of miles, till it tracks with unerring eye its own resting-place, or some familiar landmark, and then, with cutting wing, it flies through the ether till it reaches its home. So, every believer should have doves' eyes,—eyes that can see from earth to heaven, and see Christ in his glory, even when his cause is disowned by men.

16, 17. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

We have the word "rafters" here, but it should be "galleries." The "bed" expresses the near fellowship which Christ has with his people. The "house" is a larger expression, and perhaps denotes the whole Church; and the "galleries" signify the ordinances of grace. You notice that these are

made of unrotting wood, the one of cedar and the other of fir; and truly, dear friends, in closing our reading, we can say to our Lord,—

"No beams of cedar or of fir  
Can with thy courts on earth compare;  
And here we wait, until thy love  
Raise us to nobler seats above."

## Jacob and Doubting Souls—A Parallel

A Sermon

(No. 2470)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, June 21st, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Lord's-day Evening, June 20th, 1886.*

"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."—Genesis 45:28.

I THINK THAT THE PATRIARCH JACOB may well serve as the type and emblem of a doubting soul, one who has been told the good news of salvation, the gospel of God's grace, but who cannot bring his mind to believe it.

Let us think for a few minutes of old Jacob. First of all, he was a man who was very ready to believe evil tidings. When his sons held up before him a coat dipped in the blood of a kid, and asked him if it was not the coat he had given to Joseph, the patriarch answered, "It is my son's goat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." He had no doubt about it, yet it was not true; and we have many hearers who will believe anything that is very terrible, even though it may not be true. If there is something in the sermon which seems to condemn them, even though it may not be meant to condemn them, they are sure to take home that part of the discourse. If they see any passage of Scripture that appears to frown upon them, they retain that in their memory, and they keep on stinging themselves with it, often making themselves unhappy with that which was never intended to apply to them. I wish that readiness to believe the dark sayings could be turned to an equal readiness to receive the consolations of the Word of God. Surely, we ought not to be so prejudiced against ourselves as to accept every evil thing and to reject every good thing. No, let us fairly weigh the evidence for either form of teaching, and believe, or reject either, according as the evidence for it may be strong or weak.

Jacob would, all the while, have willingly believed that which was good, if he could have believed it. If you could have asked him if he had any objection to believe that Joseph was alive, the old man would have answered, "Oh, no! it would be the joy of my heart if I could but think it to be true." There are some whom I am now addressing who are in similar case. Ask them whether they have any objection to believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior, that he loved them, and gave himself for them, and they would every one reply, "Object to believe this? Why, I would give my eyes,—I would give my life,—if I could but think it to be true." Such an unbeliever as that is a ye hopeful one, because it is evident that he is not a wilful unbeliever; he does not desire to be so. His heart longs to grasp the truth which, for the moment, his mind dares not accept. Jacob in this respect is the type of very many who hear the gospel, but dare not receive it; and yet oh, how they wish they could! Their very soul hungers and thirsts after it, but they are afraid to take it lest they should be taking that which is not truly theirs.

So far, the parallel between Jacob and the doubting soul runs very properly. Next notice that, to the patriarch, the truth about his son Joseph seemed altogether incredible. Joseph was alive, and

governor over all the land of Egypt; but the old man had so long believed the contrary, that he could not readily get out of the rut. He had sorrowfully said, "Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces;" and this idea, though it was most painful to him, had, nevertheless, eaten its way into his belief, and he could not get it out of him. So do I know some who have written bitter things against themselves. "I shall be lost, I know I shall; it is not possible that Christ will save me. He will certainly reject me." And, although that is quite untrue,—as untrue as Jacob's belief that Joseph was dead,—yet they have hugged their despair so long that they cannot give it up. They are like the man who refused to be comforted, or those afflicted ones of whom we read, "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death." Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come upon these poor unwilling doubters, and help them to know that a falsehood, however long it is believed, is not the truth! Though we may be in despondency of spirit for years, yet, if there is no real cause for that despondency, it is a pity that we should continue in it. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would enable us to break those bands asunder, and joyfully to believe what is true,—that there is a Savior, an all-sufficient Savior, that all power is committed into his hands, and that he will rejoice this very hour to save and bless our souls!

The news appeared incredible to Jacob because it seemed "too good to be true." His eyes flashed for the moment with a joyful light. "Joseph alive? Joseph—my Joseph—ruler over all the land of Egypt?" And then the very brightness of the thought seemed to blind the eye of his faith. "It cannot be true," said he; "it is too good to be true." Suppose that one of you had lost a son many years ago, and that a person met you outside the Tabernacle, and said to you, "That boy of yours, who was reported dead twenty years ago, is not dead; he is in Australia, alive and well," you would be staggered, would you not? And I have no doubt you would say to yourself, "It must be somebody like him, or somebody else of the same name; it cannot be my son; it is impossible, do I not know that he is dead?" You would hardly believe it; therefore, do not blame poor old Jacob for his doubts. There are many who are, spiritually, just in that state. They say, "What! you say that Jesus died for me, that I have been redeemed with his most precious blood, that I can have my sins forgiven? It cannot be. What! that I can be taken up to dwell with Christ in heaven? Oh, that it were true! It cannot be true. I did sing, just now,—

"Even me, even me,

Let thy mercy light on me;"

"but oh, surely, it cannot come to me! I must be left out; when the showers of blessing are falling, I cannot hope that there will be even a drop for me." Well, then, you and old Jacob are very much alike; I think you must be first cousins. Yet Jacob was wrong and so are you; the news is not "too good to be true."

Through not believing his sons, Jacob began to faint in spirit. When they told him that Joseph was yet alive we read that "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." There is nothing that so stops the action of the heart, and brings on faintness of the spirit, as unbelief. As soon as the old man began to believe the good tidings that his sons brought, "the spirit of Jacob their father revived." Faith makes our spirits revive, but unbelief seems to strike us dead. I do not wonder that some of you are sad, and dull, and unhappy; as long as you cherish your unbelief, you must be so. O Holy Spirit, deliver them from this unbelief! Revive them by enabling them to believe what is true, that there is a Savior, a Savior yet alive, a Savior who is Lord of all, able and willing to save them.

There, then, is the parallel between Jacob and a doubting soul.

But, at last, Jacob rose out of his despondency and doubt; according to our text, "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." I think the time has come for some others to say, "It is enough." After having been attendants on the means of grace, perhaps for thirty years or more, they ought to be able to say, "It is enough." There came in here, last Lord's-day, from a distant part of the country, an aged man, a farmer. He came up on Saturday for no other reason but to find the Savior. He heard me say that I would see enquirers on Tuesday, so he was here then. He said, "I left my farm, though it is a large one, "and then he told me something about himself, and he added, "I want to find the Savior. I thought, sir, I would come and see if I could find Christ on the Sabbath day, and I waited on that I might go to the prayermeeting on Monday night, and then come and speak to you about my soul." I thought, "Yes, and it is worth while to leave your farm to find a Savior, it is worth while to come from a distant county of England, it would be worth while to come from the ends of the earth if one might but find the Savior." Ere I left him, I think he could say, "It is enough; Jesus is yet alive, I will trust him even now;" and he went on his way rejoicing. Oh, that some others might be able to say with him, "It is enough"!

There are two points upon which I think Jacob could say, "It is enough." First, *the evidence was enough to convince him*: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive." Secondly, *the conviction was enough to move him*: "I will go and see him before I die." The second point is quite as important as the first; indeed, it is that to which the first ought practically to lead us.

I. The first point is, that Jacob had ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVINCHE HIM: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive."

The question for us to consider concerns, not Joseph, but Jesus. He is yet alive. He died upon the cross, but he has risen from the dead, and gone into the glory; "wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The evidence that good old Jacob had received was *personal testimony*. His sons said concerning Joseph, "We have been to Egypt, and we have seen him." There have been many witnesses to testify that Christ is yet alive. Not only did the eleven apostles see him many times, but over five hundred brethren at once saw the Son of God after he had risen from the dead. There is no fact in history that is better attested than the fact that he was crucified, and that he rose again. The resurrection is as true after nearly nineteen hundred years as it was the day it happened; the distance of time does not alter the fact. Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died on Calvary, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, the third day rose from the dead, no more to die, and ascended into heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of God. To this fact, his disciples bore unfaltering witness; they were honest, simple minded men, without enough imagination to make up the story. They were so sure of this truth that they died rather than deny it; most of them died by the most painful forms of death, yet nothing could ever make one of them speak a word to the contrary. They declared that they had seen him, that they had eaten with him, some of them could say that they had touched him, and one had put his finger into the print of the nails. Yes, brethren, Jesus Christ is yet alive, and I pray that each one here may say, "The testimony of these many witnesses is true, I believe it. It is enough; Jesus is yet alive."

Moreover, the Holy Ghost bore witness to this fact, for after the ascension of the Savior, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and their companions, and they began to speak with other tongues. They went into all the countries of the world, and wherever they went, they were able to speak the language without having to learn it. At the same time, the Holy Ghost enabled them to

work miracles by which the sick were healed; and these two things together were the witness of the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ the Son of God still lived, and that in his name salvation was to be preached to the sons of men. To me, this is evidence enough,—the witness of faithful men, and the works of the Holy Ghost.

Beside that, there are many of us who are witnesses that, in answer to prayer, we have received pardon through the living Christ. We have also received, through that living Christ, a new life into our soul; we have passed from death unto life, and those who knew us before our conversion must notice a very remarkable change in us. They may not all admire it, but they must all admit it, and bear witness that we are now other than we used to be. The Lord Jesus, in whom we have trusted, has given us new motives, new desires, in fact, a new nature, and a new life, and we are witnesses to this truth that he is a living Savior, still mighty to save. I wish you could all say, with regard to these witnesses, "It is enough." I do not know what more witnesses we can give you, and I may say of the apostles, and of all those who bear witness by the Holy Spirit, "If ye receive not their witness, neither will ye believe though men should rise from the dead and bear testimony to the fact that Jesus lives to save the sons of men."

But then, Jacob had, in addition to this personal testimony of witnesses, the testimony of *accurate reports*, for we find that Jacob's sons told their father "all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them." Those words of Joseph were remarkable words, for he traced God's providence in all that had happened. He said to his brethren, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God, and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Jacob knew that those words were after the manner of Joseph, for Joseph always lived in the fear and love of God. As for our Lord Jesus Christ, he has come to teach us of the Father. He reveals God to us; that which he speaks to us, he speaks not of himself, but in the power and in the name of God, and we know that his word is true, because it is a word which glorifies God and not man.

Joseph also spoke somewhat about his own position and power. "Tell my father," he said, "thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt." So, the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and therefore we are to go and teach all nations, and bring them as disciples to his feet. The words he speaks concerning himself are not boastful or false; but they are the utterance of a humble, meek, and lowly Savior who never said a word more or less than the truth.

Joseph had also spoken to them very tenderly and kindly about their father. He would do everything for his father and his brethren, giving them the best of the land; and our Lord Jesus has spoken very tenderly to us. "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you hear them or read them, are their own witness. There is a certain distinct unique majesty about the language of Jesus Christ which somehow penetrates to the hearts of men, and carries its own convincing witness into the mind. I pray you, then,—you who have for years heard his words,—say, "It is enough; we have heard quite sufficient from him to compel us to believe that he liveth, and that he is able to save." How long must he continue to speak to you who are now getting old hearers of the gospel, and yet have not believed it? How much longer must we persuade, entreat, exhort in the name of the Lord Jesus? How much longer must his words be read and quoted in your hearing? May God the Holy Ghost

speedily end your indecision, and bring you each one to say, "It is enough; Jesus is alive, there is a living Savior, I will take him to be my Savior"!

There were also *abundant tokens* which greatly helped to convince old Jacob: "When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him," he said, "It is enough." To what shall I liken these wagons? It seems to me that some of you, who are doubting whether Christ will save you, ought to think to yourselves, "Well, there is the Sabbath day, which is a special token of God's love." As I came here this evening, I thought to myself, "Why has God appointed a Sabbath day if he does not mean to give rest to men?" What a mockery it is to have one day in seven set apart for you to think of God if God does not mean to think of you! The very institution of the Sabbath seems to me to be a "wagon" in which to bring you to Christ. And why does God send ministers to preach his gospel? I said to myself, as I came here this evening, "I am going on the silliest errand that ever moved the foot of man, unless God means to save men by the message he has given me to deliver." What is the use of my talking, and talking, and talking, unless there is a living Christ, and unless that living Christ is really able to save? He has sent you a minister who, with all his faults, loves your souls, and who would do anything within the compass of a human mind to bring you to Christ if he only knew how to do it. Surely, God did not send us to speak in his name, and move us to an agony about your souls, if he did not mean to bless you. So, the Christian ministry itself is like a "wagon" in which to bring men to Christ. I have often thought to myself, when I have been going home after preaching, "I have put the truth before my hearers so plainly that, if they want to be saved, I have very clearly shown them the way to Christ." I used to attend the means of grace very, very often when I was under concern of soul, and to the best of my knowledge and belief I never heard the gospel simply and plainly put to me while I was listening for it. This is the pity, that so often our brethren preach very fine sermons, but they are no good to seeking souls, and they do not lead them to Christ. But as soon as I heard that poor Primitive Methodist preach Christ,—and he preached Christ alone, because he did not know anything else, and I myself am very much in that condition,—why, as soon as ever I heard that, I laid hold of it. When fish are hungry, they bite at the bait; and if you really want Christ, you will at once lay hold of him. If you do not accept him, at any rate he has been plainly set before you; and if you refuse him, you shall deliberately and wilfully reject and refuse him. I pray that you may not do that. O sinner, play not the fool with your own soul! If you must play, go home to your children, pick up their toys, throw their balls and twist their skipping-ropes; but trifle not with your souls, and with God, and heaven, and hell! If I have lied to you about these matters, condemn me, for I deserve it; but if I have spoken the truth to you, hear me, or if you hear not me, hear the still small voice of your own conscience, or rather, hear the voice of God which has been speaking through me. Believe in Jesus now that you are under the influence of a ministry which may be to you what Joseph's wagons were to old Jacob.

Think also, why is it that you are instructed in the truths revealed in the Word of God? Why is it that there are so many expostulations and warnings in it? Why is it that this precious Book is put into all your homes? Why is it so full of invitations and promises, but that all this is intended to be a "wagon" to bring you to your Joseph, even to Jesus? When you see God, as it were, moving heaven and earth to help you to salvation, bending providence in the direction of aiding you to hear and to believe the gospel, surely you ought to say, "It is enough; Jesus is yet alive; God means mercy for me; Christ Jesus can save me, and he will save me."

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill,

And receives poor sinners still."

The evidence brought before Jacob was sufficient to convince him; he said "It is enough." Oh, that you also may say the same concerning the evidence brought before you!

II. But now comes the tug of war: THE CONVICTION WAS ENOUGH TO MOVE HIM. "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

Oh! how many people there are in the world who say, "Yes, there is a Savior;" and yet they are not saved! Some of you have often sung,—

"There is a fountain fill'd with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains."

Is it so? Do you believe that? Then, why have not you lost all your guilty stains? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." You never doubted the truth of that text, and yet you have not believed on the only-begotten Son of God and you have not received everlasting life. I can understand those who reject the Scriptures altogether, and who deny that there is any Savior for sinners; I see where they are, and feel that there is some kind of consistency in their conduct, deeply as I grieve over it; but I cannot comprehend what you mean when you admit the truth of what we preach, yet do not practically obey it. If the gospel be true, why do you not believe it? If you believe it, why do you not act upon it? It is not sufficient merely to say that you trust Christ for salvation, and then to fancy there is nothing further to be done. I have often tried to expose that delusion by representing a pilot as being brought on board a vessel, and the captain and sailors saying that they all had confidence in him, that he would take the ship safely into the haven. They said they trusted him, but having declared their faith in him, they all went below, and lay down to sleep. Now, of course, the pilot wanted to have the sails attended to, and the ship put in good trim, and he needed the helmsman to manage the rudder, so he called out, "What are you all doing down there? Why have you all run away from me?" And one of them answered, "Because we trust in you; you are the pilot, and you said you would bring us safely into port. We trust in you; so the captain has gone to his cabin, and all the sailors have gone to the fo'c'sle. You see, it is a wet night, a strong nor'wester is blowing, it is very cold, and we would rather be comfortable and snug in our berths than up there on deck. You said that you would bring us to the haven, and we trust in you to do it." The pilot would of course reply, "You do not really trust in me, for if you did, you would do as I bid you. You are mocking me, you are insulting me; you have brought me on board your ship to make a fool of me; if you really trusted me, every man would take his proper place, and do his duty, and then, as I gave the word of command, it would be obeyed, and so you would be brought safely into port." It is just so with Christ and ourselves; we trust him entirely to save us, but we have no right to say that we are saved if we do not practically obey him. It is beyond all excuse that men should know that they need a Savior, and that there is a Savior, and yet that they should not trust that Savior. It is as if Jacob had said, "Joseph is yet alive; but I shall not trouble my head about him." Oh, no, no, no! The patriarch does not talk like that, but he says, "Joseph is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die." And, straightway, the poor old man and his household started to go down into Egypt; for the very next verse reads, "And Israel took his journey with all that he had."

One reason why Jacob wanted to go to Egypt was because *he wished to see his son*. Some of us know the delight of seeing again a dear son who has been absent from us for years, and of seeing him return again well. It is not so much a matter for us to talk about, it is rather a thing for our own

hearts to rejoice over and to remember; and we often breathe the prayer, "God grant that we may see our beloved son again!" Yet, after all, to see a son is but the gratification of a natural affection; there is a great deal more reason why we should, by faith, see our Savior, for he who truly sees the Son of God shall live for ever. O dear hearts,—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!"

A faith-look to God in human flesh, a believing sight of him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, will bring you life for evermore. I think that every sinner who knows that there is a living Christ ought to say, "I will go and see him, whatever else I do not go to see." There are some sights in the world of which we say, "I should like to go and see that." Well, you may forego all the things of beauty that ever charmed the eyes of men; but, I charge you, do not forego this sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the heaven of angels; he is the delight of God himself; there is no true life for you other than that which will come through your looking to him who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Since you believe that there is a Savior, I pray that you may be moved at once to say, "I will go and see him." May you be preserved from putting it off even till the daylight breaks again! This very hour, through your tears, look straight away to the cross; and may the Lord Jesus Christ reveal himself to you, that in his light you may see light!

Further, this old man, who said, "I will go and see my son," yet felt that *it was but for a little while*. He says, "I will go and see him before I die." He had seventeen more years to live, but he did not know that; he felt so old a man at one hundred and thirty that he thought he should only just manage to see his son, and perhaps die on his neck. He said, "But I will go and see him, even though it be only with my dying eyes. I will die with the sight of Joseph before me, and that will be enough to make me happy." And, dear souls, if you did but get to Jesus, you might be happy if you could only say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." But it need not be death to you any more than it was to Jacob. Indeed, when you have seen him, you shall live, and never die; but your eyes shall be opened to see yet more and more of him, and the light of Christ shall so shine into your soul that you shall behold him after a still more glorious fashion till he shall be the joy of your heart, and the heaven of your soul for ever. Therefore, since there is such a living Savior, go to him, I pray you, and you shall not merely see him for a little while, and then die, but you shall see him and live for ever. Therefore, hasten by faith to see him this very moment.

Old Jacob also felt that *age should not hinder, but rather speed him*. He believed that he was soon going to die, but he said, "I will go and see him before I die." I think that Jacob's age really made him go more quickly. "Ah!" said he to himself, "I shall be dead soon; therefore, let me hasten down to Joseph, that I may see him before I die." So, dear friends, do not let anyone say, "I am too old to be saved." Who is too old to trust Christ? Who is too old to seek and find the Savior? I have often heard stories told about people not being converted after they are five-and-forty, or thereabouts; but that is all untrue, and I do not believe a word of it. I have seen just as many people in proportion converted at one age as at another. There are more young people in the world than there are aged persons, and therefore there are more people converted, by God's grace, while they are young. There are fewer old people than young ones; but I do thank God that, even in this building, I could point out a great many who I know were baptized after their hair had grown grey. Some of them put their trust in Jesus when they were threescore years and ten, and others even later than that. There was a dear old brother, who came in here when he was past eighty years of age, and he found the Savior. He was such a Little-faith or Feeble-mind that he hardly dared to "peak to any of us as

he came in and out amongst us, but at last he said to himself, "I must join the church." I fancy that he was eighty-eight when he was baptized, and he was so happy with us for about six months, and then he gently slipped away and went home. I am sure I never saw a more childlike person, or a more genuine conversion than that of this dear old man. However old you are, friend, come along. If Methuselah were here, I would preach to him the same gospel that I would teach to one of these dear girls; for, however old a sinner is, there is nothing in the gospel about limiting it to persons of a certain age. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" does not mean, go and begin picking out the creatures, and saying, "I only preach the gospel to people who are under a specified age." Go home, and go to bed, sir, if that is how you talk; Christ never sent you on such an errand as that. He sent us to preach the gospel to every creature; and to you who are almost worn out, if there be but life in you, I cry, "Come along, trust in Jesus, and he will save even you."

"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return;"  
and, returning, he shall find Christ.

Be quick about it, however, you who are getting on in life, you who are far advanced in years, and may God bless you! Yesterday, I had many kind letters congratulating me on completing my fifty-second year, but there was one that did a little surprise and amuse me. One brother writes that he has read my sermons for many years, and that, at *my advanced age*, he cannot pray that I may have many returns of the day; but he does trust that God may spare me at least two or three years longer for the good of the church. Well, as I read the letter, I could not help smiling, as you do, for I do not feel that I am quite as advanced in age as that; but still, I thought that, perhaps, this brother's letter might be prophetic. We may be older than we think we are, and two or three years may be all the time we are to have here. At any rate, I will try to work for Christ as earnestly as if I had only two or three years to live, and then it may be that he will add to us yet more; and, if not, what matters it? We shall go home to him who sent us, and be gathered to our Father in peace.

Once more, old Jacob was not kept back from going to see his son because it *was a long journey into Egypt*. Journeys appear longer to old men than they do to young folk, and it was a very great undertaking to go so far with those seventy and more people around him. There would be a deal of packing up to be done, and there were no Pantehnicon vans in those days to carry everything for the whole company. It was the transplanting of a grand old tree, and it was a difficult task to move so venerable an oak, with such wide-spreading roots and branches. Yet Jacob said, "I will go and see Joseph before I die." Now, dear friend, if it does seem a long way to Jesus, yet undertake the journey; and if you can persuade your wife and all your children also to go, so much the better. Christ will receive them all in Goshen, and they shall dwell with him for ever. I wish that there might be a blessed migration of many who have been rooted to the soil of the old Canaan, the sinful place, who will now go, not down to Egypt, but up to Jesus in the land of plenty and of purity, to dwell with him for ever. That which ruins so many is that hesitancy, that delaying, that halting between two opinions, which I find in the original is hopping upon two twigs, and never resting upon either; let not that be the case with you. Procrastination is the devil's net in which myriads are entangled to their utter destruction; may the Lord deliver any of you who have been caught in it! Decide for Christ now, I beseech you; may the Holy Spirit constrain you to decide at once, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—241, 508, 607.

Genesis 45:9-28; and John 5:24-44.

Genesis 45:9. *Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not:*

Joseph, having made himself known to his brethren, bids them return to their father, and bring him down to Egypt to see his long-lost son.

10-11. *And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.*

It is just like Joseph to speak thus kindly, and to put the invitation so attractively to his father: "Thou shalt be near unto me." That would be the greatest joy of all to old Jacob; and this is the greatest joy to a sinner when he comes to Christ, our great Joseph, "Thou shalt be near unto me." It is not merely that he gives us the land of Goshen to dwell in, but he promises that we shall be near unto him, and that is best of all.

12-22. *And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyed of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have Been; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and so, get you unto the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your's. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.*

Benjamin was his full brother, so he loved him best, and gave him most.

23, 24. *And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.*

This was a sure sign that Joseph knew his brethren, and they might well recognize him even by that precept, for their consciences must have told them that it had been their common habit to fall out either with or without occasion, so he bids them not to do so.

20-28. *And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the world of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said,*

See how quickly the patriarch changes from Jacob into Israel; when his spirit is revived, he becomes Israel.

28. *It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

Now we are going to read in the Gospel according to John, the fifth chapter, beginning at the twenty-fourth verse.

John 5:24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,—*

If we truly believe the word of Christ, and trust in him who sent his Son into the world, we have at this moment everlasting life.

24. *And shalt not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

What a grand verse this is! It is worthy to be written in letters of gold at every street corner; would that we all knew the fullness of its meaning by heartfelt experience!

25-30. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

Christ as Mediator did the will of the Father, and yet also did his own will, for his will was always the same as his Father's.

31. *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.*

He did bear witness to himself by his miracles, but that was not the witness upon which he relied, nor was it the only witness to the truth of his mission.

32-40. *There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

They were great Bible-readers, great students of the letter, but they would not come to Christ; and hence the Scriptures themselves became a sepulcher in which they were entombed.

41-44. *I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?*

Some men find it difficult to believe in Christ because they are always seeking honor for themselves; desire for the praise of men often blinds the mind and prejudices the spirit. How boldly our great Master speaks! There is no flattery on his lips. He is the faithful and true Witness, the very Word of God. Oh, that all men would give heed to his message!

## The Best of All, God Is With Us

A Sermon

(No. 2471)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, June 28th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Thursday Evening, June 24th, 1886.*

"Is not the Lord your God with You?"—1 Chron. 22:18.

WHILE WE WERE READING this chapter, you must all have been struck with the melting of one man's life into another. Here is David most anxious about the building of the temple at Jerusalem; he is not permitted to erect it himself, and therefore he sets to work with diligent care to gather together the gold and the silver, the brass and the iron, the timber and the stone, that would be required. He also instructed the workmen who would be needed, so that, when he was gone, and his son Solomon had ascended the throne, the temple might be built. Did David live in vain? Can it be truly said that he failed in the grandest project of his life? Assuredly not; he did all that he was permitted to do, and by making those elaborate preparations, he was really the means of the building of the temple.

Let every man and every woman among us judge of our life, not merely from that little narrow piece of it which we ourselves live, for that is but a span; but let us judge it by its connection with other lives that may come after our own. If we cannot do all we wish, let us do all we can, in the hope that someone who shall succeed us may complete the project that is so dear to our heart. That is a blessed prayer which Moses wrote in the 90th Psalm, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." We shall be quite satisfied to do the work, and scarcely see the glory, if we may but know that, in another generation, the work that we shall have done shall produce glory to God which shall be seen among the sons of men. No, Elijah, thou must not do all the Lord's work; but thy mantle must fall upon Elisha, and with it shall come a double portion of thy spirit, and he shall work twice as many miracles as ever thou didst, and shall do greater things for the Lord God of Israel. I do not think it ought ever to be any question of ours what people will do after we are dead and gone. The God who did very well without us before we were born, will do very well without us after we are dead. It is enough for us to do to-day's work in the day; let somebody else do to-morrow's work if we are not spared to do it. To-day, do that which cometh to thy hand, and be not dreaming of the future. Put down that telescope; you have nothing to do with peering into the next hundred years. The important matter is, not what you spy with your eye, but what you do with your hand. Do it, and do it at once, with all your might, believing that God will find somebody else to go on with the next piece of the work when you have finished your portion.

There is also another delightful thought here, and that is, the continuity of the divine blessing. God was with David in the gathering together of the great stores of treasure for the building of the temple; but then God was also with Solomon. Oh, what a mercy it is that God did not give all his grace to other people before we came into the world! The God of grace did not empty the whole horn of grace upon the head of Whitefield or Wesley; he did not pour out all the blessings of his

Spirit upon Romaine and John Newton, so as to leave nothing for us. No; and to the end of time he will be the same God as he was yesterday, and as he is to-day. There is no break in the Lord's blessing; he has not ceased to be gracious, his arm is not shortened that he cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. God buries his workmen, but his work goes on; and he, the Great Worker, wearies not of it, nor shall he ever fail or be discouraged. All his everlasting purposes shall be accomplished, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. Wherefore, let us be of good heart, if we have been apt to look upon the future with fear. The Lord Jesus still lives, and he will take care that his Church shall live and work on until he himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

This text seems to me, dear friends, to have a very immediate bearing upon ourselves. David is talking to Solomon and the princes of Israel about the building of a temple; we are not building a material temple, but we are building a spiritual temple. We do not believe in gorgeous architecture, nor in the expenditure of needless gold and silver upon the house wherein we meet to worship God, for we still hear our Lord and Master say, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." We sing with Cowper,—

"Jesus, where'er thy people meet,  
There they behold thy mercy-seat:  
Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,  
And every place is hallow'd ground."

We believe that God is as much present beneath the blue sky, and out there in the street, as he is in any kind of building that we can erect for Him. It is very singular that, as soon as ever the temple was built, true religion began to decline; the day when Solomon opened it was the culmination of the glory of true godliness in Israel, and from that hour it began to darken down into an awful night. Yet it was proper that there should be a temple which, in its magnificence, should call for the respect of men towards God, being typical of that far greater temple, not made with hands, even the glorious person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We, however, are engaged in the building of a temple, in a spiritual sense. God has sent his servants into the world, to gather together for his beautiful house, stones hewn out of the quarry of nature, to be shaped, polished, and prepared for building into the temple of his grace. The Church is the living temple of God, "exceeding magnificent." It is a wondrous idea that men's hearts and souls can be blended together, and built up into a spiritual temple wherein God will dwell. This temple is to be builded of stones taken from the quarry of nature, and, God being with us, you and I are to go forth, and to hew out and shape and prepare the stones for the building of this house of the Lord which shall endure for ever.

In order to do this, we certainly need the presence and the help of God; for what can we do without him? In the work of conversion, what can be done without the Spirit of God? I would like anybody who thinks he can convert another person without divine help, to try and do it, and see what a wretched failure he will make of it, or what a dire hypocrisy he will produce by his apparent success. We must have God with us for this work; we cannot create a spark of grace, how then can we create a new heart and a right spirit? Conversion is an absolute creation, regeneration is a miracle of divine grace, the work of the Spirit of God; and this is altogether beyond our power. We need the Spirit of God to aid us in the building of a temple for God; but, brethren, with the Lord's presence we can do it.

The text says, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" I will go any length with the brother who likes to preach upon the incapacity of man, the utter and entire weakness of the creature apart from the Creator. You cannot, I think, exaggerate there; but do not always keep dwelling upon your own weakness, recollect that, when you are weak, thou you are strong, if you do but fall back upon the omnipotence of God. "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Has he sent us into the world with the gospel, and will he not be with us in the preaching of it? Has he sent us to be the means of seeking souls, and made our hearts to ache because of the sins that men have committed against him, and will he not be with us? Do not let us talk as if we had to live and labor without our God. We have been brought to know him, we have been made members of the mystical body of Christ the Holy Spirit dwells in us, if we are what we profess to be,—the Church of the living God; will he not occupy the house that he has built? "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Then, what can be too difficult for you?

Now, dear friends, I shall treat our text, first, as *an assertion*; for, oftentimes, in Scripture, a question is one of the strongest modes of assertion when it is anticipated that to that question there can be no other reply than "Yes." Secondly, I shall treat it as a *question*, for there are some here to whom it is a question, some doubting, trembling ones to whom we must say, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" When I have handled it first as an assertion and then as a question, I will briefly use it as *an argument*: "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Therefore, arise and be doing. Something great and glorious ought to be done by men who have so divine a Helper with them.

I. First, then, this is AN ASSERTION.

Brethren and sisters in Christ, the Lord our God is with us. I do not entertain any doubt upon that point, and I hope you do not. Is the Lord your God? Is he your God by a holy covenant? Have you entered into bonds of fellowship with him? Have you taken him to be your God by trust, by love, and by the consecration of your body, soul, and spirit to him? Can you say of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our Guide even unto death"? Very well, then, if he be your God, he is with you. Do you ask how I know that?

Well, I know it, first, because *he has pledged himself to be with his people*. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Is not the Lord your God with you, then? Assuredly he is, if he keeps his promise; and you do not doubt his fidelity, do you? Can he forget his promise, or, remembering it, will he treat it as if it were more verbiage, words without meaning? There are men who can do that, we know; but coos God act so? Can you suppose it possible? No, not for an instant; then, as he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," he will keep his word. We say, "Never is a long day," and so it is, for it covers all time; and the Lord hath said, "I will *never* leave thee,"—in poverty, in sickness, in slander and reproach, in depression of spirit, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment,—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He has pledged himself to this, and God forbid that we should, for even a moment, doubt that he will keep his word! To believers in their church capacity, there is a pledge given by the blessed Lord Jesus himself which refers especially to his work: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." "Lo, I *am* with you," says Christ, as much as to say, "Not only do I promise to be with you, but I *am* with you, I am already fulfilling my promise to you. For the past, for the present, and for the future, 'Lo, I am with you alway.'" Let not any Church of God hesitate to answer this question, "Is not the

Lord your God with you?" If he be your God, he is with you as individuals, and he is especially with you as a Christian community going forth to preach his gospel to every creature. That ought to be enough, surely? He has pledged himself to be with us.

Next, *he is pleased to be with us*. It is the good pleasure of God to be with his people. He is our Father; and do not fathers love to be with their children? The loving father says, when he has little ones at home, "I will get back from my business early, that I may spend my evening in the family." We feel ourselves happiest when, laying aside external cares, we leave the world, and rest with our loved ones at home; so God is at home with his people, as a Father he delights in his children. Remember how Divine Wisdom said, "My delights were with the sons of men." It is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but God takes a great deal more pleasure in us than we do in him; yet there seems in us nothing that can give him pleasure, while in him there is everything that can afford us delight. The Lord so loves his people that he is never long away from them. You know that dear relationship into which our Lord has entered with his Church; she is his bride, he loves her as he loves his own soul. In some respects, he loves her better than he loves himself, for he gave himself for her; and do you think that he is happy away from his bride, his spouse? It is not so; he saith to her, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely;" and whenever she calls for him, saying, "Let my Beloved come into his garden," his quick answer is, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." He so loves us that, when we shut the door against him, he stands and knocks, and cries to us, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Do not think that he has gone from you when he loves you so as your Father, and as the Husband of your soul. Moreover, he will be with his Church in her work, because her work is his work; and wherever there is a heart on the earth, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, in sympathy and harmony with the heart of Christ, depend upon it he is assuredly there, for that sympathy and that harmony are created by his very presence. Well, then, as he has pledged himself, and he is himself pleased to be with his people, we believe the assertion which is implied in the enquiry, "Is not the Lord your God with you?"

I hope also, brethren beloved, we can say that *we have had proofs that God is with us*. In this house we have had many plain proofs of the Lord's presence. If you could have been with me last Tuesday week, and the Tuesday before that, it might have made your hearts ring for joy, all the bells of your soul would have given forth blessed chimes as you heard how God had saved one and another who had strolled in here as if by accident, and others who had come in great heaviness of heart, but who here found the Lord. Our ministry is nothing, but the Lord makes it something, he makes it everything to many souls; and blessed be his name for that! And you, brethren and sisters, in your labor and service for the Master, have brought many souls to Christ; therefore I say to you, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Assuredly he is, or you would not have beheld all this blessedness.

The Lord has proved his presence with us by preserving us in the hour of temptation. Some of you who have been lately converted to God have had very fierce temptations since then. In this wicked city, our young people—yet I do not know that I need say our young people alone,—have been exposed to a furnace of temptation which has been seven times heated. The days in which we live are grievous to the last degree; and if the Lord had not been with us, our soul would not have escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler. Often our feet have well-nigh slipped, and we

should have fallen if the Lord had not been with us to preserve us. "Is not the Lord your God with you" when you have boon kept alive with death so near? Assuredly, he is.

Some of you also know that the Lord is with you because you have been so greatly comforted in time of trouble. A sister said to me, the other day, "I could not have thought that I could have lived through the bereavements I have lately endured. When I used to think of the possibility of my husband's death, it seemed to me that I must die with him." Yet she is not dead; and she does not despair; though she had to endure that bereavement, and another as well, she said, "Oh, how good God was to me to sustain me as he did!" "Is not the Lord your God with you?" I know some dear friends who have experienced very great temporal trouble through heavy losses in these trying times; yet they are as happy as when they had ten times as much. The little bird still sings at the window, the blue sky hovers overhead, and the heart's-ease still grows in their garden, and they love it well. Yes, dear friends, the comforts that God gives us in times of deep trouble are a sufficient proof that he is with us.

Beside that, there have been times when we have been in the house of prayer, or when we have been alone in our chamber, ay, in the middle of the night sometimes, when pain has kept us from sleeping when we have felt that we did not want to sleep; for we have been flooded with delight. Did you ever feel that deep calm which sometimes comes over a believer, when there seems to be no evil in the world, when we could not invent a doubt if we tried, when we could not have a dark thought concerning our Lord? After our Savior had been tempted in the wilderness, angels came and ministered unto him. Do you know what that experience is when there seem to be angels upstairs, and downstairs, and all through the house, ministering to you, and your life seems set to a gentle psalm tune, and instead of the sound of the trumpet calling you to battle, there is only the dulcet music of an instrument of ten strings praising the God who has given you rest? So, when the question is put, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" you can answer, "Ay, that he is, and blessed be his holy name!" Oh, what a blessing it is to live with a present God! If anyone says to me that there is no God, he might as well tell me that there is no air. I cannot see it, but I know that I am living in it, and that I could not live without it; so, "in him we live, and move, and have our being." The Lord is life, and light, and love, and liberty, and all in all to some of us. "Is not the Lord your God with you?" is no question to us, for we know that he is with us, and we glorify his holy name that so it is.

II. Now, secondly, we must devote a few minutes to those poor weary souls to whom this is A QUESTION: "Is not the Lord your God with you?"

"Oh!" says one, "I have no joy; I have very little rest; I have nothing but trouble; deep calleth unto deep at the noise of his waterspouts, and I am so weak, so feeble, so faint, I cannot imagine that the Lord is with me. I see no signs of his presence, neither do I perceive even a star of hope amid the dense darkness of the night." Listen, dear friend; have you taken him to be your God? Are you trusting him? Are you determined to rely on nothing but the finished work of Christ? Then, he is with you; though you do not perceive his Holy Spirit, in the deepest darkness he is with you.

If the Lord had not been with you, *your despondency might have become despair*. If he had not been with you, your despair might have gone further still. You are yet alive, remember, you have not laid violent hands upon yourself, as you might have done if you had been left to yourself. God is with you, keeping you, even while you live on the very brink of despair. I know that there are some here who were sure God was with them in their darkness because it did not grow any darker.

It was a black night, but still it was not altogether dark, there was a gleam of light left. Ah, yes! it was your gracious Lord who gave you that little ray of hope.

Tell me, sad heart, what is it that causes you to hate sin, and makes you so wretched without the presence of the Savior? It is because *you have his presence though you do not know it*. You have, perhaps, seen your boy play with a magnet and a needle; the needle is above the table, and the magnet, though out of sight, acts upon it, the needle feels the attraction of the magnet, and moves after it; and those desires, those groans, those cries, that inward anguish, that self-despair, that horror of great darkness, all these prove that God is secretly working with you, and drawing you to himself. He is with you; and if you take him afresh to be your God, if you come and trust in his promises, I should not wonder but that, even now, your midnight shall burst into a glorious meridian. The Lord send it to you right speedily! Only, do rest in him.

*The Lord is not far from any one of us*; a cry will fetch him, he will hear even a groan, and he will quickly come to the rescue of those who call upon him. Do but trust him, do but take him to be yours, and then he cannot leave you. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." There is such love in God's heart towards the very feeblest of his people, that he cannot turn away from them. Mother, is it not so in your family, that the child who is most ill, most weak, most full of pain, is the one who is best remembered by you? While you have been sitting here, this evening, you have not thought of John and Thomas, who have grown up, and gone out into the world, and are strong and healthy, but you have thought of poor little Jane, whose spine is injured, or of the little boy who has to lie still so many hours a day, and who suffers so much. I am sure that, while I have been preaching, your thoughts have been trotting home to that dear child, and you have been thinking much of him. Well, remember that, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" and remember also how the Lord takes the mother's part as well as the father's, and says, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." These are cheering truths for those who do raise the question; I wish they could enable you to get rid of that question, and to know assuredly that the Lord is with you. I recollect how Mr. Joseph Irons used to say of some who were always hoping, "It is all very well to have hope, but do not keep on hoping and hoping, or hopping and hopping, but put both feet down, and begin to run." I trust you may do the same, and get beyond the "hoping" and the "hopping" to the full assurance of faith.

"And art thou with us, gracious Lord,  
To dissipate our fear?  
Dost thou proclaim thyself our God,  
Our God for ever near?"  
Then, as Doddridge continues to sing,—  
"Why droop our hearts, why flow our eyes,  
While such a voice we hear?  
Why rise our sorrows and our fears,  
While such a Friend is near?"

III. Our last point is that, here is AN ARGUMENT: "Is not the Lord your God with you?"

It is a reason for us to *arise, and be doing*. You observe how it is put in the sixteenth verse, "Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee,"—so it is in the original let all true Christian people arise, and be doing, because the Lord is with them. Perhaps, I need not say much

to my own people about that matter, for most of you are doing what you can for your Lord. There is a brother who is just going out to Australia; when he came to bid me farewell, he gave me a little sketch of his life during three-and-twenty years. It has been a time of incessant activity in the church; and he said to me, "Yes, sir, you drove me out to work for Christ, you would not let me be idle. You said, 'The worst kind of lazy people are lazy Christians,' and you also said, 'To come here twice on a Sunday, and hear me preach, and to be doing nothing for the Master, is not at all the right thing.'" Then the good man added, "I do not often get to hear you now. I have been secretary of a Sunday-school for some time, and I often go out preaching, so I cannot come to the Tabernacle." I do delight in so many of the members not coming to hear me because they are doing the Master's work elsewhere! I know that in many churches the main thing is to sit down in a corner pew, and be fed. Well, of course, every creature needs to be fed, from the pig upwards;—you must excuse my mentioning that unclean animal, for he is the creature whose principal business it is to food, and he is not a nice creature at all, and I do not at all admire Christian people whose one business is to feed and feed. Why, I have heard them even grumble at a sermon that was meant for the conversion of sinners, because they thought there was no food for them in it! They are great receptacles of food; but, dear Christian people, do not any of you live merely to feed,—not even on heavenly food; but if God be with you, as you say he is, then get to his work.

"What shall I do?" asks one. That is no business of mine; you have to find work for yourself. He who works for God does not need to go to this man, or that man, and enquire, "What shall I do?" Why, do the first thing that comes to hand, but do get to work for your Master! Many Christians live in country villages where there is no preaching of the gospel; then, preach it yourself, brother, "Oh, but I could not!" Well then, get somebody who can. "But we have no chapel," says one. What do you want with a chapel these bright days? Preach on the village green, where the old trees that were cut down a year or two ago are still lying, and will serve for seats. "I could not preach," says one, "I should break down." That would be a capital thing to do; break-down sermons are often the best for breaking down other people as well as the preacher. Some of the greatest enterprises in the world have sprung from very little causes; the forest of the mightiest oaks in the world was once only a handful of acorns. Oh, that we might all do what we can for him who laid down his life for us, and who still continues to abide in us, to be our joy and our strength!

David also exhorted these people to *set their hearts upon what they had to do*: "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Oh, how much there is of our religion that is a kind of celestial going to sleep! The preacher preaches as if he had not really woke up yet; and the people hear in the same fashion. Are there not, even in our churches, many who, if a guinea were to jingle, would be sufficiently wide awake to look for it, but when the gospel is being preached, they are not thoroughly aroused? As to speaking to strangers, and saying a word for the Master, that has not yet occurred to them.

"I do not know what I can do," says one. Brother, *if the text is true, I do not know now what you cannot do*. The text says, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" "Well, I could not—" "Could not,—could not;" do you put God and "could not" together? I think it would be infinitely better to put God and "can" or God and "shall" together. If God be with us, what can be impossible, what can be even difficult to us? God being with his people, "he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

I cannot speak longer to you, nor is there any need that I should do so. If you Christians will all go out and seek to save sinners, you will be prolonging my sermon, not only for a few minutes,

but for many a day and many a year to come. God be with you, brothers and sisters, in this holy service! And if any to whom I am speaking are obliged to say, "No, God is not with me, I am not saved;" remember that the way of salvation is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ. If you trust him, he is with you, and you are saved; for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." God is with you if you are trusting him, and you may go forth in his might to serve the Lord who has redeemed you. God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46 (Version II.), 338, 766.

1 Chronicles 21:7-30; and 22.

Chapter 21:7. *And God was displeased with this thing;*

This numbering of Israel, which David had carried out in spite of Joab's protest: "God was displeased with this thing:"—

7-15. *Therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer saying, GO and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee either three years famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand.*

See the power of the mercy of God; even when the angel has drawn his sword, and is already executing the Lord's just judgments, God's mercy interposes, and holds back the blade of death. Should we not love the Lord for his great longsuffering toward us? "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

15, 16. *And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.*

This was the very best clothing and the very best posture for men who were under the chastising hand of God; they had put on sackcloth, and they had fallen upon their faces. O guilty sinner, if God's sword of vengeance is drawn against you, you cannot do better than put sackcloth upon your soul, if not upon your body, and prostrate yourself before the Most High.

17. *And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed, but as for those sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.*

Here we see David at his beat; and what a true patriot he is! He interposes himself, willing rather that he should be destroyed than that the people should die. This was the spirit of Moses when he said to the Lord, "If thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of

thy book which thou hast written." And this was the spirit of Paul, when he wrote, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." There are times when our great love for others will overflow all bounds of moderation, when we shall say, and say from our hearts, what we should not have dared to utter in cooler moments.

18-27. *Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD, and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.*

See what was done by David's intercession and sacrifice; and remember that there is a greater David who, with a richer sacrifice and mightier intercession, sheathes the sword of God, so that his people are spared.

28-30. *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

Chapter 22:1. *Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.*

From that moment, this place was set apart as the site of the future temple, and the center of the hopes of the people of God, and, dear friend) went better site could have been selected than the spot where the angel sheathed his sword, where prayer was heard, and where sacrifice was accepted? And now, to-day, you and I have only one temple, and that temple is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved, for in him the sword is sheathed, in him the sacrifice if accepted, and in him intercession still prevails.

2-4. *And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings and brass in abundance without weight; also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.*

See, a great deliverance brings a great offering. Because God has bidden the angel sheath his sword, there is to be a temple commenced, and David is busy preparing for it. O you who have been saved from death and hell, what can you render unto God for all his benefits toward you?

5. *And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.*

If he might not build the temple, he would at least gather the materials for it. So, let us try to do all we can in the cause of God. There is said to have been a king, who felt so grateful to God for some special favor, that he determined to build a great temple, and pay for it all himself; no one was to help at all in it. One night, in his dreams, he was told that the honor of building that temple would not belong to him as he desired, and he thought within himself, "To whom then can it be, for I have not allowed any person to work for me without full wage, and I have done it all?" At last, he discovered that there was a poor woman in his kingdom, who also loved his God, and not daring to help in the temple building, she had brought little handfuls of hay to give to the horse that had dragged the stones, so hers was to be the greater honor. If you may not do all you would, do all you can; for God will accept it of you if it be rendered by a willing mind and a loving heart.

6-9. *Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD GOD of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon,—*

That is, peaceful, or peaceable,—

9-14. *And I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his Kingdom over Israel for ever. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hast said of thee. Only the LORD give thee wisdom, and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou takest heed to fulfill the statues and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed. Now, behold in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.*

At the very lowest calculation, David had laid up eighteen millions of money for the building of this house for the Lord. It was an enormous sum, and he must have been long in saving it, yet he gives Solomon leave to increase it: "Thou mayest add thereto." I like that way of putting the matter; and when some of you see good help rendered to the cause of God by others who are able to do more than you can, do not therefore say, "I need not give anything," but remember what David said to Solomon, "Thou mayest add thereto." There is room in the treasury of God for your mite us well as David's millions.

15. *Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.*

God will always find the right man in time for his own work, in his Church there are "all manner of cunning men for every manner of work."

16-19. *Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee. David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help*

*Solomon his son, saying, Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine land, and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God, arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.*

## The Best of the Best

A Sermon

(No. 2472)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, July 5th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Thursday Evening, May 19th, 1881.*

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."—Song of Solomon 2:1.

THE time of flowers has come, and as they are in some faint degree emblems of our Lord, it is well, when God thus calls, that we should seek to learn what he desires to teach us by them. If nature now spreads out her roses and her lilies, or prepares to do so, let us try, not only to see them, but to see Christ as he is shadowed forth in them.

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." If these are the words of the Well-beloved,—and I have no doubt that they are,—then it may be suggested by some that here we have the Savior praising himself; and it is true; but in no unworthy sense, for well may he praise himself since no one else can do it as it should be done. There is no human language that can ever set forth his beauties as they deserve to be told. As good John Berridge says,—

"Living tongues are dumb at best,

We must die to speak of Christ"

as he should be spoken of. He will never fully be described unless he shall describe himself. For certain, we should never have known God if he had not revealed himself; and every good thing that you or I know of him, he himself has told us. We make no discoveries of God except as God discovers himself to us. If, then, any cavillers were to find fault with the Christ of God because he did commend himself, I would answer, Does not God commend himself, and must not his well-beloved Son do the same? Who else is there that can possibly reveal him to us unless he unveils his own face to our admiring gaze?

Moreover, be it always remembered that human self-praise is evil because of the motive which underlies it. We praise ourselves,—and, alas! that we should be so foolish as to do so,—we do it out of pride; but when Christ praises himself, he does it out of humility. "Oh!" say you, "how can you prove that to be true?" Why, thus; he praises himself that he may win our love; but what condescension it is on his part that he should care about the love of such insignificant and undeserving persons as we are! It is a wonderful stoop that the Christ of God should speak about having a bride, and that he should come to seek his bride among the sons of men. If princes were to look for consorts among beggars, that would be after all but a small stoop, for God hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth; but for Christ to forsake the thrones and glories of heaven, and the splendours of his Father's courts above, to come down to win a well-beloved one here, and for her sake to take upon himself her nature, and in her nature to bear the shame of death, even the death of the cross, this is stupendous condescension of which only God himself is capable; and this praising of himself is a part of that condescension, a necessary means of winning the love of the heart that he has chosen. So that this is a matchless instance, not

of pride, but of humility, that those dear lips of the heavenly Bridegroom should have to speak to his own commendation, and that he should say, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." O human lips, why are ye silent, so that Christ must speak about himself? O human hearts, why are ye so hard that ye will never feel until Christ himself shall address you? O human eyes, why are ye so blind that ye shall never see till Christ shows himself in his own superlative light and loveliness? I think I need not defend my Master, though he used these sweet emblems to set forth himself; for this is an instance, not of his pride, but of his humility.

It is also an instance of the Master's wisdom, for as it is his design to win hearts to himself, he uses the best means of winning them. How are hearts won? Very often, by the exhibition of beauty. Love at first sight has been begotten by the vision of a lovely countenance. Men and women, too, are struck with affection through the eye when they perceive some beauty which charms and pleases them; so, the Savior lifts the corner of the veil that conceals his glories, and lets us see some glimpse of his beauty, in order that he may win our hearts. There are some who seem to think that they can bully men to Christ; but that is a great mistake. It is very seldom that sinners can be driven to the Savior; his way is to draw them. He himself said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." And the drawings of Christ are not, as it were, with a cart rope, but with silken bonds, ay, with invisible chains, for his beauty is of such a character that it creates love, his beauty is so attractive that it draws the heart. So, in infinite wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth his own beauties that thereby he may win our hearts. I do believe that there is no preaching like the exaltation of Christ crucified. There is nothing so likely to win the sons of men as a sight of him; and if God the Holy Ghost will but help all his ministers, and help all his people, to set forth the beauties of Christ, I shall not doubt that the same Spirit will incline men's hearts to love him and to trust him. Note, then, the condescension and also the wisdom which are perceptible in this self-commendation on the part of Christ: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

I think that our Lord also speaks thus as an encouragement to timid souls; his tender familiarity in praising himself to us is one of the most effectual proofs of his lowliness. Does Christ commend himself to us? Does he say to us, for instance, "I am meek and lowly in heart"? What is his object in speaking thus but that we may take his yoke upon us, and may learn of him, and that we may find rest unto our souls? And if he says, "I am the rose of Sharon," what does he mean but that we may pluck him, and take him for our own? If he says, "I am the lily of the valleys," why does he take the trouble to tell us that but because he wants us to take him, and to have him for our very own? I think that it is so sweet of Christ to praise himself in order to show that he longs for us to come to him. He declares himself to be a fountain of living water; yet why is he a fountain but that we may come unto him, and drink? He tells us, "I am the bread which came down from heaven;" but why does he speak of himself as bread, whereof if a man eat, he shall never hunger? Why, because he wants us to partake of him! You need not, therefore, be afraid that he will refuse you when you come to him. If a man praises his wares, it is that he may sell them. If a doctor advertises his cures, it is that other sick folk may be induced to try his medicine; and when our Lord Jesus Christ praises himself, it is a kind of holy advertisement by which he would tempt us to "come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If he praises himself, it is that we may fall in love with him; and we need not be afraid to come and lay our poor hearts at his feet, and ask him to accept us, for he would not have wooed us by unveiling his beauties if he had meant, after all, to trample on our hearts, and say, "I care nothing for such poor love as yours."

I feel most grateful, then, that I have not at this time so much to praise my Master as to let him speak his own praises, for "never man spake like this Man." When he commends himself, what would have been folly in others is wisdom in him; and whereas we say to our fellow-man, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth," I would say to Christ, "My Master, praise thyself, for thou alone canst do it as it ought to be done." As for thy poor servant, he would try to be the echo of thy voice, and that will be infinitely better than anything he can say of himself.

I think, also, that there is good reason for our Lord to praise himself in the fashion that he does in our text, because, after all, it is not praise. "What!" say you, "and yet you have been talking all this while as if it was praise." Well, so it is in one sense, to us, but it is not so to Christ. Suppose the sun were to compare itself with a glow-worm, would that be praise? Suppose an angel were to compare himself with an emmet, would that be praise? And when my Lord and Master, whose eyes outshine the sun, and who is infinitely higher than the mightiest of the angels, compares himself to a rose and a lily, is that praise? Well, it is so to you and to me, but it certainly cannot be so to him. It is a marvellous stoop for Christ, who is "God over all, blessed for ever," and the Light of the universe, to say, "I am a rose; I am a lily." O my blessed Lord, this is a sort of incarnation, as when the Eternal God did take upon himself an infant's form! So here, the Everlasting God says, "I am"—and what comes next?—"a rose and a lily." It is an amazing stoop, I know not how to set it forth to you by human language; it is a sort of verbal rehearsal of what he did afterwards when, though he counted it not robbery to be equal with God, "he took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "I am God, yet," saith he, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

What does our text mean? I think it means that our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly delightful, so, let us speak, first, of *the exceeding delightfulness of our Lord*; and then, inasmuch as he uses two emblems, first the rose, and then the lily, surely this is to express *the sweet variety of his delightfulness*; and, inasmuch as he speaks of himself as the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, I shall have to show you, in the last place, that this hints to us *the exceeding freeness of his delightfulness*.

I. First, then, the text sets forth THE EXCEEDING DELIGHTFULNESS OF OUR LORD.

He compares himself here, not as in other places to needful bread and refreshing water, but to lovely flowers, to roses and lilies. What is the use of roses and lilies? I know what the use of corn is; I must eat it, it is necessary to me for food. I know why barley and rye and all sorts of roots and fruits are created; they are the necessary food of man or beast. But what do we want with roses? What do we want with lilies? They are of no use at all except for joy and delight. With their sweet form, their charming color, and their delicious fragrance, we are comforted and pleased and delighted; but they are not necessities of life. A man can live without roses; there are millions of people, I have no doubt, who live without possessing lilies of the valley. There are all too few roses and lilies in this smoky Babylon of ours; but, when we do get them, what are their uses? Why, they are things of beauty, if not "a joy for ever." Jesus is all that and more; he is far more than "a thing of beauty," and to all who trust him he will be "a joy for ever." To you who are Christ's people, he is your bread, for you feed on him, and he makes you live; you could not do without him as the sustenance of your soul. He is the living water, and your soul would pine and perish of a burning thirst if you did not drink of him. But that is not all that Jesus is to you; God has never intended to save his people on the scale of the workhouse, to give you just as much as you absolutely need, and nothing more. No, no, no; he means you to have joy as well as to have life, to look upon beauty as well as

to be in safety, and to have not only a healthy atmosphere, but an atmosphere that is laden with the odour of sweet flowers. You are to find in Christ roses and lilies, as well as bread and water; you have not yet seen all his beauties, and you do not yet know all his excellence.

The exceeding delightfulness of Christ is suggested to our mind by his declaration, "I am the rose, and I am the lily." And first, *he is in himself the delight of men*. He speaks not of offices, gifts, works, possessions; but of himself: "I am." Our Lord Jesus is the best of all beings; the dearest, sweetest, fairest, and most charming of all beings that we can think of is the Son of God, our Savior. Come hither, ye poets who dream of beauty, and then try to sing its praises; but your imagination could never reach up to the matchless perfection of his person, neither could your sweetest music ever attain to the full measure of his praise. Think of him as the God-man, God incarnate in human nature, and absolutely perfect; I was going to say something more than that, for there is not only in him all that there ought to be, but there is more than your thoughts or wishes have ever compassed. Eyes need to be trained to see beauty. No man seeth half or a thousandth part of the beauty even of this poor, natural world; but the painter's eye—the eye of Turner, for instance,—can see much more than you or I ever saw. "Oh!" said one, when he looked on one of Turner's landscapes, "I have seen that view every day, but I never saw as much as that in it." "No," replied Turner, "don't you wish you could?" And, when the Spirit of God trains and tutors the eye, it sees in Christ what it never saw before. But, even then, as Turner's eye was not able to see all the mystery of God's beauty in nature, so neither is the most trained and educated Christian able to perceive all the matchless beauty that there is in Christ.

I do not think, brethren, that there is anything about Christ but what should make his people glad. There are dark truths concerning him, such as his bearing our sin; but what a joy it is to us that he did bear it, and put it away for ever! It makes us weep to look at Jesus dying on the cross, but there is more real joy in the tears of repentance than there is in the smiles of worldly mirth. I would choose my heaven to be a heaven of everlasting weeping for sin, sooner than have a heaven—if such a heaven could be,—consisting of perpetual laughing at the mirth of fools. There is more true pleasure in mourning before God than in dancing before the devil. Christ is, then, all beauty; even the dark parts in him are light, and the bitter parts are sweet. He has only to be seen by you, and you must perceive that, whether it be his Godhead or his manhood, whether it be his priesthood, his royalty, or his prophetic office, whether it be on the cross or on the throne, whether it be on earth, or in heaven, or in the glory of his second coming, every way,—

"All over glorious is my Lord,  
Must be beloved, and yet ador'd;  
His worth if all the nations knew  
Sure the whole earth would love him too."

But, next, our Lord is *exceedingly delightful to the eye of faith*. He not only tells us of what delight is in himself,—*"I am the rose, and I am the lily,"*—but he thereby tells us that there is something to see in him, for the rose is very pleasing to look upon. Is there a more beautiful sight than a rose that is in bud, or even one that is fullblown? And the lily—what a charming thing it is! It seems to be more a flower of heaven than of earth. Well now, Christ is delightful to the eye of faith. I remember the first time I ever saw him; I shall never forget that sight, and I have seen him many a time since, and my grief is that I ever take off my eyes from him, for it is to look away from the sun into blackness; it is to look away from bliss into misery. To you who look at Christ by faith, a sight of him brings such peace, such rest, such hope, as no other sight can ever afford; it so

sweetens everything, so entirely takes away the bitterness of life, and brings us to anticipate the glory of the life that is to come, that I am sure you say, "Yes, yes; the figure in the text is quite correct; there is a beauty in Jesus to the eye of faith, he is indeed red as the rose and white as the lily."

And, next, the Lord Jesus Christ is *delightful in the savor which comes from him to us*. In him is a delicious, varied, abiding fragrance which is very delightful to the spiritual nostril. Smell is, I suppose, a kind of delicate feeling; minute particles of certain substances touch sensitive membranes, and we call the sensation that is produced smelling. It is a mysterious sense; you can understand sight and hearing better than you can understand smelling. There is a spiritual way of perceiving the savor of Christ; I cannot explain it to you, but there is an ineffable mysterious sweetness that proceeds from him which touches the spiritual senses, and affords supreme delight; and as the body has its nose, and its tender nerves that can appreciate sweet odours, so the soul has its spiritual nostril by which, though Christ be at a distance, it yet can perceive the fragrant emanations that come from him, and is delighted therewith.

What is there that comes from Christ, from day to day, but his truth, his Spirit, his influence, his promises, his doctrines, his words of cheer? All these have a heavenly sweetness, and make us, with the psalmist, say to our Lord, "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." Whenever these sweet odours are wafted down to us, they make us also glad; anything that has the savor of Christ in it is sweet to a Christian. If Christ has touched it, let me put it in my bosom, and keep it there as a sweet forget-me-not, until I see his face in glory. Ay, the very stones he sat on, I was about to say, the very mountains at which he looked, have become dear to us. We have no idolatrous or superstitious reverence for Palestine, or even for the garden in which he sweat great drops of blood; but for spiritual things with which he has to do, we have a never-ceasing reverence and affection. Everything that comes from him is wondrous as the songs of the angels must have been to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and sweet to the taste as the manna that dropped from the skies around Israel's desert camp. Yes, brethren and sisters, there is a sweet savor about the Lord Jesus Christ; do you all perceive it?

Once more, *in all that he is, Christ is the choicest of the choice*. You notice, the Bridegroom says, "I am the rose." Yes, but there were some particularly beautiful roses that grew in the valley of Sharon; "I am that rose," said he. And there were some delightful lilies in Palestine; it is a land of lilies, there are so many of them that nobody knows which lily Christ meant, and it does not at all signify, for almost all lilies are wondrously beautiful. "But," said he, "I am the lily of the valleys," the choicest kind of lily that grew where the soil was fat and damp with the overflow of mountain streams. "I am the lily of the valleys:" that is to say, Christ is not only good, but he is the best; and he is not only the best, but he is the best of the best. He is a flower; ay, but he is a rose, that is the queen of flowers; ay, but then he is the best rose there is, he is the rose of Sharon. He is a Savior, and a great one; yea, the only Savior. He is a Husband; but what a Husband! Was there ever such a Bridegroom as Christ Jesus the Lord? He is the Head; but Father Adam was a poor head compared with him. He is inexpressibly, unutterably, indescribably lovely; I might as well leave off talking about him, for I cannot hope to set him forth as he deserves. If you could but see him, I would leave off, for I am sure I should be only hanging a veil before him with the choicest words that I could possibly use. Suppose you had a dear son, or husband, or friend, far away, and that I was a painter who could carry pictures in my mind's eye, and then draw them to the very life. If I stood here, trying to paint your well-beloved friend, laying on my colors with all the skill I possessed, and

doing my best to reproduce his features; suppose, while I was at work, that the door at the back was opened, and he came in, I should cry out, "Oh, stop, stop, stop! Let me put away my canvas, let me pack up my brushes and my paints. Here is the loved one himself; look at him! Look at him, not at my portrait of him!" And you would rise from your seat, and say, "It is he! It is he! You may talk as long as you like, dear sir, when he is away; but when he is himself here, your talk seems but mere chatter." Well, I shall be quite content that you should think so, I shall be even glad if you do, provided that the reason shall be that you can say, "We have seen the Lord. He has manifested himself to us as he does not unto the world." "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." The best of the best, the fairest of the fair, the sweetest of the sweet, is Jesus Christ to you and to me if we are indeed his people. I cannot say more about the exceeding delightfulness of my Lord; I wish I could.

II. I must pass on, next, to notice THE SWEET VARIETY OF CHRIST'S DELIGHTFULNESS.

He is not only full of joy, and pleasure, and delight to our hearts, but he is full of all sorts of joy, and all sorts of pleasure, and all sorts of delights to us.

"Nature, to make his beauties known,  
Must mingle colors not her own."

The rose is not enough, you must have the lily also, and the two together fall far short of the glories of Christ, the true "Plant of renown."

"I am the rose." That is *the emblem of majesty*. The rose is the very queen of flowers; in the judgment of all who know what to admire it is enthroned above all the rest of the beauties of the garden. But the lily—what is that? That is *the emblem of love*. The psalmist hints at this in the title of the forty-fifth Psalm. "Upon Shoshannim, a Song of love." Shoshannim signifies lilies, so the lily-psalm is the love-song, for the lilies, with their beauty, their purity, their delicacy, are a very choice emblem of love. Are you not delighted when you put these two things together, majesty and love? A King upon a throne of love, a Prince, whose very eyes beam with love to those who put their trust in him, a real Head, united by living bonds of love to all his members;—such is our dear Lord and Savior. A rose and yet a lily; I do not know in which of the two I take the greater delight, I prefer to have the two together. When I think that my Savior is King of kings and Lord of lords, I shout, "Hallelujah!" But when I remember that he loved me, and gave himself for me, and that still he loves me, and that he will keep on loving me for ever and ever, there is such a charm in this thought that nothing can excel it. Look at the lily, and sing,—

"Jesu, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high!  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,  
Till the storm of life be past;  
Safe into the haven guide;  
Oh receive my soul at last."  
Then look at the rose, and sing,—  
"All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown him Lord of all;"

then put the rose and the lily together, and let them remind you of Christ's majesty and love. The combination of these sweet flowers also suggests our Lord's *suffering and purity*.

"White is his soul, from blemish free,  
Red with the blood he shed for me."

The rose, with its thorn, reminds us of his suffering, his bleeding love to us, his death on our behalf, his bearing of the thorns which our sin created. Christ is a royal rose beset with thorns; but the lily shows that—

"For sins not his own  
He died to atone."

Jesus, when on earth, could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." The devil himself could not see a spot or speck in that lovely lily. Jesus Christ is perfection itself, he is all purity; so you must put the two together, the rose and the lily, to show Christ's suffering and perfection, the infinitely pure infinitely suffering. In which of the two do you take the greater delight? Surely, in neither, but in the combination of both; what would be the value of Christ's sufferings if he were not perfect? And of what avail would his perfections be if he had not died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God? But the two together, the rose and the lily, suffering and purity, fill us with delight.

*Of both of these there is a great variety.* I wonder how many different sorts of roses there are, I should not like to have to tell you; they vary exceedingly, perhaps there are as many kinds as there are days in the year. How many varieties of lilies are there? Possibly, there are as many sorts of lilies as there are of roses, for both of them are wonderfully diversified; but the joys that flow from our Lord Jesus Christ are as abundant and as varied as the roses and the lilies. Bring me which rose you please, and I will tell you that it smells sweet; bring which lily you choose, and I will say, "Yes, that also has a delicate perfume; that will do, with the rose, to serve as an emblem of Christ." Our Lord Jesus possesses every kind of beauty and fragrance. "He is all my salvation, and all my desire." All good things meet in Christ; in him all the lines of beauty are focussed. Blessed are they who truly know him.

Further, *Christ is the very essence of the sweetness both of the rose and of the lily.* When he says, "I am the rose," he means, not only that he is like the rose, but that he made all the sweetness there is in the rose, and it is still in him; and all the sweetness there is in any creature comes to us from Christ, or else it is not sweetness such as we ought to love. I like to look upon the bread I eat as his gift to me, and to bless his providential hand that bestows it. I like to look upon all the landscape on such a fair day as this has been, and to say, "Christ is in all this, giving this charming view to such a poor, unworthy creature as I am." He is in all there is that is good, he is the goodness of all the good there is. He is the very soul of the universe, whatever there is in the universe that is worthy of our soul's love. All good for our soul comes from him, whether it be pardon of sin, or justification, or the sanctification that makes us fit for glory hereafter, Christ is the source of it all; and in the infinite variety of delights that we get from him, he is himself the essence of it all. We can become tired of most things, I suppose that we can become tired of everything earthly; but we shall never tire of Christ. I remember one who, when near his death-hour, forgot even his wife, and she was greatly grieved that he did not recognize her. They whispered in his ear the name of his favourite child; but he shook his head. His oldest friend, who had known him from his boyhood, was not recognized. At last they asked him, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" Then he said, "Ah, yes! and I am going to him." The ruling passion was strong in death; Christ was nearer and dearer to

him than those he loved best here. All Bowers will fade, even roses and lilies among them; but not this blessed Rose of Sharon, and Lily of the valleys. Christ does not say, "I was a rose, and I was a lily;" but "I am the rose, and I am the lily." He is now all that he ever was, and he will be in life, in death, and throughout all eternity, to the soul that knows him, an infinite variety of everything that is delightful.

III. I must now very briefly take up the last head of my discourse, which is, THE EXCEEDING FREENESS OF OUR LORD'S DELIGHTFULNESS.

It is not very pleasant or satisfying for hungry people to stand in the street, and hear someone praising a good meal, of which they cannot get even a taste. I have often noticed boys standing outside a shop window, in which there have been all sorts of dainties; they have flattened their noses against the window-pane, but they have not been able to get anything to eat.

I have been talking about my Master, and I want to show you that *he is accessible*, he is meant to be plucked and enjoyed as roses and lilies are. He says in the text, "I am the rose of Sharon." What was Sharon? It was an open plain where anybody might wander, and where even cattle roamed at their own sweet will. Jesus is not like a rose in Solomon's garden, shut up within high walls, with broken glass all along the top. Oh, no! he says, "I am the rose of Sharon," everybody's rose, the flower for the common people to come and gather. "I am the lily." What lily? The lily of the palace of Shushan, enclosed and guarded from all approach? No; but, "I am the lily of the valleys," found in this glen, or the other ravine, growing here, there, and everywhere: "I am the lily of the valleys."

Then *Christ is as abundant as a common flower*. Whatever kind of rose it was, it was a common rose; whatever kind of lily it was, it was a well-known lily that grew freely in the valleys of that land. Oh, blessed be my Master's name, he has brought us a common salvation, and he is the common people's Christ! Men in general do not love him enough, or else they would have hedged him in with all sorts of restrictions; they would have made a franchise for him, and nobody would have been able to be saved except those who paid I know not how much a year in taxes. But they do not love our Lord enough to shut him in, and I am glad they have never tried to do so. There he stands, at the four-cross roads, so that everybody who comes by, and wants him, may have him. He is a fountain, bearing this inscription, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Why do roses grow in Sharon? Why do lilies grow in the valleys? Why, to be plucked, of course! I like to see the children go down into the meadow when it is decked in grass, and adorned with flowers, gilded with buttercups, or white with the day's-eyes; I love to see the children pluck the flowers, and fill their pinafores with them, or make garlands, and twist them round their necks, or put them on their heads. "O children, children!" somebody might cry, "do not spoil those beautiful flowers, do not go and pick them." Oh, but they may! nobody says they may not; they may not go into our gardens, and steal the geraniums and the fuchsias; but they may get away into the meadows, or into the open fields, and pluck these common flowers to their heart's content. And now, poor soul, if you would like an apronful of roses, come and have them. If you would like to carry away a big handful of the lilies of the valleys, come and take them, as many as you will. May the Lord give you the will! That is, after all, what is wanted; if there be that grace-given will, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys will soon be yours. They are common flowers, growing in a common place, and there are plenty of them; will you not take them?

Even to those who do not pluck any, there is one strange thing that must not be forgotten. A man passes by a rose-bush, and says, "I cannot stop to think about roses," but as he goes along he

exclaims, "Dear, dear, what a delicious perfume!" A man journeying in the East goes through a field that is full of lilies; he is in a great hurry, but, for all that, he cannot help seeing and smelling the lilies as he rushes through the field. And, do you know, the perfume of Christ has life in it? He is "a savor of life unto life." What does that mean but that the smell of him will save? Ah! if you do but glance at him, though you were so busy that you could not come in till the sermon had begun, yet a glance at this Lily will bring you joy and peace, for he is so free that, often, even when men are not asking for him, he comes to them. "What?" say you, "is it so?" Yes, that it is; such is the freeness of Christ's grace that it is written, "I am found of them that sought me not." He sends his sweet perfume into nostrils that never sniffed after it. He puts himself in the way of eyes that never looked for him. How I wish that some man who has never sought for Christ, might find him even now! You remember the story that Christ tells of the man that was ploughing the field; he was only thinking of the field, and how much corn it would take to sow it; and he was ploughing up and down, when suddenly, his plowshare hit upon something hard. He stopped the oxen, and took his spade, and dug, and there was an old crock, and it was full of gold. Somebody had hidden it away, and left it. This man had never looked for it, for he did not even know it was there, but he had stumbled on it, as men say, by accident. What did he do? He did not tell anybody, but he went off to the man who was the owner of the field, and he said, "What will you take for that field?" "Can you buy it?" "Yes, I want it, what will you take for it?" The price was so high that he had to sell the house he lived in, and his oxen, and his very clothes off his back; but he did not care about that, he bought the field, and he bought the treasure, and then he was able to buy back his clothes, his house, and his oxen, and everything else. If you find Christ, and if you have to sell the coat off your back in order to get him, if you have to give up everything you have that you may find him, you will have such a treasure in him that, for the joy of finding him, you would count all the riches of Egypt to be less than nothing and vanity; but you need not sell the coat off your back, Christ is to be had for nothing, only you must give him yourself. If he gives himself to you, and he becomes your Savior, you must give yourself to him, and become his servant. Trust him, I beseech you, the Lord help you so to do, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Genesis 8:15-22; and Jeremiah 33:15-26.

Genesis 8:15-21. *And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savor;*

Until then, the earth had been obnoxious to Jehovah. He had put it away from him as a foul thing, drowned beneath the flood; but after the offering of Noah's sacrifice, the Lord smelled "a savor of rest."

21, 22. *And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground. And any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

Thus we see what we may expect so long as the earth remains, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Now let us read a few verses from Jeremiah's prophecy.

Jeremiah 33:15. *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.*

In the latter days, at the glorious appointed time, Jesus Christ will grow up like a Branch out of the stem of Jesse. The dynasty of David now seems like a tree out down, whose stock is buried under the ground, but "the Branch of righteousness" shall appear in due time, and Jesus, the Son of David, "shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land."

16. *In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith the shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.*

What a wonderful unity there is between Christ and his Church! She actually takes his name: "The Lord our righteousness."

17, 18. *For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel, neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.*

This shows that the covenant was not a literal and fleshly one, made with David and his seed according to the flesh, or with the priests and their seed according to the flesh. There is a Kingdom that can never be moved, and our Lord sits on that throne; there is a Priesthood which is everlasting, it is held by that great High Priest who hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and who abides a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

19, 22. *And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne, and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.*

So that they are at this day the seed of Jesus, the Son of David, who shall count them? And the company of those whom he hath made to be kings and priests unto God, who but he can number them?

23-26. *Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.*

This shall be literally fulfilled in the latter days, I doubt not, but it is even now being fulfilled to the spiritual seed of Jacob and David. The covenant of grace is made sure to all the seed, even to as many as have believed on Christ's name.

## An Awful Contrast

A Sermon

(No. 2473)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, July 12th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Lord's-day Evening, July 11th, 1886.*

"Then did they spit in his face."—Matthew 26:67.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away."—Revelation 20:11.

GUIDED BY OUR TEXT in Matthew's Gospel, let us first go in thought to the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, and there let us, in deepest sorrow, realize the meaning of these terrible words: "Then did they spit in his face." There is more of deep and awful thunder in them than in the bolt that bursts overhead, there is more of vivid terror in them than in the sharpest lightning flash: "Then did they spit in his face."

Observe that these men, the priests, and scribes, and orders, and their servitors, did this shameful deed after they had heard our Lord say, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. "It was in contempt of this claim, in derision of this honor which he foretold for himself, that "then did they spit in his face," as if they could bear it no longer, that he, who stood to be judged of them, should claim to be their Judge; that he, whom they had brought at dead of night from the garden of Gethsemane as their captive, should talk of coming in the clouds of heaven: "Then did they spit in his face."

Nor may I fail to add that they thus assaulted our Lord after the high priest had rent his clothes. My brethren, do not forget that the high priest was supposed to be the representative of everything that was good and venerable among the Jews. The high priest was the earthly head of their religion; he it was who, alone of mortal men, might enter within the mysterious veil; yet he it was who condemned the Lord of glory, as he rent his clothes, and said, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy." It makes me tremble as I think of how eminent we may be in the service of God, and yet how awfully we may be enemies of the Christ of God. Let none of us think that, though we even clamber up to the highest places in the church, we are therefore saved. We may be high priests, and wear the Urim and the Thummim, and put on the breastplate with all its wondrous mystic stones, and bind around us the curious girdle of the ephod, and yet, for all that, we may be ringleaders in expressing contempt of God and of his Christ. It was when Caiaphas, the high priest, had pronounced the word of condemnation against Christ, that "then did they spit in his face." God grant that we may never take upon ourselves any office in the Church of God, and then, girt about with the authority and influence which such an office might lend to us, be the first to pour derision and contempt upon the Christ of God! Yet I do not hesitate to say that when men look to the earthly priesthood instead of looking to Christ, the great High Priest, when men are taught to trust in the mass instead of trusting in Christ's one sacrifice for sin upon the cross, it is then that the very priests do lead the way in spitting in his face. Antichrist

never more surely dwells anywhere than in the place where Christ is thus dishonored, and none do him such dire disgrace as those who ought to bow at his feet, and lift him high among the sons of men, yet who reject him, and refuse his rightful claims.

"Then did they spit in his face," after he had proclaimed his Godhead as King and Judge of all, and after the man who ought to have been his principal earthly servant had turned arch-traitor, and led the way in contempt of him by accusing him of blaspheming. "Then did they spit in his face."

There are two or three thoughts that come to my mind when I think that these wicked men did actually spit in Christ's face,—in that face which is the light of heaven, the joy of angels, the bliss of saints, and the very brightness of the Father's glory. This spitting shows us, first, *how far sin will go*. If we want proof of the depravity of the heart of man, I will not point you to the stews of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor will I take you to the places where blood is shed in streams by wretches like to Herod and men of that sort. No, the clearest proof that man is utterly fallen, and that the natural heart is enmity against God, is seen in the fact that they did spit in Christ's face, did falsely accuse him, and condemn him, and lead him out as a malefactor, and hang him up as a felon that he might die upon the cross. Why, what evil had he done? What was there in his whole life that should give them occasion to spit in his face? Even at that moment, did his face flash with indignation against them? Did he look with contempt upon them? Not he; for he was all gentleness and tenderness even towards these his enemies, and their hearts must have been hard and brutal indeed that "then did they spit in his face." He had healed their sick, he had fed their hungry, he had been among them a very fountain of blessing up and down Judaea and Samaria; and yet, "then did they spit in his face." I say again, relate not to me the crimes of ancient nations, nor the horrible evils committed by uncivilized men, nor the more elaborate iniquities of our great cities; tell me not of the abominations of Greece or Rome;—this—this, in the sight of the angels of God, and in the eyes of the God of the angels, is the masterpiece of all iniquity: "Then did they spit in his face." To enter into the King's own palace, and draw near to his only-begotten Son, and to spit in his face,—this is the crime of crimes which reveals the infamous wickedness of men. Humanity stands condemned of the blackest iniquity now that it has gone as far as to spit in Christ's face.

My meditation also turns towards the Well-beloved into whose face they spat; and my thought concerning him is this, *how deep was the humiliation he had to endure!* When he was made sin for us, though he himself knew no sin; when our Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself the iniquities of his people, and was burdened with the tremendous weight of their guilt, it became incumbent upon the justice of God to treat him as if he were actually a sinner. He was no sinner, and he could be none; he was perfect man and perfect God, yet he stood in the place of sinners, and the Lord caused to meet upon him the iniquity of all his people. Therefore, in the time of humiliation, he must not be treated as the Son of God, neither must he be held in honor as a righteous man; he must first be given up to shame and to contempt, and then to suffering and to death; and, consequently, he was not spared this last and most brutal of insults: "Then did they spit in his face." O my Lord, to what terrible degradation art thou brought! Into what depths art thou dragged through my sin, and the sin of all the multitudes whose iniquities were made to meet upon thee! O my brothers, let us hate sin; O my sisters, let us loathe sin, not only because it pierced those blessed hands and feet of our dear Redeemer, but because it dared even to spit in his face! No one can ever know all the shame the Lord of glory suffered when they did spit in his face. These words glide over my tongue all too smoothly; perhaps even I do not feel them as they ought to be felt, though I would do so if I could. But could I feel as I ought to feel in sympathy with the terrible shame of Christ, and then could I

interpret those feelings by any language known to mortal man, surely you would bow your heads and blush, and you would feel rising within your spirits a burning indignation against the sin that dared to put the Christ of God to such shame as this. I want to kiss his feet when I think that they did spit in his face.

Then, once more, my thoughts run to him again in this way, I think of *the tender omnipotence of his love*. How could he bear this spitting when, with one glance of his eye, had he been but angry, the flame might have slain them, and withered them all up? Yet he stood still even when they did spit in his face; and they were not the only ones who thus insulted him, for, afterwards, when he was taken by the soldiers into Pilate's hall, they also spat upon him in cruel contempt and scorn.

"See how the patient Jesus stands,  
Insulted in his lowest case!  
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,  
And spit in their Creator's face."

How could he bear it? Friends, he could not have borne it if he had not been omnipotent. That very omnipotence, which would have enabled him to destroy them, was omnipotence of love as well as omnipotence of force. It was this that made him—if I may so say,—"restrain himself," for there is no omnipotence like that which doth restrain omnipotence. Yet so it was that he could endure this spitting from men; but can you think of this marvellous condescension without feeling your hearts all on fire with love to him, so that you long to do some special act of homage to him, by which you may show that you would fain recompense him for this shame if you could?

I will not say more about that point, for the shameful fact stands indelibly recorded in the Scripture: "Then did they spit in his face;" but I want to bring the truth home, brethren, and to show you how we may have done to Christ what these wicked men did. "Oh!" says one, "I was not there; I did not spit in his face." Listen; perhaps you have spat in his face, perhaps even *you* have spat in his face. You remember that touching hymn that we sometimes sing,—

"My Jesus! say what wretch has dared  
Thy sacred hands to bind?  
And who has dared to buffet so  
Thy face so meek and kind?  
"My Jesus I whose the hands that wove  
That cruel thorny crown?  
Who made that hard and heavy cross  
That weighs thy shoulders down?  
"My Jesus! who with spittle vile  
Profaned thy sacred brow?  
Or whose unpitying scourge has made  
Thy precious blood to flow?  
"'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,  
Yet, Jesus, pity take!  
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,  
For thy sweet mercy's sake!"

There are still some who spit in Christ's face by *denying his Godhead*. They say, "He is a mere man; a good man, it is true, but only a man;" though how they dare say that, I cannot make out, for he would be no good man who claimed to be God if he was not God. Jesus of Nazareth was the

basest of impostors who ever lived if he permitted his disciples to worship him, and if he left behind him a life which compels us to worship him, if he was not really and truly God; therefore, of all those who declare that he is not God,—and there is a very great company of them even amongst the nominally religious people of the present day,—we must sorrowfully, but truthfully say, "Then did they spit in his face."

They also do the same who *rail at his gospel*. There are many, in those days, who seem as if they cannot be happy unless they are tearing the gospel to pieces. Especially is that divine mystery of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ the mark for the arrows of the wise men, I mean those who are wise according to the wisdom of this world. We delight to know that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of his people.

"He bore that we might never bear  
His Father's righteous ire."

Yet I have read some horrible things which have been written against that blessed doctrine, and as I read them I could only say to myself, "Then did they spit in his face." If there is anything that is beyond all else the glory of Christ, it is his atoning sacrifice; and if ever you thrust your finger into the very apple of his eye, and touch his honor in the tenderest possible point, it is when you have aught to say against his offering of himself a sacrifice unto God, without blemish and without spot, that he might put away the iniquities of his people. Wherefore judge yourselves in this matter, and if ye have ever denied Christ's Deity, or if ye have ever assailed his atoning sacrifice, it might truly have been said of you, "Then did they spit in his face."

Further, this evil is also done *when men prefer their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ*. There are some who say, "We do not need pardon, we do not want to be justified by faith in Christ, we are good enough already," or, "We are working out our own salvation; we mean to save ourselves." O sirs, if you can save yourselves, why did Jesus bleed upon the cross? It was a superfluity indeed that the Son of God should die in human form if there be a possibility of salvation by your own merits; and if you prefer your merits to his, it must be said of you also, "Then did they spit in his face." Your righteousnesses are only filthy rags; and if you prefer these to the fair white linen which is the righteousness of saints, if you think to wash yourselves in your tears, and so you despise that precious blood apart from which there is no purging of our sin, still to you does our text apply, "then did they spit in his face," when they preferred their own righteousness to Christ's.

I have often spoken to you about the parable of the prodigal son; but, possibly, your case is more like that of the elder brother in the parable; you have your portion of goods, it is all your own, and you are keeping it. You are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. You are self-righteous, you think that you can do very well without God and without Christ, and you half suspect that God can hardly do without you. You are doing so very well in the observance of rites and ceremonies, and the performance of charity and devotions that, if *you* go into the far country, you will cut a very respectable figure; you will be one of those excellent citizens of that country who will, in due time, send some poor prodigal into your fields to feed your swine. I am inclined to believe that your case is even more sad and hopeless than that of the prodigal himself. You, too, have gone far away from God, you are living without him. He is not in all your thoughts, you could almost wish that there were no God, for then there would be no dark cloud hovering in the distance to spoil your summer's day, no fear of storms to come to mar the joy of the hour. Just as truly as of the avowed infidel who openly rejects Christ, it must be said of you, "Then did they spit in his face."

The same thing is, oh! so sadly true *when anyone forsakes the profession of being a follower of Christ's*. There are some, alas! who, for a time, have appeared to stand well in the Church of God,—I will not judge them,—but there have been some who, after making a profession of religion, have deliberately gone back to the world. After seeming for a while to be very zealous, they have become worldly, gay, and perhaps even lascivious and vile. They break the Sabbath, they neglect the Word of God, they forsake the mercy-seat; and their last end is worse than their first. When a man forsakes Christ for a harlot, when he gives up heaven for gold, when he resigns the joys he professed to have had in Christ in order that he may find mirth in the company of the ungodly, it is another instance of the truth of these words, "Then did they spit in his face." To prefer any of these things to Christ, is infamous; and the mere act of spitting from the mouth seems little compared with this sin of spitting with the very heart and soul, and pouring contempt upon Christ by choosing some sin in preference to him. Yet, alas! how many are thus still spitting in Christ's face. Perhaps some now present are doing it.

If, dear friends, our conscience in any measure accuses us of this sin, *let us at once confess it*; let us humble ourselves before the Lord; and with the very mouth that spat upon him, let us kiss the Son lest he be angry, and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

And when we have confessed the sin, *let us believe that he is able and willing to forgive us*. I know that it requires a great act of faith, when sin is consciously felt, to believe in the splendor of divine mercy; but, dear friends, do believe it. Do the Lord Jesus the great honor of saying to him, "Gracious Lord, wash me in thy precious blood; though I did spit in thy face, wash me in that cleansing fountain, and I shall be whiter than snow;" and according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you. You shall have the forgiveness even of this great sin if you confess it, and believe that Christ is both able and willing to forgive it.

And when you have done that, then *let your whole life be spent in trying to magnify and glorify him* whom you and others have defamed and dishonored. Oh, I think that, if I had ever denied Christ's Deity, I should want to stand in this pulpit night and day to revoke what I had said, and to declare him to be the Son of God with power! I think that, if I had ever set up anything in opposition to him, I should want day and night to be setting him up above everything else, as indeed, I long to do. Come, Christian brethren and sisters, let us do something unusual in Christ's honor; let us find out something or invent something fresh, either in the company of others or all by ourselves, by which we may further glorify his blessed name.

Yet once more, if ever anybody should despise us for Christ's sake, let us not count it hard, but *let us be willing to bear scorn and contempt for him*. Let us say to ourselves, "'Then did they spit in his face.' What, then, if they also spit in mine? If they do, I will 'hail reproach, and welcome shame,' since it comes upon me for his dear sake." See, that wretch is about to spit in Christ's face! Put your cheek forward, that you may catch that spittle upon your face, that it fall not upon him again, for as he was put to such terrible shame, every one who has been redeemed with his precious blood ought to count it an honor to be a partaker of the shame, if by any means we may screen him from being further despised and rejected of men.

There, dear friends, I have not preached, I have just talked very, very feebly, and not at all as I wished and hoped I might be able to do, about this wonderful text: "Then did they spit in his face."

Now try to follow me, just for a few minutes, while I let you see that same face in a very different light. Our second text is in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, at the 11th verse:—"And I saw a

great white throne, and him that sat on it, *from whose face the ear and heaven fled away*; and there was found no place for them."

This passage needs no words of mine to explain it. Notice how the apostle begins: "*I saw.*" Oh, I wish I had the power to make you also see this great sight! Sometimes, vividly to realize a truth even once, is far better than to have merely heard it stated ten thousand times. I remember the story of a soldier who was employed in connection with one of the surveys of Palestine. He was with some others of the company in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and without thinking seriously of his words, he said to his comrades, "Some people say that, when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world, the judgment will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, in this very place where we now are." Then he added, "When the great white throne shall be set, I wonder whereabouts I shall be." It is said that he carelessly exclaimed, "I shall sit here upon this big stone," and he sat down; but in an instant he was struck with horror, and he fainted, because in the act of sitting down he had begun to realize somewhat of the grandeur and the terror of that tremendous scene. I wish I knew how to do or say anything by which I could make you realize this scene that John saw in vision. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to heaven from the top of Olivet in his own proper body, and he shall so come in like manner as he was taken up into heaven; but he shall come, not the lowly Man of sorrows, but as Judge of all seated upon a great white throne; and John says, "I saw it." As we sang, a few minutes ago,—

"The Lord shall come! but not the same  
As once in lowliness he came;  
A silent lamb before his foes,  
A weary man, and full of woes.  
"The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,  
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm;  
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind."

I wish, dear friends, that even in your dreams you might see this sight, for, though I have no trust in dreams by themselves, yet any realization of this great truth will be better than the mere hearing of it.

"I saw," said John, "a great white throne." He saw *a throne*, for Christ now reigns, he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and when he comes again, he will come in the power of universal sovereignty as the appointed Judge of all mankind. He will come upon a throne;

That throne is said to be *white*. What other throne can be so described? The thrones of mere mortals are often stained with injustice, or bespattered with the blood of cruel wars; but Christ's throne is white, for he doeth justice and righteousness, and his name is truth.

It will also be a *great* white throne,—a throne so great that all the thrones of former kings and princes shall be as nothing in comparison with it. The thrones of Assyria, and Babylon, and Persia, and Greece, and Rome, shall all seem only like tiny drops of dew to be exhaled in a moment; but this great white throne shall be the recognized seat of the King of kings, the Sovereignty over all sovereignties: "I saw a great white throne."

John not only saw the great white throne, but also "*HIM that sat upon it.*" What a wondrous sight was that! John saw him, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." John saw him whose divine majesty shall shine resplendent even through the nail-prints which he shall still wear when seated on the great white throne. What a sight

it was to John, who had leaned his head upon Christ's bosom, to behold that same Master, whom he had seen die upon the cross, now sitting upon the throne of universal judgment: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it."

Now notice what happened: "*from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.*" As soon as ever this great white throne appeared, heaven and earth began to roll away like a wave receding from the shore. What must HE be before whose face heaven and earth shall retreat as in dismay?

Observe, first, *Christ's power*. He does not drive away the heaven and the earth; he does not even speak to them; the sight of his face is all that is needed, and the old heaven, and the old instained earth, shall begin to flee away, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" and all that by the mere showing of Christ's face. He does not have to lift his arm, he has not to seize a javelin, and to hurl it at the condemned earth; at the sight of his face, heaven and earth shall flee away.

Behold the terror of *Christ's majesty*. And what will you do in that day,—you who did spit in his face, you who did despise him? What will you do in that day? Suppose the great judgment day had already come, suppose that the great white throne was just over yonder, and that when this service was over, you must appear with all the risen dead before your Judge. One would have to say, "I have refused him; how shall I dare to look in his face?" Another would cry, "He drew me once, I felt the tugging of his love, the drawings of his spirit but I resisted, and would not yield. How can I meet him now? How can I look him in the face?" Another will have to say, "I had to strive hard to escape from the grasp of his hand of mercy; I stifled conscience, and I went back into the world." You will all have to look into that face, and that face will look at all of you. One will have to say, "I gave up Christ for the world." "I gave him up for the theater," another must say. "I gave him up for the dancing saloon," another will say. "I gave him up for the love of women," another will say. "I gave him up that I might carry on my business as I could not carry it on if I was a true Christian; I gave up Christ for what I could get." You will have to say all this, and that very soon. As surely as you see me upon this platform now, you shall see the King upon the great white throne then, that King who was once despised and rejected of men.

O sirs, I would that ye would think of all this! It is not one hundredth part so much my concern as it is yours; I am not afraid to see Christ's face, for he hath looked on me in love, and blotted out all my sin, and I love him, and long to be with him for ever and ever. But if you have never had that look of love, if you have never been reconciled to him, I ask you; by the love you bear yourselves, to begin to think about this matter. Begin to prepare to meet this King of men, this Lord of love, who, as surely as he is the Lord of love, will be the King of wrath, for there is no anger like the anger of love. There is no indignation like "the wrath of the Lamb," of which we read a few minutes ago. Divine love, when it has become righteous indignation, burns like coals of juniper, and is quenchless as hell. Wherefore,—

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there;"

and ere heaven and earth begin to flee away from the face of him who sits upon the throne, and ere ye yourselves begin to cry to the rocks to cover you and the mountains to hide you from that face,—seek ye his face with humble penitence and faith, that you may be prepared to meet him with joy in that last tremendous day.

If what I have been saying be all a dream, dismiss it, and go your ways to your sins; but if these things be the very truth of God,—and verily they are,—do act as sane men should, think them over, and prepare to meet your Judge. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Matthew 26:57-68. Revelation 6:12-17, 19:11-16, 20:11-15, 21:1.

We shall read two or three short portions of God's Word in order to bring before you the wonderful contrast to which I am about to direct your thoughts.

Matthew 26:57. *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.*

It was night, but these wicked men could sit up for this gruel deed, to judge the Lord of glory, and to put the innocent One to shame. They "led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

58. *But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

I have heard Peter represented as if he did wrong to follow Christ "afar off." I think he was the bravest of all the apostles, for scarcely one of them followed Christ at all at that time. Afterwards, John bethought himself, and came into the judgment hall. Peter kept at a distance from his Lord, but he did follow him, and he did go into the high priest's palace. He "went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." Peter was right enough in following Christ; it was afterward, when the temptation came, that he fell so grievously.

59, 60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and as the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none:*

Because they did not agree, they would not hold together. This is the weakness of falsehood, that it contradicts itself. These men felt that they must have some show of truth-likeness even in condemning Christ, and this they could not get at first even from their false witnesses.

60, 61. *Yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

Brethren, observe, that this was a little twisting of Christ's words, but that slight wresting made them as different as possible from what Christ had really said. I suppose that, if you want to know how this twisting or wresting is done, any one of our general elections will give you the most wonderful examples of how everything that any man may say can be twisted to mean the very reverse of what he said. If there is one thing in which English people are expert beyond all others, it is in the art of misquoting, misstating, and misrepresenting. As our Lord was wronged in this fashion, nobody need be surprised if the like should happen unto him. "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

62. *And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?*

What was the good of answering? What is ever the good of answering when the only evidence brought against one is palpable and wilful misrepresentation? So the Savior was silent; and thus, he not only proved his wisdom, but he also fulfilled that marvellous prophecy of Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

63. *But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God.*

Now came the answer, the good confession that our Lord witnessed before his cruel adversaries.

64. *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

How that sentence must have come with the vividness of a lightning flash before their faces! What a declaration of power from One who stood there bound before his enemies, apparently helpless, and about to die!

65-68. *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?*

Our Lord had told these mockers that they should one day see him coming in the clouds of heaven. Let us read in the Book of the Revelation concerning that great event.

Revelation 6:12-16. *And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

Think of the contrast between this awful cry and the sentence we read just now: "Then did they spit in his face." "Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Think, too, of the contrast of which we were reminded in our opening hymn,—

"While sinners in despair shall call,  
Rocks' hide us; mountains, on us fall!  
The saints, ascending from the tomb,  
Shall joyful sing, "The Lord is come!"

17. *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

Let us read further on in the same Book.

Revelation 19:11, 12. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns;*

"Bright with all his crowns of glory,  
See the royal Victor's brow."

Again note the contrast: "Then did they spit in his face." "And on his head were many crowns;"—

12-16. *And he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

And this is he in whose face his enemies did spit.

Now turn to the next chapter.

Revelation 20:11 *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

Driven, like chaff before the wind, from the face of him who sat upon the throne.

12-15. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 21:1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—364, 275, 363.

## The Great Change

A Sermon

(No. 2474)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, July 19th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Lord's-day Evening, July 18th, 1886.*

"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found."—Hosea 14:8.

THIS PASSAGE IS in very vivid contrast to what Ephraim had previously said, as it is recorded in the early part of Hosea's prophecy. If you turn to the second chapter, and the fifth verse, you will find this same Ephraim saying, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." These lovers were the idol gods, and Ephraim was determined to go after them, for she ascribed to them her various comforts, her bread and her water, her wool and her flax, her oil and her drink. So desperately set was this Ephraim upon going after her idols that God had much ado to drag her away from them, for that second chapter continues, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them." So, you see, this people had been desperately set upon following after idols; yet, before the prophecy is ended, we find this same Ephraim saying, "What have I to do any more with idols?" What a change the grace of God works in the heart! It reverses the action of the entire machinery of our being. It puts, "No," for "Yes," and "Yes," for "No." It is a radical change; that which we hated, we come to love; and that which we loved, we come to hate. Whereas we said, concerning this and that, "I will," and "I shall," the grace of God makes us change our note and we say "I will not; by God's grace, I will not act as I said I would, for what have I to do any more with idols?"

At the beginning of this discourse, I would like to put to each one whom I am addressing this question, "Have you, my friend, ever experienced this great and total change?" Remember, if you have not, it is imperatively necessary that you should if you desire to be numbered among the Lord's people. "Ye must be born again," and this being born again is not the evolving of some good thing out of you that is already there hidden away, but the putting into you of something which is not there. It is the quickening of you from your death in sin. It is a change in you as great as was wrought upon the person of our Lord Jesus when, after lying in the grave dead, he was brought to life. Nothing short of this new birth, this resurrection, this thorough, total, radical change will make you meet to enter heaven. You have no right to expect that you will ever stand within yon gates of pearl unless you have been created anew in Christ Jesus. He that sitteth on the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new;" and he must make you new, or else, into the new kingdom where there is a new heaven and a new earth, you can never come; nay, you cannot even see that kingdom, for our Lord's words are as true to-day as when he said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he

cannot see the kingdom of God." Let that searching thought remain with you, and try yourselves by it.

But now I shall take you at once to the words of the text, that we may think of the change which was wrought upon Israel, or Ephraim. We will consider, first, *the character of this change*: "Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols?" Then, secondly, let us note *the cause of this change*; and, thirdly, *the effect of this change*.

I. First, then, we are to consider THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHANGE.

Ephraim had been besotted with her idolatry. The Israelites were never contented with idols of one sort; they went to Moab, to Egypt, to Philistia, to Assyria, to the Hittites, and to any other ites, to borrow idols. They introduced fresh idols from distant countries, they were never satisfied with the number of their images; yet now, when God has effectually wrought upon their hearts, they say, one voice speaking for all, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Notice, that *this change was a very hearty and spontaneous one*. Ephraim did not say, "I should like to worship idols, yet I dare not." She did not say, "I should like to set up graven images, but I must not." On the contrary, she herself said, "What have I to do any more with idols?" I wish that some people whom I might mention understood what conversion means. They say to us, "So you do not attend the theatre; what a denial it must be to you!" It is nothing of the kind, for we never have a wish or desire to go there. What have we, the twice-born, to do with these vain things of the world? "Oh, but the drunkard's cup—it must be a very great piece of self-denial to you to abjure it!" On the contrary, it is loathsome to us; we have come to feel as if the most nauseous medicine that could be mixed would be sweeter to us than that cup. What have we to do any more with idols?

So, each thing that is evil becomes to the real convert a disgusting and distasteful thing. He does not say, "Oh, how I should like it! How I long for it! What a hungering I have after it!" If he detects in himself the least hankering after evil of any kind, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But as far as the work of God's Spirit has been wrought upon him, he has a thorough hearty severance and divorce from those things which he once loved, and he has as great a horror of them as once he had a desire for them. Now he sings,—

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,  
It has no charms for me;  
Once I admired its trifles too,  
But grace has set me free.  
"Its pleasures now no longer please,  
No more content afford;  
Far from my heart be joys like these,  
Now I have seen the Lord.  
"As by the light of opening day  
The stars are all conceal'd;  
So earthly pleasures fade away,  
When Jesus is reveal'd."

I say again, the change is a very spontaneous and hearty one. Ephraim shall herself freely say, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have done with those things, and I am glad to have done with them. Oh, that I had done with them once for all!" I asked a convert, this last week, perhaps to a dozen I have put the same question, "My dear brother, are you perfect?" "No, sir," each one

has said, "I am not." Then when I have enquired, "Would you not like to be perfect?" the answer in every case has been, "Yes, indeed I would; it would be heaven on earth if I could but be perfectly holy. Oh, that I were clean rid of sin!" So we sing, with Cowper—

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee."

Let the idols go; smash them all up, break them in pieces like potter's vessels. If there be a lust, if there be a passion, if there be a joy, if there be a desire, that is not according to the mind of God, away with it. We cannot endure the evil thing, and want to get rid of it. Ephraim shall say, and shall say it cheerfully, spontaneously, heartily, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Observe also, that *this change is the work of God's effectual grace*. Notice the wording of the text: "Ephraim *shall* say." It is God who says, Ephraim *shall* say." Perhaps you ask me, "Did you not say that Ephraim said this voluntarily, spontaneously, with all her heart, and of her own free will?" Yes, that is so; but the Holy Spirit, without violating the freedom of man's will, is the Master of that will. There used to be great wars and fightings among Christian people about free will and free grace; and when I read the reports of those controversies, I am struck with the great amount of truth that was spoken on both sides. When I hear a man stoutly affirm that, if there be any good thing, it is all of the grace of God, I know that it is so; but when another declares that man is a free agent, and that, if he acts virtuously at all, his free will must consent to it, and that this condition is essential to the very making of virtue, is not that also true? Certainly it is, and why should we not believe both? Ephraim cheerfully says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" and yet at the back of that, is the great mysterious energy and work of the Holy Ghost bringing to pass the eternal purpose and decree of God, so that they are fulfilled. For God to work his will with mere materialism, with dead blocks of wood or stone, with rivers or with tempests, is but ordinary omnipotence; but for God to leave men absolutely and responsible agents, and never to interfere with the freedom of their agency, and yet for him to accomplish his eternal purposes concerning them to every jot and tittle, this is, if I may so say, omnipotent omnipotence, this is almighty power carried to a climax. It is just so with the grace of God; we spontaneously quit our sin, but it is because almighty grace is working within us to will and to do of God's own good pleasure. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" because God in his effectual grace has weaned her from her idols.

Notice next, dear friends, that *this change is always a very personal one*. Ephraim says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" She does not say, "What have the nations to do with idols?" That would be a wise question; but, as a rule, national or general religion does not amount to much; we say, with Mr. Bunyan, "Those are generals, man, come to particulars." Believe all truth with the general company of those who hold it; but mind that you come to particulars, and say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Do not ask, "What has my mother to do with idols? What has my brother to do with idols? What has my neighbour to do with idols?" but, "What have I to do with idols?" If all other men go into sin, I must not. I ask each believing one to who I am speaking to feel, "God has done so much for me that I must turn away from sin. To me, wilful wickedness would be a horrible thing. I must quit all iniquity. Whatever all the rest of the world may do, I must not go with the multitude to do evil; I must loathe it and leave it. 'As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.' 'Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?'" Abhor selfishness

and egotism; but, at the same time, be very personal and individual about your own religion. You were born alone, and you will die alone, and you have need to be born again individually and personally; and it must come to a personal transaction between yourself and God, so that you can for yourself say, as we did in our singing,—

"Tis done! the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:  
He drew me, and I follow'd on,  
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.  
"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear;  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"What have I to do any more with idols?" The change here implied must be spontaneous and hearty; it must be the result of divine grace; and it must be personal.

And then, dear friends, it must also be a *truly repentant change*: "What have I to do any *more* with idols?" There is in that question a confession that the speaker has had to do with idols already. Let the time past suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh. Brother, if thou art resolved to serve God, through his grace, yet ere thou beginnest that service, remember how thou hast in the past served the devil. Quit not thy old way without many a tear of regret, and many a blush of deep humiliation, for whatever thou mayest do in the future, thou canst not undo the past. Thy wasted time, thy injured faculties, thy angered God, thy friends about thee influenced for evil by thy example, thou canst not blot out all these; therefore, at least stay thou a while, and shed penitent tears over the graves of thy dead sins, and ask thy God to help thee to feel that thou hast had enough of thy evil ways, and sin, and neglect. Say, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have had far too much to do with them already. O Satan, O self, O world, I have served you all too long; and now, my God, with deep regret for all the past, I turn my face to thee!"

This change must also be, dear friends, *life-long*. Notice two words in our text, "What have I to do *any more* with idols?" Where the grace of God really converts a man, he is not converted merely for the next quarter of a year, with the possibility of falling from grace afterwards. That is a human conversion which can ever come to an end; but if God converts you, you can never be unconverted. As conversion is the work of the Spirit of God, it is clear that it must need the same power to undo it as first did it. He who has made you a Christian will keep you a Christian; and unless a stronger than he shall come in, and undo his work, you shall never go back to your old idols again.

"Where God begins his gracious work,  
That work he will complete,  
For round the objects of his love,  
All power and mercy meet.  
"Man may repent him of his work,  
And fail in his intent;  
God is above the power of change,  
He never can repent.  
"Each object of his love is sure  
To reach the heavenly goal:

For neither sin nor Satan can  
Destroy the blood-wash'd soul."

Oh, how I love to preach this glorious doctrine of everlasting salvation! The salvation that only carries you a little bit of the way to heaven, I never thought worthy of my acceptance, I would not have it as a gift, and I never thought it worth preaching to you. I remember hearing one of the revival preachers say that there are some who go on the road to heaven, and just take a ticket to the next station; then they get out and take a new ticket, and rush back to the train; and so they keep on. "But," said the man, "when I started I took a ticket all the way through." That is the way to travel to heaven; when you start, get a ticket all the way through. Listen to these words of Christ: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them 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." Listen also to the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." O my brothers, God does not play at saving men; first doing the work, and then undoing it. If he saves you, you are saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is the gospel which we are sent to preach to you; so that, when once converted, truly converted, you will say, "What have I any more to do with idols?"

Perhaps someone asks, "Ay, but do not some professors go back, and do you say that, if men, after making a profession of religion, live in sin, they shall be saved?" Certainly we say nothing of the kind; we say, on the contrary, that if truly converted they will not live in sin, but if the work of grace be wrought in them, they will be kept from sin; or if they shall, through sudden temptation, fall, they shall be speedily restored; weeping and sighing, they shall be brought back again to the good way. We never said that men could live in sin, and yet go to heaven. That were damnable talk, not fit for a Christian to utter; but he who is truly saved is saved once for all, and he can say, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Throughout the rest of his life he will have done with them, he will have quitted them. He will burn his boats behind him, never to go back to the country which he has quitted once for all. This is a salvation worth having; wherefore, I pray you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be a partaker of it.

Yet once more, notice that *this is a very thorough change*: "What have I to do any more with idols?" O you who have done with idols, remember that you have also done with the idol temples, you have done with the false priests, you have done with the so-called "sacred thread" and other idolatrous tokens; you have done with everything appertaining to idolatry! You who once were drunkards have done for ever with the public-house and the drunkard's cup. You who once were lascivious, if the grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with fornication, what have you to do with any kind of uncleanness? You who were aforesaid dishonest, if the grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with the tricks of the trade? What have you to do with fraudulent bankruptcies? What have you to do with cheating and lying? Let each true believer cry, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Begone, sin and Satan, bag and baggage! What has a man, who is bought with the blood of Christ, to do any more with idols? He quits them once for all, by God's good grace.

I find that the rest of my text would take up far too much time for me to expound it fully, so that I shall have to content myself with the second division of the subject.

II. This was to be, you will remember, **THE CAUSE OF THE GREAT CHANGE.**

The first cause of this change is *the grace received*. In the previous part of the chapter, we find the Lord saying, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." Then our text naturally follows, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" We cannot get you to give up sin, however earnestly we may exhort you to forsake it; but if, by God's grace, you receive Christ as your Saviour, then you will abandon sin as a natural consequence. What is the best way to keep chaff out of a bushel measure? Fill it full of wheat; and when the heart of a man is full of Christ, there will be no room for the world, the flesh, and the devil. These things cannot find an entrance where Christ has full possession. When God is as the dew of our soul, and we receive freely of his grace, then we do not need telling, and urging, and driving but we at once say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Another cause of this great change lies in *our perception of the beauties of the Lord*. I do not quite know whether what I am going to say is the exact teaching of the text, but I think it is. It is very difficult, sometimes, in these prophecies to know who is speaking. There are often dialogues, and the dialogues are not always so clearly marked that we can tell who is the speaker. I have always thought, when I have read this chapter that it was the Lord who said, "I have heard him, and observed him;" but on thinking the passage over very carefully, I am not quite sure that it is so. Let me give you another version, which I met with in two verses by an unknown poet; and then see whether this is not the, meaning of the passage:—

"I have heard him, and observed him,  
 Seen his beauty rich and rare,  
 Seen his majesty and glory,  
 And his grace beyond compare.  
 "What have I to do with idols,  
 When such visions fill my eye?  
 How be occupied with shadows  
 When the substance passes by?"

Does the text mean, then, "I will have nothing more to do with idols, for I have heard my God, and I have observed him; I have heard Christ speak, and I have observed the excellence of his character"? This much I know,—whether that be the teaching of this passage, or not,—nothing weans the heart from idols like a sight of Christ. O you worldly Christians, who are getting to be so fond of this world, I am sure that you have not seen your Master lately! If you had, the world would sink in your esteem. O you who are beginning to be fond of human wisdom, you cannot have heard him speak of late, or else he would be made of God unto you wisdom, and everything else would be folly! O you who are seeking to live for self and for earthly gain, your heads have not been lately pillowed on the Saviour's bosom, you have not recently looked into those dear eyes which are more radiant than the glories of the morning! You cannot have known the fragrance of those garments which smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, or you would never be enamoured of this poor, foul, unsavoury world. "I have heard him, and observed him: what have I to do any more with idols?" "I have heard him say, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' I have observed him go up to the cross, and lay down his life for me; 'what have I to do any more with idols?'" When thou, as the bride of Christ, lovest thy first Husband as thou shouldst love him, then thy wanderings will be at an end. When all thy heart goes after the Well-beloved, and he enraptures thee with manifestations of his love and of his grace, then wilt thou say, "What have I to do with idols,—I

so favoured, I so enriched with divine blessings, I who am on the road to heaven, I who am so soon to see the face of him I love,—what have I to do with idols?"

That seems to me to be a grand meaning perfectly consistent with earnest Christian experience, so I leave it with you. This great change, then, is wrought in us by the grace of God, and by a sight of the true beauties of our Lord.

But now, taking the text as it is generally understood, you will get another meaning. One cause for this great change is *the sense of answered prayer*: Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" And God says of Ephraim, "I have heard him." I recollect, even as a child, God hearing my prayer; I cannot tell you what it was about, it may have been concerning a mere trifle, but to me as a child it was as important as the greatest prayer that Solomon ever offered for himself, and God heard that prayer, and it was thus early established in my mind that the Lord was God. And afterwards, when I came really to know him,—afterwards, when I came to cry to him intelligently, I had this prayer answered, and that petition granted, and many a time since then,—I am only speaking what any of you who know the Lord could also say,—many a time since then he has answered my requests. I cannot tell you all about this matter; there is many a secret between me and my dear Lord. This very week, I have had a love-token from him which, if I could tell you about it, would make your eyes wonder and fill with tears. I asked, and I received, as manifestly as if I had spoken to my brother in the flesh, and he had said, "Yes, there, take all you need." Well now, I always find that, in proportion as I am conscious that God is answering my prayers, my heart says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" If I can have from my God whatever I ask for, why need I cringe and bow my knees to men? If I have but to go to God, and wait upon him, and he will give me the desires of my heart, what have I to do with the fretting, and fuming, and being anxious? What have I to do with idols? If there is everything in Christ, and that everything is to be had for the asking, what have I to do with idols? It is wonderful how you are weaned from the dry breasts of the world when you can drink in all that your soul desires from the living God. If God, the Jehovah of hosts, be no more to you than the gods of the heathen, or the gods of the men of the world, why then you will have to do with idols; but if your God is the God that heareth prayer, and if you live in his presence, and you speak to him, and he speaks to you, if you keep up perpetual intercourse with him, so that God can say to you, "I have heard him, and observed him," then I am sure that you will also say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

If I am addressing any poor soul that has been craving mercy from God, one who has been crying for months to God to give him forgiveness through Jesus Christ, why, dear heart, if you will only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall get all that you are asking, you shall receive peace, and pardon, and joy, and rest; and then you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

"Oh!" says one, "my dear sir, I have been trying to overcome sin, and I cannot." I know you cannot; but if you begin by receiving Christ, by praying to God, and getting the answer, then you will be able to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" You want to wash yourself first, and then to come to the fountain. That will not do; you must come, black as you are, and wash, and be cleansed. You want to get rich spiritually, and then to come to God to enrich you. No; you must come to him poor, come without anything of your own, just as you are, and trust the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he will give you all you need, and then you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols, for God has heard me, and he doth observe my soul?"

You see, then, some of the ways in which this very great and wonderful change is wrought. I had to omit many other points on which I meant to speak, but I do pray that this change may be

wrought in every one of you. Do not wait to have the change wrought, and then come to God, but come to God for it. If you have a broken heart, come to Christ with it; but if you do not feel your sin, come to Christ that you may be made to feel it. If there is any good thing in you, thank God for it, and come to him for more; but if there is no good thing whatever in you, come without any good thing, and let Christ begin at the very beginning with you, in all your emptiness, and need, and spiritual beggary and loathsomeness. Come to him just as you are, for he still says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." May his sweet Spirit graciously attract every one of you till you shall be drawn to him, and so drawn from your idols, and to him shall be glory, for ever and ever! Amen.

Psalm 34; and Hosea 14.

Psalm 34. Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times:*

"At dark times, and bright times; when I am alone, and when I am in company; when I feel like doing it, and when I do not feel like doing it: 'I will bless the Lord at all times.'"

1. *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

"I will not only feel it in my heart, but I will give expression to it with my mouth. Those who do not care for this blessed employment may leave it alone; but as for me, 'his praise shall continually be in my mouth.'"

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*

"I will ride the high horse when I begin to talk of the goodness of God: 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord;' and whereas boasters are generally very vexatious to humble-minded people, this kind of boasting shall please them: 'the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.'"

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

Come my brethren and sisters, I cannot perform this happy service alone; it is too much for me all by myself. This bunch of grapes is too heavy to be carried by one. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

4. *I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

Should not the prayer-hearing God be praised? If he hears the cries of his people, should he not also hear the praises of his people? It is not one only to whom God has thus listened, but many can say with the psalmist, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me."

5, 6. *They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

It is God's delight to hear the cry of the poor men. Sometimes, he passes by the rich and great, and gives heed to the poor and desolate. It is our need that has the loudest cry with God; if our necessities are urgent, our prayer will be powerful.

7. *The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

God's children are always attended like princes, legions of angels form their body-guard. The angel of the Lord, and companies of holy angels with him, pitch their celestial tents round about them that fear God.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Do try him, dear friends, and prove for yourselves how good and gracious he is: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

"Oh, make but trial of his love;

Experience will decide

How blest are they, and only they,

Who in his truth confide!"

9. *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.*

He will supply all their wants. You need not fear for anything else when once you fear God.

10. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:*

They are strong, and fierce, and crafty, and unscrupulous, yet still they suffer hunger:—

10. *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

Though they be neither cruel, nor cunning, nor strong, "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." What a promise for you to plead in prayer, dear friends! If you are in any need, do not hesitate, but by an act of faith take this gracious word, and plead it with the promise-keeping God: "Hast thou not said that, 'they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing'? Then, Lord, do as thou hast said."

11-13. *Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

He who can manage his tongue can manage his whole body; for the tongue is the rudder of the ship, and if that be properly held, the vessel will be rightly steered. If thou wouldst escape the quicksands and the rocks, look well to thy tongue; keep it from evil, that it speak neither blasphemy against God nor slander against thy fellow-men; and keep thy lips from guile, that is, from deceit, from double meanings, from saying one thing and meaning another, or making other people think that you mean another,—an art all too well understood in these days. God make us plain-speaking men, who say what we mean, and mean what we say! When, by the grace of God, we are taught to do this, we have learnt a good lesson.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*

If it runs away from you, run after it. Never run into or after a quarrel, but always run after peace: "Seek peace, and pursue it."

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*

The Lord is always watching them, and he is always listening that he may hear everything they say, especially when they cry unto him.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

He will not only destroy the wicked, but he will blot out the very memory of them. They may become great and famous in their wickedness, but they shall not be kept in memory as the righteous are. As Solomon says, "The name of the wicked shall rot."

17, 18. *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Men do not care for broken hearts, but God does. "Give me a sound heart and a brave heart," says man. "Give me a broken and contrite heart," says the Lord. If you have such a heart as that, be not afraid to draw near to your God, through Jesus Christ, for he is already nigh unto you.

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

Many who read this verse admit that the first part of it is true: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Yes, but the latter clause is also true: "but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Do not omit either portion of the passage, for one part is as true as the other.

20. *He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

God's people shall suffer no real, lasting, vital injury. You may have flesh wounds; but as to the bones of your spirit, as it were, the solid part of it, "not one of them is broken."

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.*

They shall want nothing else to make an end of them but their own sins: "Evil shall slay the wicked."

22. *The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*

Now we are going to read the last chapter of the Book of the prophet Hosea, the first of the minor prophets.

Hosea 14. Verse 1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thy iniquity.*

When we fall by sin we must regain our comfort by going back to the place where we lost it: "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thy iniquity." Then, to help us return, God, through his servant, actually makes a prayer for us.

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord:*

"What words am I to take?" asks the poor convinced sinner. "I cannot put words together." Here are the words put into your mouth:—

2. *Say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

Come with humble confession, come with sincere repentance, come with earnest supplication, come trusting to the grace of God, come bringing your heart with you, and rendering it to God as a living sacrifice.

3. *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless find mercy.*

If you come to God to be saved, you must bring no other saviour with you. What an encouragement is given to us to come to God! He calls himself the Father of the fatherless. O thou, whose soul is orphaned, thou who art left disconsolate in a world of grief, come thou to him in whom the fatherless find mercy, for so shalt thou find mercy!

4, 5. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel:*

"Swiftly and mysteriously will I come and refresh him."

5. *He shall grow as the lily,*

Quickly, beautifully,—

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.*

He shall be as permanent as he is fair, like a cedar as well as like a lily.

6. *His branches shall spread,*

The dew of the Lord imparts influence to men; it gives them, as it were branches, with which they cast a wide shadow.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,*

The beauty of fruitfulness. God grant all of us this beauty!

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.*

Oh, to stand in holy repute among men, so that there is a fragrance going forth from us, like the sweet odours from the wild thyme and other products of Mount Lebanon!

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.*

When God blesses men, he also blesses those round about them. Your children, your servants, your neighbours, shall all be the better if the grace of God comes to you. So may it be!

8, 9. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—377, 657, 658.

## "My Garden"—"His Garden"

A Sermon

(No. 2475)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, July 26th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Thursday Evening, July 20th, 1882.*

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."—Song of Solomon 4:16.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE there is between what the believer was by nature and what the grace of God has made him! Naturally, we were like the waste howling wilderness, like the desert which yields no healthy plant or verdure. It seemed as if we were given over to be like a salt land, which is not inhabited; no good thing was in us, or could spring out of us. But now, as many of us as have known the Lord are transformed into gardens; our wilderness is made like Eden, our desert is changed into the garden of the Lord. "I will turn unto you," said the Lord to the mountains of Israel when they were bleak and bare, "I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown;" and this is exactly what he said to the barrenness of our nature. We have been enclosed by grace, we have been tilled and sown, we have experienced all the operations of the divine husbandry. Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "My Father is the husbandman," and he has made us to be fruitful unto his praise, full of sweetness where once there was no fruit, and nothing that could give him delight.

We are a garden, then, and in a garden there are flowers and fruits, and in every Christian's heart you will find the same evidences of culture and care; not in all alike, for even gardens and fields vary in productiveness. In the good ground mentioned by our Lord in the parable of the sower, the good seed did not all bring forth a hundredfold, or even sixty-fold; there were some parts of the field where the harvest was as low as thirty-fold, and I fear that there are some of the Lord's gardens which yield even less than that. Still, there are the fruits and there are the flowers, in a measure; there is a good beginning made wherever the grace of God has undertaken the culture of our nature.

I. Now coming to our text, and thinking of Christians as the Lord's garden, I want you to observe, first, that **THERE ARE SWEET SPICES IN BELIEVERS.**

The text assumes that when it says, "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." There are in the Lord's garden sweet flowers that drip with honey, and all manner of delightful perfumes. There are such sweet apices within the believer's heart; let us think of them for a few minutes, and first, let me remind you of *the names of these sweet spices.*

For instance, there is faith; is there anything out of heaven sweeter than faith,—the faith which trusts and clings, which believes and hopes, and declares that, though God shall slay it, yet will it trust in him? In the Lord's esteem, faith is full of fragrance. He never delighted in the burning of bulls and the fat of fed beasts, but he always delighted in the faith which brought these things as types of the one great sacrifice for sin. Faith is very dear to him. Then comes love; and again I must

ask,—Is there to be found anywhere a sweeter spice than this,—the love which loves God because he first loved us, the love which flows out to all the brotherhood, the love which knows no circle within which it can be bounded, but which loves the whole race of mankind, and seeks to do them good? It is exceedingly pleasing to God to see love growing where once all was hate, and to see faith springing up in that very soul which was formerly choked with the thorns and briars of doubt and unbelief. And there is also hope, which is indeed an excellent grace, a far-seeing grace by which we behold heaven and eternal bliss. There is such a fragrance about a God-given hope that this poor sin-stricken world seems to be cured by it. Wherever this living, lively hope comes, there men lift up their drooping heads, and begin to rejoice in God their Savior. You do not need that I should go over all the list of Christian graces, and mention meekness, brotherly kindness, courage, uprightness, or the patience which endures so much from the hand of God; but whatsoever grace I might mention, it would not be difficult at once to convince you that there is a sweetness and a perfume about all grace in the esteem of him who created it, and it delights him that it should flourish where once its opposite alone was found growing in the heart of man. These, then, are some of the saints' sweet spices.

Next notice, that *these sweet spices are delightful to God*. It is very wonderful that we should have within us anything in which God can take delight; yet when we think of all the other wonders of his grace, we need not marvel at all. The God who gave us faith may well be pleased with faith. The God who created love in such unlovely hearts as ours may well be delighted at his own creation. He will not despise the work of his own hands; rather will he be delighted with it, and find sweet complacency therein. What an exaltation it is to us worms of the earth that there should ever be anything in us well-pleasing unto God! Well did the psalmist say, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" But God is mindful of us, and he does visit us. Of old, before Christ came into this world—in human form, his delights were with the sons of men; much more is it so now that he has taken their nature into heaven itself, and given to those sons of men his own Spirit to dwell within them. Let it ravish your heart with intense delight that, though often you can take no complacency in yourself, but go with your head bowed down, like a bulrush, and cry, "Woe is me!" yet in that very cry of yours God hears a note that is sweet and musical to his ears. Blessed is repentance, with her tear-drops in her eyes, sparkling like diamonds. God takes delight even in our longings after holiness, and in our loathings of our own imperfections. Just as the father delights to see his child anxious to be on the best and most loving terms with him, so does God delight in us when we are crying after that which we have not yet reached, the perfection which shall make us to be fully like himself. O beloved, I do not know anything that fills my soul with such feelings of joy as does the reflection that I, even I, may yet be and do something that shall give delight to the heart of God himself! He has joy over one sinner that repenteth, though repentance is but an initial grace; and when we go on from that to other graces, and take yet higher steps in the divine life, we may be sure that his joy is in us, and therefore our joy may well be full.

These spices of ours are not only delightful to God, but *they are healthful to man*. Every particle of faith that there is in the world is a sort of purifier; wherever it comes, it has a tendency to kill that which is evil. In the spiritual sanitary arrangements which God made for this poor world, he put men of faith, and the faith of these men, into the midst of all this corruption, to help to keep other men's souls alive, even as our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." The sweet perfumes that flow out from the flowers which God cultivates in the garden of his Church are scattering spiritual health and sanity all around. It is a blessed thing that the Lord has provided

these sweet spices to overpower and counteract the unhealthy odours that float on every breeze. Think, then, dear friends, of the importance of being God's fragrant flowers, which may yield perfumes that are delightful to him, and that are blessed and healthful to our fellow-men. A man of faith and love in a church sweetens all his brethren. Give us but a few such in our midst, and there shall be no broken spiritual unity, there shall be no coldness and spiritual death; but all shall go well where these men of God are among us as a mighty influence for good. And, as to the ungodly around us, the continued existence in the earth of the Church of Christ is the hope of the world. The world that hates the Church knows not what it does, for it is hating its best friend. The spices with which God is conserving this present evil age, lest his anger should destroy it because of the growing corruption, are to be found in the flowers which he has planted in the garden of his Church.

It sometimes happens that *these sweet odours within God's people lie quiet and still*. There is a stillness in the air, something like that which the poet Coleridge makes "The Ancient Mariner" speak of in his graphic description of a calm within the tropics. Do you, dear friends, never get into that becalmed condition? I recollect, when I was young, reading an expression,—I think of Erskine's,—in which he says that he lines a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil. It struck me then that, if I could keep the devil always asleep, it would be the best thing that could possibly happen for me; but now I am not so sure that I was right. At all events, I know this, when the old dog of hell barks very loudly, he keeps me awake; and when he howls at me, he drives me to the mercy-seat for protection; but when he goes to sleep, and lies very quiet, I am very apt to go to sleep, too, and then the graces that are within my soul seem to be absolutely hidden. And, mark you, hidden grace, which in no way reveals itself by its blessed odours, is all the same as if there were none, to those that watch from the outside, and sometimes to the believer himself. What is wanted, in order that he may know that he has these sweet perfumes, is something outside himself. You cannot stir your own graces, you cannot make them more, you cannot cause their fragrance to flow forth. True, by prayer, you may help to this end; but then, that very prayer is put into you by the Holy Spirit, and when it has been offered to the Lord, it comes back to you laden with blessings; but often, something more is needed, some movement of God's providence, and much more, some mighty working of his grace, to come and shake the flower bells in his garden, and make them shed their fragrance on the air. Alas! on a hot and drowsy day, when everything has fallen into a deep slumber, even God's saints, though they be wise virgins, go as soundly asleep as the foolish virgins, and they forget that "the Bridegroom cometh." "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept;" and, sometimes, you and I must catch ourselves nodding when we ought to be wide awake. We are going through a part of that enchanted ground which John Bunyan describes, and we do not know what to do to keep ourselves awake.

At such times, a Christian is very apt to ask, "*Am I indeed planted in God's garden? Am I really a child of God?*" Now, I will say what some of you may think a strong thing; but I do not believe that he is a child of God who never raised that question. Cowper truly wrote,—

"He has no hope who never had a fear;  
 And he who never doubted of his state,  
 He may, perhaps,—perhaps he may—too late."  
 I have sung, and I expect that I may have to sing again,—  
 "'Tis a point I long to know;  
 Oft it causes anxious thought;

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I his, or am I not?"

I cannot bear to get into that condition, and I cannot bear to keep in it when I am in it, but still, there must be anxious thought about this all-important matter. Because you happened to be excited on a certain occasion, and thought you were converted and were sure of heaven, you had better look well to the evidence on which you are relying. You may be mistaken after all; and while I would not preach up little faith, I would preach down great presumption. No man can have a faith too strong, and no assurance can be too full, if it comes really from God the Holy Spirit; but if it comes merely out of your fancying that it is so, and, therefore, will not examine yourself, whether you be in the faith, I begin to make up my mind that it is not so, because you are afraid to look into the matter. "I know that I am getting rich," says a merchant, "I never keep any books, and I do not want any books, but I know that I am getting on well in my business." If, my dear sir, I do not soon see your name in the *Gazette*, I shall be rather surprised.

Whenever a man is so very good that he does not want to esquire at all into his position before God, I suspect that he is afraid of introspection, and self-examination, and that he dare not look into his own heart. This I know; as I watch the many people of God committed to my care here, I see some run on for ten years or more serving God with holy joy, and having no doubt or fear. They are not generally remarkable for any great depth of experience, but when God means to make mighty men of them, he digs about them, and soon they come to me crying, and craving a little comfort, telling me what doubts they have, because they are not what they want to be. I am glad when this is the case, I rejoice because I know that they will be spiritually better off afterwards. They have reached a higher standard than they had previously attained, they have a better knowledge now of what they ought to be. It may be that, before, their ideal was a low one, and they thought that they had reached it. Now, God has revealed to them greater heights, which they have to climb; and they may as well gird up the loins of their mind to do so by divine help. As they get higher, they perhaps think, "Now we are at the top of the mountain," when they are really only on one of the lower spurs of it. Up they go, climbing again. "If once I can reach that point, I shall soon be at the summit," you think. Yes, and when you have at length got there, you see the mountain still towering far above you. How deceptive is the height of the Alps to those who have not seen them before! I said to a friend once, "It will take you about thirteen hours to get to the top of that mountain." "Why," he replied, "I can run up in half-an-hour." I let him have a try, and he had not gone far before he had to sit down to pant and rest. So you think of a certain height of grace, "Oh, I can easily reach that!" Yea, just so; but you do not know how high it is; and those who think that they have reached the top do not know anything about the top; for he who knows how high is the holiness to which the believer can attain will go on clambering and climbing, often on his hands and knees, and when he has reached that point which he thought was the summit, he will sit down and say, "I thought I had reached the top, but now I find that I have but begun the ascent." Or he may say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:" (and then I did not know much of thee, or of myself either,) "but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

You see, then, that there are sweet spices lying in Christians, like hidden honey and locked-up perfume within the flowers on a hot day.

II. What is wanted is that **THOSE SWEET ODORS SHOULD BE DIFFUSED**. That is to be our second head. Read the text again: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Observe, first, that *until our graces are diffused, it is the same as if they were not there*. You may go through a wood, and it may be abounding in game, yet you may scarcely see a hare or notice a pheasant anywhere about. There they lie all quiet and undisturbed; but, by-and-by, the beaters go through the wood making a great noise, and away the pheasants fly, and you may see the timid hares run like hinds let loose, because they are disturbed and wakened up. That is what we sometimes need, to be aroused and stirred from slumber. We may not know that we have any faith till there comes a trial, and then our faith starts boldly up. We can hardly know how much we love our Lord till there comes a test of our love, and then we so behave ourselves that we know that we do love him. Oftentimes, as I have already reminded you, something is needed from without to stir the life that lies hidden within. It is so with these sweet flowers in the Beloved's garden, they need either the north wind or the south wind to blow upon them that they may shed abroad their sweet odours.

Notice next, that *it is very painful to a Christian to be in such a condition that his graces are not stirring*. He cannot endure it. We who love the Lord were not born again to waste our time in sinful slumber; our watchword is, "Let us not sleep, as do others." We were not born to inaction; every power that God has put within us was meant to be used in working, and striving, and serving the Lord. So, when our graces are slumbering, we ourselves are in an unhappy state. Then we long for any agency that would set those graces moving. The north wind? Oh, but if it shall blow, then we shall have snow! Well, then, let the snow come, for we must have our graces set in motion, we cannot bear that they should continue to lie quiet and still. "Awake, O north wind!"—a heavy trial, a bleak adversity, a fierce temptation,—anything so long as we do but begin to diffuse our graces. Or if the north wind be dreaded, we say, "Come, thou south!" Let prosperity be granted to us; let sweet fellowship with our brethren rouse us, and holy meditations, full of delight, stir our souls; let a sense of the divine life, like a soft south wind, come to our spirit. We are not particular which it is, let the Lord send which he pleases, or both together, as the text seems to imply, only do let us be aroused. "Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy Word,"—whichever Word thou shalt choose to apply, only do quicken thy servant, and let not the graces within me be as if they were dead!

Remember, however, that *the best Quickener is always the Holy Spirit*; and that blessed Spirit can come as the north wind, convincing us of sin, and tearing away every rag of our self-confidence, or he may come as the soft south wind, all full of love, revealing Christ, and the covenant of grace, and all the blessings treasured for us therein. Come, Holy Spirit! Come as the Heavenly Dove, or as the rushing mighty wind; but do come! Drop from above, as gently as the dew, or come like rattling hail, but do come, blest Spirit of God! We feel that we must be moved, we must be stirred, our heart's emotions must once again throb, to prove that the life of God is really within us; and if we do not realize this quickening and stirring, we are utterly unhappy.

You see also, dear friends, from this text, that *when a child of God sees that his graces are not diffused abroad, then is the time that he should take to prayer*. Let no one of us ever think of saying, "I do not feel as if I could pray, and therefore I will not pray." On the contrary, then is the time when you ought to pray more earnestly than ever. When the heart is disinclined for prayer, take that as a danger-signal, and at once go to the Lord with this resolve,—

"I will approach thee—I will force

My way through obstacles to thee:  
 To thee for strength will have recourse,  
 To thee for consolation flee!"

When you seem to yourself to have little faith, and little love, and little joy, then cry unto the Lord all the more, "cry aloud, and spare not." Say, "O my Father, I cannot endure this miserable existence! Thou hast made me to be a flower, to shed abroad my perfume, yet I am not doing it. Oh, by some means, stir my flagging spirit, till I shall be full of earnest industry, full of holy anxiety to promote thy glory, O my Lord and Master!" While you are thus crying, you must still believe, however, that God the Holy Spirit can stir your spirit, and make you full of life again. Never permit a doubt about that fact to linger in your bosom, else will you be unnecessarily sad. You, who are the true children of God, cannot ever come into a condition out of which the Holy Spirit cannot uplift you. You know the notable case of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore so nauseous to the great Lord that he threatened to spue her out of his mouth, yet what is the message to the angel of that church?" Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." This is not said to sinners, it is addressed to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Oh, matchless grace! He is sick of these lukewarm professors, yet he promises to sup with them, and that they shall sup with him. That is the only cure for lukewarmness and decline, to renew heart-fellowship with Christ; and he stands and offers it to all his people now. "Only do you open the door, and I will sup with you, and you shall sup with me." O you whose graces are lying so sinfully dormant, who have to mourn and cry because of "the body of this death"—for death in you seems to have taken to itself a body, and to have become a substantial thing, no mere skeleton now, but a heavy, cumbrous form that bows you down,—cry still to him who is able to deliver you from this lukewarm and sinful state! Let every one of us put up the prayer of our text, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

III. Our third and closing head will help to explain the remaining portion of our text: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." These words speak of THE COMPANY OF CHRIST AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FRUIT BY CHRIST.

I want you, dear friends, specially to notice one expression which is used here. While the spouse was, as it were, shut up and frozen, and the spices of the Lord's garden were not cowing out, she cried to the winds, "Blow upon *my* garden." She hardly dared to call it her Lord's garden; but now, notice the alteration in the phraseology: "Let my Beloved come into *his* garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The wind has blown through the garden, and made the sweet odours to flow forth; now it is no longer "my garden," but "his garden." It is wonderful how in increase of grace transfers our properties; while we have but little grace, we cry, "*my*," but when we get great grace, we cry "*his*." Wherein you are sinful and infirm, brother, that is yours, you rightly call it "*my*"; but when you become strong, and joyous, and full of faith, that is not yours, brother, and you rightly call it "*his*." Let him have all the glory of the change while you take all the shame and confusion of face to yourself that ever you should have been so destitute of grace. As the spouse says, "Let my Beloved come into his garden. Here are all the sweet perfumes flowing out; he will enjoy them, let him come and feel himself at home amongst them. He planted every flower, and gave to each its fragrance; let him come into his garden, and see what wonders his grace has wrought."

Do you not feel, beloved, that *the one thing you want to stir your whole soul is that Christ's should come into it?* Have you lost his company lately? Oh, do not try to do without it! The true child of God ought not to be willing to bear broken communion for even five minutes; but should be sighing and crying for its renewal. Our business is to seek to "walk in the light as God is in the light," fully enjoying communion with Christ our Lord; and when that fellowship is broken, then the heart feels that it has cast all its happiness away, and it must robe itself in sackcloth, and sorrowfully fast. If the presence of the Bridegroom shall be taken away from thee, then indeed shalt thou have cause to fast and to be sad. The best condition a heart can be in, if it has lost fellowship with Christ, is to resolve that it will give God no rest till it gets back to communion with him, and to give itself no rest till once more it finds the Well-beloved.

Next observe that, when the Beloved comes into his garden, the heart's humble but earnest entreaty is, "*Let him eat his pleasant fruits.*" Would you keep back anything from Christ? I know you could not if he were to come into his garden. The best things that you have, you would first present to him, and then everything that you have, you would bring to him, and leave all at his dear feet. We do not ask him to come to the garden, that we may lay up our fruits, that we may put them by and store them up for ourselves; we ask him to come and eat them. The greatest joy of a Christian is to give joy to Christ; I do not know whether heaven itself can overmatch this pearl of giving joy to the heart of Jesus Christ on earth. It can match it, but not overmatch it, for it is a superlative joy to give joy to him,—the Man of sorrows, who was emptied of joy for our sakes, and who now is filled up again with joy as each one of us shall come and bring his share, and cause to the heart of Christ a new and fresh delight.

Did you ever reclaim a poor girl from the streets? Did you ever rescue a poor thief who had been in prison? Then I know that, as you have heard of the holy chastity of the one, or of the sacred honesty of the other of those lives that you have been the means of restoring, you have said, "Oh, this is delightful! There is no joy equal to it. The effort cost me money, it cost me time, it cost me thought, it cost me prayer, but I am repaid a thousand times." Then, as you see them growing up so bright, so transparent, so holy, so useful, you say, "This work is worth living for, it is a delight beyond measure." Often, persons come to me, and tell me of souls that were saved through my ministry twenty years ago. I heard, the other day, of one who was brought to Christ by a sermon of mine nearly thirty years ago, and I said to the friend who told me, "Thank you, thank you; you could not tell me anything that would give my heart such joy as this good news that God has made me the instrument of a soul's conversion." But what must be the joy of Christ who does all the work of salvation, who redeems us from sin, and death, and hell, when he sees such creatures as we are, made to be like himself, and knows the divine possibilities of glory and immortality that lie within us?

What are we going to be, brothers and sisters, we who are in Christ? We have not any idea of what holiness, and glory, and bliss, shall yet be ours. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We may rive even while on earth to great heights of holiness,—and the higher the better; but there is something better for us than mortal eye has ever seen or mortal ear has ever heard. There is more grace to be in the saints than we have ever seen in them, the saintliest saint on earth was never such a saint as they are yonder who are before the throne of the Most High; and I know not but that, even when they get there, there shall be a something yet beyond for them, and that through the eternal ages they shall still take for their motto, "Onward and upward!" In heaven, there will be no "*Finis.*" We shall still continue to develop, and to become something more than we have ever been

before; not fuller, but yet capable of holding more, ever growing in the possibility of reflecting Christ, and being filled with his love; and all the while our Lord Jesus Christ will be charmed and delighted with us. As he hears our lofty songs of praise, as he sees the bliss which will ever be flashing from each one of us, as he perceives the divine ecstasy which shall be ours for ever, he will take supreme delight in it all. "My redeemed," he will say, "the sheep of my pasture, the purchase of my blood, borne on my shoulders, my very heart pierced for them, oh, how I delight to see them in the heavenly fold! These my redeemed people are joint heirs with me in the boundless heritage that shall be theirs for ever; oh, how I do delight in them!"

"Wherefore, comfort one another with these words," beloved, and cry mightily that, on this church, and on all the churches, God's Spirit may blow, to make the spices flow. Pray, dear friends, all of you, for the churches to which you belong; and if you, my brother, are a pastor, be asking especially for this divine wind to blow through the garden which you have to cultivate, as I also pray for this portion of the garden of the Lord: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The Lord be with each one of you, beloved, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—811, 814, 778.

John 20:11-29.

Verses 11-12. *But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

You see, dear friends, love is very patient and persevering. The other disciples had gone away home, but not so Mary, she stands outside the sepulcher, and still waits, for she cannot go till she has seen her Lord. Love, however, has many sorrows for, as Mary stood without the sepulcher, she was weeping. Oftentimes your love to Christ will make you sorrowful when you for a while lose his presence; it will be a great sorrow to you if your Lord should seem to have hidden himself from you. But see how quick-sighted love is; Mary saw the angels, whom the other disciples might have seen if they had not gone home. One of the beatitudes is, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God;" and love is one of the most eminent signs of purity. I do not wonder, therefore, that love saw angels, since love sees God himself.

13. *And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*

They could not understand Mary's tears, their question seemed to say "Christ the Lord is risen from the dead, and all the streets of heaven are ringing with hallelujahs because the great Conqueror has returned bearing the spoils of his victory. Why weepest thou? Art not thou one of those for whom this redeeming work was done? 'Woman, why weepest thou?'"

13. *She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

That was enough to make any of Christ's loved ones weep, and if ever you hear a sermon which has not Christ in it, you may well go down the aisle weeping, and if any ask why you weep, you may reply, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

14. *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.*

A strange and sad unbelief had taken possession of her, and there is nothing that blinds the eye so quickly as unbelief. Christ is near thee, poor soul, near thee in thy trouble, but thou dost not know that it is Jesus. Open thine eyes, may God the Holy Spirit touch them with his heavenly eye-salve, that thou mayest see that it is Christ himself who is close beside thee!

15. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Her supposition was wrong in one way, but right in another, for Jesus is the Gardener, and his Church is his garden. There was one gardener in whom we fell; here is another and a better Gardener in whom we rise. It is he, and he alone, who can properly tend all the plants of his Father's right-hand planting. He is the Gardener, though not the one that Mary supposed, but what a strange request this was for her to make: "If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Could she have carried away the body of Jesus if it had been there? If so, what a ghastly load for her tender frame to bear! Ay, but she would have done it somehow or other; for, if faith laughs at impossibilities, and cries, "It shall be done," it is love that actually does the deed of holy daring. The task that seems well-nigh impossible is readily performed when the spirit is invigorated by love.

16. *Jesus saith unto her, Mary.*

In the simple utterance of her name, there were tones which she could not mistake, it was the sweetest music she had heard since her Lord's last message from the cross: "Mary." "Why, surely," she must have thought, "it was the Master's voice calling me by name!"

16. *She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*

Or, "My Master!" The word "Rabboni" means something more than "Master." Mary seems to say, "Greatest and best of all teachers, I know thy voice; now that thou hast called me by my name, I recognize thee, and I wait to listen to the instruction thou art ready to impart to me."

17. *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:*

"There will be time enough for the fellowship your heart craves:"—

17. *But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Practical service is better than personal rapture. Mary would fain have held her Lord, but he says to her, "Go to my brethren." You will always find that it is best and safest to do what Jesus tells you, when he tells you, and as he tells you. What a delightful message is this from the risen Christ! "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

18, 19. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

If they had possessed more faith, they would have left a door open for Jesus to come in, however anxious they might have been to shut out the Jews. I am afraid, dear brethren and sisters, that we also are sometimes more anxious about shutting out the Jews than we are about letting in Christ. I mean, we are very particular in trying to keep out our own troubles and cares, but if we get Jesus within, we shall not think of the Jews, nor of our troubles and cares; they will all disappear as soon as he appears.

20. *And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

That was enough to make them glad. The gladdest sight out of heaven, and the gladdest sight in heaven itself, is to see the Lord.

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

"I am the Messiah, the sent One; you, too, shall be my missionaries, my sent ones;" it is but another form of the same word.

22, 23. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

That is to say, "As you proclaim my gospel, I will back up your message; when you preach of pardoning blood, I will make it efficacious. When you declare to penitent sinners that their sins are remitted, it shall be so; and when you tell those who believe not that they are condemned already, and that except they repent they shall abide in condemnation, their sins shall still be retained." The true minister of God speaketh not apart from the Word of God, and when he speaks the Word of God, the God of the Word is himself there to make it effectual. It shall be no brutum fulmen, no wasted thunderbolt; it shall fall in reality, and what the servant of Christ declares, according to the Scriptures, shall really be proved to be true.

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

Possibly he did not go out of an evening; it may be that he was a halfdead sort of Christian, like a great many people are in London. They think they have done finely if they go out on the Sabbath morning, but the evening,—well, it is too cold for them, or they must find some other excuse for keeping indoors: "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." That was a great pity, because Thomas would not only be a loser by his absence, but he would be sure to influence others, for he was an apostle. Surely, whenever it is possible, we who are leaders in the church, ministers, deacons, and elders, should take care that we are not absent from the house of the Lord.

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

There is something good about that declaration of Thomas, for a man is not bound to believe merely on the testimony of others. He should, if he can, endeavor to get evidence for himself, and as Christ is still alive, the very best thing is to go to him. But there was also much that Thomas said which was very wrong, he had no right to demand that he should see the nailprints in Christ's hands, and, worse still, that he should be permitted to put his finger into them, and to thrust his hand into his Lord's side. There was more than a little impertinence about that utterance, and something more even than an ordinary unbelief; and when we ask for signs and wonders from God, and say that we will not believe except we have them, we are guilty of very presumptuous conduct. We are bound to look for evidence concerning Christ; but when the evidence is sufficient, we ought not out of curiosity to crave for more.

26. *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them.*

That was an improvement upon the meeting of the previous Lord's-day evening; Thomas had learnt by this time what he had lost the week before, so he was present on this occasion.

26, 27. *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas,*

Picking out the one who most needed to be addressed, like the Good Shepherd seeking out the sick sheep first: "Then saith he to Thomas,"—

*27, 28. Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

It has been well observed that Thomas was the first person who ever proved to himself the Deity of Christ from the exhibition of his wounds. There is a good argument in it, which we cannot stay to explain at this time; but the very humanity of Christ has in it the doctrine of his Deity; you can easily argue from the one to the other. How divine must he be who, in his condescension, took upon himself our nature!

*29. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That blessedness can be reached by all of us who believe in Christ. Those who lived in this world before Christ came, saw his day by faith, and they were blessed; those who lived in his day, and saw him in the flesh, and trusted him, were blessed; but we who cannot see him, yet believe in him, are the most blessed of them all.

## **"This Thing Is from Me"**

A Sermon

(No. 2476)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, August 2nd, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Thursday Evening, July 22nd, 1886.*

"Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me."—1 Kings 12:24.

IT IS VERY DELIGHTFUL to read a history in which God is made prominent. How sadly deficient we are of such histories of our own English nation! Yet surely there is no story that is more full of God than the record of the doings of our British race. Cowper, in one of his poems, shows the parallel between us and the house of Israel, and he dwells upon various special incidents in our history, and draws valuable lessons therefrom. God's wisdom and power have been conspicuous from the time when this now full-grown nation was but like a puling chit. He has nursed and watched over it, protecting it against gigantic foes, and making it to be the defender of his truth, the favored abode of his people. Oh, for a historian who could dip his pen in thoughts of God, and who, from beginning to end of his history, would not be showing us the crafty policy of kings and cabinets, but the finger of God! We want, nowadays, to have history written in some such style as appears in these Books of Samuel, and Kings, and Chronicles; then might history become almost like a new Bible to us. We should find that, as the book of revelation agrees with the book of creation, so does the book of divine providence in human history agree with both of them, for the same God is the Author of all these works. If we cannot get anybody to write such histories, yet let us continually amend the errata, and add appendices to such records as we have, for God is God, and God is everywhere, and blessed is the man who learns to spy him out.

Notice, next, what I pointed out to you in our reading, what power was possessed by God's prophets under the Old Testament. Here is one Shemaiah,—some of you never heard of him before, perhaps you will never hear of him again; he appears once in this history, and then he vanishes; he comes, and he goes,—only fancy this one man constraining to peace a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, warriors ready to fight against the house of Israel, by giving to them in very plain, unpolished words, the simple command of God: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house;" and it is added, "they hearkened therefore to the Word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the Word of the Lord." Why have we not such power? Peradventure, brethren, we do not always speak in the name of the Lord, or speak God's Word as God's Word. If we are simply tellers out of our own thoughts, why should men mind us? If we speak the word which we ourselves have fashioned, what is there in our anvil that it should command respect for what we make upon it? But if we can rise to the height of this great argument, and speak the truth as messengers of God, and there leave it, believing in it ourselves, and expecting great results from it, I wot that there will come more from our ministries than we have ever seen as yet. When the apostle Peter spoke to the lame man at the temple gate,

he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk;" and he did rise up and walk because the name of Jesus Christ was relied upon; and we have need to preach the gospel, not as though our suasion, much less our oratory, were to prevail with men, but believing that there is an intrinsic power in the gospel, and that God the Holy Ghost will go with it to work the divine purpose, and accomplish the decrees of the Most High. We have need to stand near to God, and to be more completely overshadowed by his presence, and to be ourselves more fully believers in the Divine Majesty, and then shall we see greater things than these. Surely, God must have meant that, under the New Testament, there should be a power in his Word even greater than that which rested on it under the Old Testament.

Note one more lesson conveyed by this incident. It would be a grand thing to preach only one sermon, and to be as successful as Shemaiah was; it would be far better than to preach ten thousand, and to accomplish nothing by them all I hope the net result of our ministry will not be like that of the famous leader who with his troops marched up a hill and then marched down again. A man may take many years to say nothing, and he may very elaborately and very eloquently discharge himself of that which it was totally unnecessary for him to have said; but it would be better far to be surcharged with one message, and to deliver that one in the power of Almighty God, even if the speaker's voice is never heard again. I pray that those of us who do preach the gospel may preach each sermon as if that one discourse were worth a lifetime, worth the putting forth of every faculty that we possess, so that, if we never preached again, we might nevertheless have done a life-work in a single sermon. What an opportunity is mine to-night! What an opportunity you also will have, my brother, when you confront your congregation next Lord's-day, an opportunity which angels might envy you! Though you do not gather together a hundred and eighty thousand men, yet you may reach as many as that through the one sermon you are going to preach next Sabbath, for one person converted by the Holy Ghost, through you, may be the means of bringing in many others, and eventually there may come out of your one effort a harvest that cannot be counted. A forest once slept within a single acorn-cup. The beginning of the great lies in the little. Let us therefore earnestly pray God that we may preach as dying men to dying men, and deliver each discourse as if that one message was quite enough to serve for our whole life-work. We need not wish to preach another sermon provided we are enabled so to deliver that one that the purpose of God shall be accomplished by us, and the power of his Word shall be seen upon our hearers.

With these remarks by way of preliminary observations, I want to prove to you from our text that, first, *some events are very specially from God*; secondly, *when they are seen to be from God, they are not to be fought against*; and, thirdly, *this general principle has many special applications*, some of which we shall try to make.

I. First, SOME EVENTS ARE SPECIALLY FROM GOD: "This thing is from me."

I do not know what some people believe, for they seem to try to do without God altogether; but I believe that God is in all things,—that there is neither power, nor life, nor motion, nor thought, nor existence apart from him. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." By him all things exist and consist. Like foam upon the wave, all things would dissolve away did not God continue them, did not God uphold them. I see God in everything, from the creeping of an aphid upon a rose-bud to the fall of a dynasty. I believe that God is in the earthquake and the whirlwind; but I believe him to be equally in the gentlest zephyr, and in the fall of the sere leaf from the oak of the forest. Blessed is that man to whom there exists nothing in which he cannot see the presence of God. It makes this world a grand sphere when God is seen everywhere in it from the deepest mine

to the remotest star. This earth is a wretched dark dungeon if once the light of the presence and the working of God be taken away from it.

Notice also, dear friends, that God is in events which are produced by the sin and the stupidity of men. This breaking up of the kingdom of Solomon into two parts was the result of Solomon's sin and Rehoboam's folly; yet God was in it: "This thing is from me, saith the Lord." God had nothing to do with the sin or the folly, but in some way which we can never explain, in a mysterious way in which we are to believe without hesitation, God was in it all. The most notable instance of this truth is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ; that was the greatest of human crimes, yet it was foreordained and predetermined of the Most High, to whom there can be no such thing as crime, nor any sort of compact with sin. We know not how it is, but it is an undoubted fact that a thing may be from God, and yet it may be wrought, as we see in this case, by the folly and the wickedness of men; neither does this in the least degree interfere with human agency in its utmost freedom. Some who have held that man is a free agent have attempted to vindicate free agency as if predestination were the contradiction of it, which it is not; we who believe in predestination also believe in free agency as much as they do who reject the other truth. Others hold predestination, and straightway they begin to rail at all who believe in the responsibility and free agency of men. My brothers, there is nothing to rail at in either doctrine, the two things are equally true. "How, then," asks someone, "do you reconcile them?" These two truths have never fallen out, as far as I know, and it is poor work to try to reconcile those who are true friends. "But," says the objector, "how do you make them seem to be true friends?" I do not make them seem to be true friends. I bless God that there are some things in the Bible which I never expect to understand while I live here. A religion which I could perfectly understand would be no religion to me; when I had mastered it, it would never master me. But to my mind it is a most delightful thing for the believer to bow before inscrutable mysteries, and to say, "My God, I never thought that I was infinite, I never dreamt that I could take thy place, and understand all things; I believe, and I am content." So I believe in the free agency of men, in their responsibility and wickedness, and that everything evil cometh of them; but I also believe in God, that "this thing" which, on the one side of it, was purely and alone from men, on another side of it was still from God, who rules both evil and good, and not only walks the garden of Eden in the cool of a summer's eve, but walks the billows of the tempestuous sea, and ruleth everywhere by his sovereign might.

How, then, was "this thing" from God? Well, clearly, it was from God in two ways. First, it was so *as a matter of prophecy*. The prophet Ahijah had prophesied that the ten parts of the rent garment which were given to Jeroboam should be symbolic of the ten tribes that would be given to him when they had been torn away from the house of David. The prophecy was literally fulfilled, as God's words always are.

And, secondly, "this thing" was from God *as a matter of punishment*. He sent it as a punishment for the sins of the house of David of which Solomon had been guilty when he set up other gods before the Most High, and divided the allegiance of his kingdom from Jehovah by bringing in the gods of Moab, and Ammon, and Egypt. God ordained this evil that he might chastise the greater evil of want of loyalty to himself on the part of his servant Solomon. Yea, my brethren, God setteth evil against evil that he may destroy evil, and he uses that which cometh of human folly that he may manifest his own wisdom.

So there are some events which are specially from the Lord, although it seemeth not so; and this is to us often a great source of consolation. We have said to ourselves, "However did things

get into this tangle and snarl?" Look at the professing church at this present moment, what is there about it that can at all cheer the child of God? All things appear dark and complicated; they seem to be built on a quicksand; and that which is superficial, and unsubstantial, and dreamy, and deceptive is everywhere. Still, the Lord liveth, and the rock of our salvation faileth not. As he makes the wrath of man to praise him, so doth he also with the folly and the wickedness of man, and the remainder of both he doth restrain. "The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." Hallelujah!

II. The second thing evidently taught by our text is that, **WHEN EVENTS ARE SEEN TO BE FROM THE LORD, THEY ARE NOT TO BE FOUGHT AGAINST.**

Rehoboam had summoned his soldiers to go to war against the house of Israel; but, inasmuch as it was from God that the ten tribes had revolted from him, he must not march into the territories of Israel, nor even shoot an arrow against them.

The thing that is happening to you is of the Lord, therefore resist it not, for *it would be wicked to do so*. If it be the Lord's will, so may it be. To put our will against his will, is sheer rebellion against him. Trace an event as distinctly from God, and then the proper course of action is that which the psalmist took, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Absolute submission is not enough, we must go on to joyful acquiescence in the will of God. If the cup be bitter, our acquiescence must take it as cheerfully as if it were sweet. "Hard lines," say you. "To hard hearts," say I; but when our hearts are right with God, so well do we love him that, if it ever came to a conflict anywhere, whether it should be our will or his will that should prevail, we should at once end the conflict by saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is nothing but wickedness, whatever form it assumes, when we attempt to resist the will of God.

But, next, while it is wicked, *it is also vain*, for what can we do against the will of God? Shall the rush by the river resist the north wind? Shall the dust rise up in conflict with the tempest? God is almighty; if that were all, it were enough, for who can stand against his power? But he is also all-wise; and if we were as wise as he is, we should do as he does. Moreover, he is all goodness, and he is ever full of love. Judged of according to the divine understanding, everything that he willeth must be right. Why, then, shall I dare contend against his strength, his wisdom, and his love? It must be useless so to do. Who hath resisted his will? Who could succeed if he did?

Next, *it would be mischievous*, and would be sure to bring a greater evil upon us if we did resist. Had this king Rehoboam gone out to fight with the far greater tribes which had revolted, it might have resulted in the desolation of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem. He was much wiser in putting up his sword into its sheath, for it would have been disastrous to the last degree for him to break the command of God, and go to war against Israel. And depend upon it, brothers, there is no way of bringing afflictions upon ourselves like refusing to bear afflictions. If we will not bear the yoke that is laid upon us, and heed the gentle tugging of the rein, then the goad and the whip will be used upon us. Nothing involves us in so much sorrow as our refusal to submit to sorrow. If we will not take up the cross, the cross, mayhap, will take us up; and that is a far worse lot than the other. Endure, submit, acquiesce, it is the easiest way, after all; for if thou art a child of God, and thou rebellest against him, thou wilt have to smart for it. But if thou art not his child, and thou rebellest, like proud Pharaoh, God will set thee up to be a monument for men to wonder at as they see how sternly Jehovah dealeth with stubborn sinners who say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Whenever, therefore, a thing is distinctly from the Lord, it is not to be resisted.

III. Now I come to what may be more interesting to you, that is, to make a practical application of this subject, for THIS GENERAL PRINCIPLE HAS MANY SPECIAL APPLICATIONS. I believe it often happens that events are most distinctly from the Lord, and when it is so, our right and proper way is to yield to them.

I could narrate many very singular things that have happened to me, but I will not; only I am reminded just now of one that I will tell you. There sat, one Sabbath day, in that left-hand gallery, a young Hindoo gentleman wearing a scarlet sash. I preached that morning from this text, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?"\* and I had hardly reached the vestry at the back before this young Hindoo gentleman was there with an aged man, who is now with God,—a well-known Christian man,—and all in a hurry the young man said, "Sir, has Mr. E\_\_\_\_\_ told you about me?" "No," I said, "I have not seen him for months; what could he have told me about you?" "Are you sure that you never heard of me before?" "To my knowledge, I never heard of you, and never saw you before." "Well then, sir," he said, "there is a God, and that God is in this place." "How so?" I asked. "Last night, I told this gentleman here," he answered, "that I was almost persuaded to be a Christian; but that, when I went home to India, I should be disinherited by my father, and I felt sure that I should not have the courage to stand out as a Christian; and then my friend said, 'Come and hear Mr. Spurgeon to-morrow morning,' and I came in here, and you preached from those words, 'What if thy father answer thee roughly?' Verily," he said, "the God of the Christians is God, and he has spoken to me this day." That was another illustration of our text, "*This thing is from me.*" Has it not often happened so? The providential working of the Holy Ghost is a very wonderful subject. They who are the Holy Ghost's servants learn to depend upon him for every word they are to utter; they sometimes feel their flesh creep, and almost every hair on their head stand on end at the way in which they have unconsciously spoken so as to depict to the very life the character of their hearers,—casual hearers, perhaps,—as if they had photographed them though they knew them not. Oh, you who are the Lord's workers, commit yourselves to God's guidance; the more you can do it, the better, for often and often you will have to say of an event that happens to you, "This thing is from the Lord."

Again, dear friends, another case in which this principle applies is *when severe afflictions arise*. I think that, of all afflictions to which we should bow most readily, those take the first place that are distinctly from the Lord; for instance, the deaths of dear friends, or when we cannot accuse ourselves of having done anything that can have contributed to the affliction that has come upon us, or when we have suffered losses in business though we have been engaged honestly and industriously in doing all we can to provide things honest in the sight of all men. There are some afflictions which remind me of a term which I have seen in the charters of ships,—"the act of God." Certain calamities at sea are called "the act of God." So there are certain events in life which may be very terrible and very sorrowful, but if they are the act of God, they come to us thus distinguished, "This is from God." Will you not accept it from the Lord?" Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Will we not say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"? "This thing is from me." O thou who art his child, accept the chastisement from thy Father's hand, and kiss the rod with which he smites thee!

Sometimes, also, we are troubled by certain *disquieting plans* proposed by our friends or our children. We do not like their schemes, and we say, "No, do not act so; it seems to me to be quite wrong;" yet, sometimes, a boy will do this and that; or a friend has made up his mind to take a certain course, and, at last, when you have pleaded, and persuaded, and urged, and done your best

to turn them from their purpose, if the thought should creep into your mind, "Peradventure, this thing is from God," then stay your persuasions, as Paul's friends when he would not be persuaded, ceased to argue with him. Sometimes, that which seems to be a great mistake may, nevertheless, in the hand of God, prove to be the right course; our judgment is but fallible, but the judgment of the Most High is always correct. Struggle not too long, lest thou bring thyself into another sorrow; but be willing to yield at the right time, saying, "Peradventure, this thing is from the Lord."

A very pleasant phase of this same truth is *when some singular mercy comes*. Have not many of you experienced some very remarkable deliverances? Has not God been pleased to open for you rivers in the desert, and waters in high places, where waters are not usually found? Well, whenever singular and startling mercy comes to you, say, "This is from God." It is a delightful thing when you get a present from a very choice friend who says, "This is from me." You value it all the more because of the person from whom it comes. If thou hast nothing but a crust of bread, take thy knife and cut it, and say, "This is from the Lord." But if he has given thee a downy bed on which to rest thy weary limbs, and if he has indulged thee with many luxuries, say thou, "This is from the Lord," and everything shall be the brighter and the better to thee because he gave it. It is the best part of the gift. Often, a little thing, which we might despise in itself, becomes invaluable because of the giver; and all thy life shall be full of rich treasure, ay, with very "curios" worthy to be stored away, and looked at with admiration throughout the rest of thy days, because "This is from me," is so clearly written upon them all.

Still applying the principle of our text, let me remind you that, *when a man receives a very striking warning*, he ought to hear a voice at the back of it, saying, "This thing is from me." When near to die, wrecked, almost aground, or delivered out of an awful accident, if such has been thy case, hear thou, man, out of all the hurry-burly from which thou hast escaped, "This is from me." A soldier, who has heard the bullets whistle by his ear, or who comes out of a battle lopped of a limb but still alive, should hear this voice, "This is from me." Oh, that men would hear the voice of God, and turn from their sins! If the Lord has been so gracious as to spare thy life, count that his long-suffering means to thee repentance, and that his sparing thee is a call to thee to give up thy sins, and turn to him.

The same principle applies when it is not a striking warning, but when it happens that men have some *tender emotions stealing over them*. Some of you to whom I am speaking are unconverted, but there have been times when, in the house of God, you have felt very strangely. You may not have actually prayed, but you have almost prayed that you might pray. "Please God I once get home," you have said, "I will go to my room, and fall upon my knees before him." Have not even the most thoughtless of you, when alone, felt as if you must think? In the watches of the night, have you not been made to consider? A policeman, who came to join the church this week, said to me, "Often, when I tread my solitary beat, I feel as if I must think of God. He seems so very near me when there is not a sound to be heard except the tread of my own feet." Well, if ever you feel that, yield to it. O dear hearts, if ever you find an unusual softness stealing over you, do not resist it! It may be that it is the blessed Spirit come to emancipate you from your obstinacy and hardness, and to bring you into the new life,—the life of tenderness and love. When he draws thee, run after him. Let tender impulse and gentle drawing suffice thee, for all is for thy good. Yield yourselves to the Spirit's influence even now. While he bids thee, believe in Jesus, and live. While he whispers to thee, "Repent," repent, and be converted. God grant it, of his infinite mercy! Our time has gone;

but may what has been spoken be remembered throughout eternity because it can truly be said, "This thing is from me, saith the Lord."

1 Kings 11:40-43; and 12.

God threatened Solomon, on account of his setting up other gods, that he would rend away a great part of the kingdom from him, and that he would set up another king in his place.

1 Kings 11:40-43. *Solomon sought therefore to kill Jereboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.*

After great mountains there usually come low hills. After Solomon comes Rehoboam. Grace does not run in the blood, we may be sure, for even human wisdom does not descend from father to son. There is no necessary transmission of gifts and talents, much less of grace, from one generation to another.

1 Kings 12:1-3. *And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) that they sent and called him.*

It was a sure sign of great discontent when the people sent for a rebel to be their spokesman.

3, 4. *And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.*

This was a very natural request; these Oriental monarchs took their thrones as by a kind of divine right, and there was a tendency among the people to demand something like a constitution, some regulations by which they should not be so heavily oppressed. I do not know whether they had been oppressed by Solomon or not; certainly, the realm as a whole was greatly enriched under his government; but the wisest ruler must not expect that he will have the uniform love of the people, there will be come discontented ones in every community.

5. *And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.*

One commentator says that it is the only sign of wisdom that there is in Rehoboam, that he took three days to consider the answer to this question. Peradventure, if he had answered it rightly, it would have been better if answered immediately. Still, it is a good rule, when there is an important question before you, to take time to consider it. The mischievous point is that Rehoboam did not wait upon God for guidance in this emergency. Had he been like his grandfather David, those three days would have been spent with God in prayer, and he would have come back, with a greater wisdom than even his father Solomon possessed, to answer the people in this thing. We often blunder over very ample matters when we speak without asking guidance of God; but in the most intricate circumstances our course will be perfectly clear if we commit our way unto the Lord.

6-8. *And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel*

*of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:*

He was probably a man forty years of age, and therefore no longer young; but he had all the while been playing the part of a young man. He had not been old in wisdom when he was young in years; it would have been well for him if he had been.

9-11. *And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*

Old men are not always wise, and young men are not always wise; he who consults with men only shall yet learn the truth of this verse, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Among Rehoboam's counsellors, the old men had no real principle to guide them, they said to the king, in effect, "Just butter these people with soft words, delude and deceive them with the idea that you are going to yield to them, and then, when you once get the reins into your own hands, you can govern the nation as you like." This was a wicked policy; but the young men said to the king, "No, no, no; do not pretend that you will listen to the people. There is nothing like putting a bold face on it, and just letting the people know that you will not yield to them. They will be startled by what you say; have you not the authority and example of your father Solomon? Nobody ever dared speak a word of this kind to him, so do you put it down at once, and be bold." There is no principle, you see, about the advice in either case; it is all policy, but the latter policy is sure not to succeed. I counsel you, brother,—nay, I will give you no counsel except that I counsel you to take counsel of God. Wait upon him, for he knows what you should do in every difficulty that may arise. If Rehoboam had only had wit enough and grace enough to lay this case before his God he would have given him somewhat of the largeness of heart and the wisdom which he gave to his father Solomon.

12-15. *So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD,*

The great, deep, mysterious providence of God was quietly working even behind the folly and the domineering pride of this foolish man.

15, 16. *That he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the Son of Nebat. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.*

He that speaks roughly must expect to be answered roughly. Let us learn from this incident as one might who sees the warning light of a beacon, and tacks his ship to avoid the rock on which it is placed.

17, 18. *But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute;*

Having made trouble, the king tried to make piece. He selected one of the ancient officers of his father Solomon to be his ambassador, but he selected the very worst that he could have found, "Adoram, who was over the tribute." The man who had been a leader in exactions from the people, or who had been thought to be so, was not the one to act as peace-maker.

18-20. *And all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.*

See what mischief may be done by one foolish man; and let me add, see what evil may come of the ill conduct of a wise man. Some think that Rehoboam was Solomon's only son, though he had a multitude of wives. That I cannot tell: but it is a singular thing that so wise a man should have but one son mentioned here, and that he should be such a foolish one. Yet what could be expected to come out of such a family as Solomon's was? He whose own house is so disorderly as his was, must expect that those who come after him will be no better than they should be. Blessed is that home where the Lord is the Master, where his law is loved, and his word is obeyed.

21-24. *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.*

It is a very striking fact that this one prophet did but speak in God's name, and that vast host disbanded in obedience to his word. It gives us some hope concerning Rehoboam, yet we cannot be cure that it was he who was thus obedient to the prophet. The people may have been better than their king; at any rate, they did not fight against their brethren, but they went their way. Oh, that God's servants in these days could speak with anything like such power as Shemaiah possessed!

25-27. *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.*

Jeroboam is moved by policy, you see. It is very hard, I believe, to be a ruler over men, and yet to be a servant of God. There seems to be connected with politics in every country something that besmears the mind, and defiles the hand that touches it. The king of Judah had but little wit, and this king of Israel has too much cunning; he is a far-seeing man, and perceives that, if the people go up to Jerusalem to worship, they may by-and-by return to their allegiance to the house of David.

28. *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

Truly, history repeats itself, only, if it be bad history, it is apt to grow worse. "Behold thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This is almost exactly what they said in Aaron's days, when he made the ox which Scripture sarcastically calls a calf, the Egyptian image of strength. Jeroboam makes not merely one calf, but two; and he speaks of them in nearly the same language as they used concerning the golden calf in the wilderness: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

29, 30. *And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Daniel And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.*

I suppose that Jeroboam did not mean to draw them away from worshipping Jehovah; but he would have Jehovah worshipped under some visible image, and not according to the rule which God had laid down. That is just where mischief often begins, both in the church and in the world. Men are willing to worship God if they are allowed to have a ritual and symbols which they have themselves devised; so, instead of the divine simplicity of the New Testament, they have many things added, things to please the taste, aesthetic, beautiful, sensuous; all of which take off the mind from that sublime worship of the invisible God which alone can be acceptable before him. It is not for us to determine how we will worship God; we are to worship him after his own manner, for his commandments are still in force: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them."

"Well, but the cross," someone says, "surely that is a truly venerable symbol?" Let it be as venerable as you please; but we must not use it in divine worship. The ox was supposed to set forth strength; surely it was an admirable emblem of the Almighty, yet God pours contempt upon it when he bids his inspired servants to speak of it as the image of an ox that eateth grass, as if that could be any symbol of the Most High! "This thing became a sin."

31. *And he made an house of high places and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.*

For the sons of Levi went over to Judah, and remained faithful to God; and the better sort of people probably dreaded to assume the office to which God had called the sons of Levi, and none would undertake it but the very lowest of the people.

32. *And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah,*

He shifted the month, but retained the day,—the fifteenth day of the eighth month instead of the seventh. "That was quite unimportant," say some. I do not agree with them, for nothing is unimportant that has to do with the law of God's house. Disobedience may be more plainly seen in some of the non-essentials than in an essential thing. At all events, we have no right to alter jot or tittle of the divine command.

32, 33. *And he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart;*

It is a strong condemnation of anything in religion if it be devised by a man's own heart. We are to do what God bids us, as God bids us, when God bids us, and because God bids us; but that

which is merely of our own free will, ordained and manufactured by ourselves, is practically the worship of ourselves, and not the worship of God.

*33. And ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Thus Israel was led astray at the very beginning. She came to the turning of the roads, and took the wrong course, and she went from bad to worse. God save all of us from following her evil example, but may we all serve the one living and true God, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—71 (Song I), 208, 211.

\* See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,188, "A Word for the Persecuted."

## Darkness Before the Dawn

A Sermon

(No. 2477)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, August 9th, 1896,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*On Lord's-day Evening, August 1st, 1886.*

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel."—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:17.

THE SPOUSE SINGS, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," so that the beloved of the Lord may be in the dark. It may be night with her who has a place in the heart of the Well-beloved. A child of God, who is a child of light, may be for a while in darkness; first, darkness comparatively, as compared with the light he has some times enjoyed, for days are not always equally bright. Some days are bright with a clear sunshine, other days may be overcast. So the child of God may one day walk, with full assurance of faith, in close fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; and at another time he may be questioning his interest in the covenant of grace, and may be rather sighing than singing, rather mourning than rejoicing. The child of God may be, then, in comparative darkness.

Yes, and he may be in positive darkness. It may be very black with him, and he may be obliged to cry, "I see no signs of returning day." Sometimes, neither sun nor moon appears for a long season to cheer the believer in the dark. This may arise partly through sickness of body. There are sicknesses of the body which in a very peculiar way touch the soul; exquisite pain may yet be attended with great brightness and joy, but there are certain other illnesses which influence us in another way. Terrible depressions come over us; we walk in darkness, and see no light. I should not like to guess how heavy a true heart may sometimes become; there is a needs-be that we be in heaviness through manifold trials. There is not only a needs-be for the trials, but also for the heaviness which comes out of them. It is not always that a man can gather himself together, and defy the fierce blasts, and walk through fire and through water with heavenly equanimity. No, brethren, "a wounded spirit who can bear?" and that wounded spirit may be the portion of some of the very fairest of the sons of God; indeed, the Lord has some weakly, sickly sons who, nevertheless, are the very pick of his family. It is not always the strong ones by whom he sets the most store; but, sometimes, those that seem to be driven into a corner, whose days are spent in mourning, are among the most precious in his sight. Yes, the darkness of the child of God may be comparative darkness, and it may to a great extent be positive darkness.

But yet it can only be temporary darkness. The same text which suggests night promises dawn: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," says the song of the spouse. Perhaps no text is more frequently upon my lips than is this one; I do not think that any passage of Scripture more often recurs to my heart when I am alone, for just now I feel that there is a gathering gloom over the church and over the world. It seems as if night were coming on, and such a night as makes one sigh and cry, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

I am going to speak upon three things which are in our text. The first will be, *our prospect*. We have a prospect that the day will break, and the shadows flee away. Secondly, *our posture* "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." Thirdly, *our petition*: "Turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division." We are content to wait if he will come to us; if gladdened with his presence, the night shall seem short, and we can well endure all that it brings. Let the prayer of our text be put up by any of you who are waiting in the darkness, and may it be speedily answered in your happy experience!

I. First of all, let us consider OUR PROSPECT. Our prospect is, that the day will break, and that the shadows will flee away. We may read this passage in many ways, and apply it to different cases.

Think, first, of *the child of God, who is full of doubt*. He is afraid that, after all, his supposed conversion was not a true one, and that he has proved it to be false by his own misbehaviour. He is afraid, I scarcely know of what, for so many fears crowd in upon him. He is crying to God to remove his doubts, and to let him once again—

"Read his title clear

To mansions in the skies."

His eyes are looking toward the cross, and somehow, he has a hope, if not quite a persuasion, that he will find light in Christ, where so many others have found it. I would encourage that hope till it becomes a firm conviction and a full expectation. The day will break for you, dear mourner, the shadows will yet flee away. While I say that, I feel able to speak with great confidence, for my eye, as it looks round on this congregation, detects many brethren and sisters with whom I have conversed in the cloudy and dark day. We have prayed together, dear friends,—have we not? I have repeated in your hearing those precious promises which are the pillows of our hope; yet, at the time, it seemed as if you would never be cheered or comforted. Friends who lived with you grieved much to see you so sad; they could not understand how such as you who have lived so scrupulously as you believed to be right, should, nevertheless, come into sadness and despondency. Well, you have come out of that state, have you not? I can almost catch the bright expression in your eye as you flash back the response, "It is so, sir; we can sing among the loudest now, we can leap as a hart, and the tongue that once was dumb can now sing praises unto the Lord who delivered us." The reason of this great change is that you did still cling to Christ even when it seemed to be no use to cling. You had a venturesome faith; when it seemed a risky thing even to believe, you did believe, and you kept on believing, and now the day has dawned for you, and the shadows have fled away. Well, so shall it be to all who are in like case if they will but trust in the Lord, and stay themselves upon our God. Though they walk in darkness, and see no light, yet by-and-by the day shall break for them also.

This expression is equally applicable when we come into some *personal sorrow not exactly of a spiritual kind*. I know that God's children are not long without tribulation. As long as the wheat is on the threshing-floor, it must expect to feel the flail. Perhaps you have had a bereavement, or you may have had losses in business, or crosses in your family, or you have been sorely afflicted in your own body, and now you are crying to God for deliverance out of your temporal trouble. That deliverance will surely come. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "I have been young," said David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." The Lord will yet light your candle, and surround your path with brightness. Only patiently hope and quietly wait, and you shall yet see the salvation of the Lord.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Hark that; you know that part of the verse is true, and so is the rest of it: "but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Clutch at that, for it is equally true. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." You know that is true. "Be of good cheer," says Christ, "I have overcome the world." Therefore, expect that you also will overcome it through your conquering Lord. Yes, in the darkest of all human sorrows, there is the glad prospect that the day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

This is the case again, I believe, on a grander scale with reference *to the depression of religion at the present time*. Some of us are obliged to go sorrowing when we look upon the state of the church and the world. We are not accustomed to take gloomy views of things, but we cannot help grieving over what we see. More and more it forces itself upon us that the old-fashioned gospel is being either neglected or trampled in the dust. The old spirit, the old fire that once burned in the midst of the saints of God, is there still, but it burns very low at present. We want—I cannot say how much we want a revival of pure and undefiled religion in this our day. Will it come? Why should it not come? If we long for it, if we pray for it, if we believe for it, if we work for it, and prepare for it, it will certainly come. The day will break, and the shadows will flee away. The mockers think that they have buried our Lord Jesus Christ. So, perhaps, they have; but he will have a resurrection. The cry is, "Who will roll us away the stone?" The stone shall be rolled away, and he, even the Christ in whom our fathers trusted, the Christ of Luther and of Calvin, of Whitefield and of Wesley, that same Christ shall be among us yet in the fullness and the glory of his power by the working of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of myriads of men. Let us never despair; but, on the contrary, let us brush the tears from our eyes, and begin to look for the light of the morning, for "the morning cometh," and the day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

Let me encourage any friends who have been laboring for Christ in any district which has seemed strikingly barren, where the stones of the field have seemed to break the ploughshare. Still believe on, beloved; that soil which appears most unfruitful will perhaps repay us after a while with a hundred-fold harvest. The prospect may be dark; perhaps, dear friends, it is to be darker yet with us. We may have worked, and seemed to work in vain; possibly the vanity of all our working is yet to appear still more; but for all that, "the morning cometh." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." We must not be in the least afraid even in the densest darkness; but, on the contrary, look for the coming blessing.

I believe that this is to be the case also *in this whole world*. It is still the time of darkness, it is still the hour of shadows. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, and I cannot foretell what is yet to happen in the earth; it may be that the darkness will deepen still more, and that the shadows will multiply and increase; but the Lord will come. When he went up from Olivet, he sent two of his angels down to say, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He is surely coming; and though the date of his return is hidden from our sight, all the signs of the times look as if he might come very speedily. I was reading, the other day, what old Master William Bridge says on this subject:—"If our Lord is coming at midnight, he certainly will come very soon, for it cannot be darker than it now is." That was written two hundred years ago, but our Lord has not come yet, and I might say much the same as Master Bridge did. Do not doubt as to Christ's coming because it is delayed. A person lies dying, and the report concerning him is, "Well, it does not look as if he could live many hours." You call again, and they say, "Well, he still survives, but it seems as if he would scarcely get through the night." Do you go away and say, "Oh,

he will not die; for I have expected, for several days, to hear that he has passed away"? Oh, no! but each time you hear the report, you feel, "Well, it is so much nearer the end." And so is our Master's coming; it is getting nearer every hour, so let us keep on expecting it. That glorious advent shall end our weary waiting days, it shall end our conflicts with infidelity and priestcraft, it shall put an end to all our futile endeavors; and when the great Shepherd shall appear in his glory, then shall every faithful under-shepherd and all his flock appear with him, and then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away.

As to the shadows fleeing; what are those shadows that are to fly at his approach? The types and shadows of the ceremonial law were all finished when Christ appeared the first time; but many shadows still remain,—the shadows of our doubts, the grim mysterious shadows of our fears, the shadows of sin, so black, so dense,—the shadows of abounding unbelief, ten thousand shadows. When he cometh, these shall all flee away; and with them shall go heaven and earth,—the heaven and earth that now are, for what are these but shadows? All things that are unsubstantial shall pass away when he appeareth; when the day breaks, then shall everything but that which is eternal and invisible pass away. We are glad that it shall be so; and we pray that soon the day may break, and the shadows flee away. This, then, is our prospect.

II. Now I want to occupy a few minutes of your time in considering OUR POSTURE "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." We are here, like soldiers on guard, waiting for the dawn. It is night, and the night is deepening; how shall we occupy ourselves until the day break, and the shadows flee away?

Well, first, we will wait in the darkness with *patient endurance* as long as God appoints it. Whatever of shadow is yet to come, whatever of cold damp air and dews of the night is yet to fall upon us, we will bear it. Soldiers of the cross, you must not wish to avoid these shadows; he who has called you to this service knew that it would be night time, and he called you to night duty; and being put upon the night watch, keep at your post. It is not for any of us to say, "We will desert because it is so dark." Has not the thought sometimes grossed your mind, "I am not succeeding; I will run away"? Have you not often felt, like Jonah, that you would go to Tarshish that you might escape from delivering your Master's message? Oh, do not so! The day will break, and the shadows flee away; and until then, watch through the night, and fear not the shadows. Play the man, remembering through what a sevenfold night your Master passed, when, in Gethsemane, he endured even to a bloody sweat for you. When, on the cross, even his mid-day was midnight, what must have been the darkness over his spirit? He bore it; then bear you it. Let no thought of fear pass over your mind; or, if it does, let not your heart be troubled, but rise above your fear until the day break, and the shadows flee away. Be of good courage, soldiers of Christ, and still wait on in patient endurance.

What next are we to do until the day break? Why, let there be *hopeful watching*. Keep your eyes towards the East, and look for the first grey sign of the coming morning. "Watch!" Oh, how little is done of this kind of work! We scarcely watch as we ought against the devil; but how little do we watch for the coming of our Master! Look for every sign of his appearing, and be ever listening for the sound of his chariot wheels. Keep the candle burning in the window, to let him see that you are awake; keep the door on the latch, that when he cometh you may quickly open unto him. Hopefully watch until the day break, and the shadows flee away.

Then, further, dear friends, while we maintain patient endurance and hopeful watching, let us give each other *mutual encouragement*. Men who have been shipwrecked will give each other a

hand, and say, "Brother, mayhap we shall escape after all." Now that it is midnight all around, let every Christian give his fellow-soldier a grip of his hand. Courage, brothers; the Lord has not forgotten us. We are in the dark, and cannot see him; but he can see us, and he knows all about us, and maybe he will come, walking on the stormy waters in the middle watch of the night when our little bark seems ready to be sunk beneath the waves by the boisterous wind. I seem just now as though I were a soldier in this great guard-room, and as if we were sitting in these shadows, and perhaps in the darkness, and seemed very much dispirited; and I would say to you my comrades, "Come, brothers, let us cheer up. The Lord hath appeared to one and another of us. He hath given to some of us the light of his countenance, and he is coming back to welcome us all unto himself. Let us not be dismayed; our glorious Leader forgets not the weakest and feeblest of us, neither is any part of the battle-field beyond the reach of the great Captain's eye. He sees which way the struggle is going, and he has innumerable reserves, which he will bring up at the right time. I seem to hear the music of his horse's hoofs even now. He is coming who shall turn the scale in the worst moment of the conflict, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will deliver the enemy into our hand. Let no man's heart fail him because of yonder Goliath; the God who has raised up men to slay the lion and the bear, will yet find a David and a smooth stone to kill this mighty giant. Wherefore, brothers, be of good courage."

What further should we do in the dark? Well, one of the best things to do in the dark is to *stand still and keep our place*. "Until the day break and the shadows flee away," let us keep our place, and firmly maintain our position. A brother who sat at the back of me, twenty years ago, dropped in again recently to hear me preach; and he said to me, after the service, that he had been back in America, and come over here again after twenty years, and he added, "It is the same old story, Spurgeon, as when I was here before; you are sticking to the same old gospel" I replied, "Yes, and if you will come in twenty years' time, if God spares me, I shall still be sticking to the same old gospel, for I have nailed my colors to the mast, and I do not mean to have anything to do with this new-fangled progressive theology." To me, the gospel came to perfection long ago in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it can never go beyond that perfection. We preach nothing but that gospel which has saved our own souls, and saved the souls of the myriads who have gone to their eternal rest, and we do not intend preaching anything else until somebody can find us something better, and that will not be to-morrow, nor the day after, nor as long as the world stands. It is dark, very dark, so we just stop where we are, in steadfast confidence in the Lord who has placed us where we are. We are not going to plunge on in a reckless manner, we mean to look before we leap; and as it is too dark to look, we will not leap, but will just abide here hard by the cross, battling with every adversary of the truth as long as we have a right hand to move in the name of the Almighty God, "until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

What else ought we to do? Keep up a *careful separateness* from the works of darkness that are going on all around us. If it seems dark to you, gather up your skirts, and gird up your loins. The more sin abounds in the world, the more ought the Church of God to seek after the strictest holiness. If ever there was an age that wanted back again the sternest form of Puritanism, it is this age. If ever there was a time when we needed the old original stamp of Methodists, we need them now,—a people separated unto God, a people that have nothing to do but to please God and to save souls, a people that will not in any way bow themselves to the fashions of the time. For my part, I would like to see a George Fox come back among us, ay, Quaker as he was, to bear such a testimony as he did bear in the power of the Spirit of God against the evils of his time. God make us to feel that

now, in the dark, we cannot be even as lenient as we might have been in brighter days towards the sin that surrounds us! Are any of you tempted into "society" so-called, and into the ways of that society? Every now and then, those who read the papers get some little idea of what is going on in "society." The stench that comes from "society" tells us what it must be like, and makes us wish to keep clear of it. The awful revelations that were once before made, which caused us to be sick with shame and sorrow, might be made again; for there is just the same foulness and filthiness beneath the surface of the supposed greater decency. O Christian people, if you could but know, as the most of you ought not to know, how bad this world is, you would not begin to talk about its wonderful improvements, or to question the doctrine of human depravity. We are going on, according to some teachers, by "evolution" into something; if I might prognosticate what it is, I should say that it is into devils that many men are being evolved. They are going down, down, down, save where eternal grace is begetting in the heart of men a higher and better and nobler nature, which must bear its protest against the ignorance or hypocrisy which this day talks about the improvements of our civilization, and the progress that we are making towards God. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," keep yourselves to your Lord, and hear you this voice sounding through the darkness, the voice of a wisdom that sees more than you see, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty." "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," lift your hands to heaven, and pledge yourselves to walk a separated pilgrim life, until he cometh before whose face heaven and earth shall flee away.

III. Now I close by noticing OUR PETITION: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

I am not going to preach upon that part of our text, but only just to urge you to turn it into prayer. We have to wait, brothers and sisters; we have to wait in the darkness, cheered here and there with the light from a golden lamp that glows with the light of God. The world lieth in darkness, but we are of God, little children, therefore this must be our prayer to our Well-beloved, "*Come unto us.*" "Turn to me, O my Beloved, for thou hast turned away from me, or from thy Church. Turn again, I beseech thee. Pardon my lukewarmness, forgive my indifference. Turn to me again, my Beloved. O thou Husband of my soul, if I have grieved thee, and thou hast hidden thy face from me, turn again unto me! Smile thou, for then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away. Come to me, my Lord, visit me once again." Put up that prayer, beloved.

The prayer of the spouse is in this poetic form: "*Come over the mountains of division.*" As we look out into the darkness, what little light there is appears to reveal to us Alp upon Alp, mountain upon mountain, and our Beloved seems divided from us by all these hills. Now our prayer is, that he would come over the top of them; we cannot go over the top of them to him, but he can come over the top; of them to us, if he think fit to do so. Like the hinds' feet, this blessed Hind of the morning can come skipping over the hills with utmost speed to visit and to deliver us. Make this your prayer, Great Master, sweetly-beloved One, come over the mountains of division, and come quickly, like a roe or a young hart. Come easily, come unexpectedly; as roes and harts let no man know when they will come, so come thou unto me." I wish that, even while we are sitting here, our Divine Lord would come to our spirits with all his ravishing charms, so that we might cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Have you never felt an influence steal over you which has lifted you out of yourself, and made you go as on burning wheels with axles hot with speed, where before you had been sluggish and dull? Our Well-beloved can come

and visit us, all on a sudden, without any trouble to himself. It cost him his life's blood to come to earth to save us; it will cost him nothing to come just now to bless us. Remember what he has already done; for, having done so much, he will not deny you the lesser blessing of coming to you. Are you saved by his grace? Then do not think that he will refuse you fellowship with himself. Pray for it now. Before we come to the communion table, pray for it, and while you are sitting there, let this be your cry, "Come to me, my Beloved, over the hills of division; come as a roe or a young hart;" and he will come to you. Put up your prayer in the sweet words we sang just now,—

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?

O come, my Lord most dear!

Come near, come nearer, nearer still,

I'm blest when thou art near.

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?

Until thou dost appear,

I count each moment for a day,

Each minute for a year."

Oh, that this might be one of those happy seasons when you shall not be fed by the preacher's talk, but by the Master revealing himself to you! May God graciously grant it!

I may be addressing some who long to find the Savior. This morning, I got, from a friend who came in to see me, an illustration which I will give to you. He told me—and oh, how he made my heart rejoice!—that, six years ago, he was, so the apostle says, "going about to establish his own righteousness." He is a man of reputation, and when a friend sent him some of my sermons to read, he thought to himself, "What do I want these sermons for? I am as good so any man can be." But he did read them, and the friend asked him, "Have you read those sermons of Mr. Spurgeon's that I sent you?" "Yes," he replied, "I have; but I have got no good out of them." "Why not?" "Why," he said, "he has spoiled me; he has dashed my hopes to the ground, he has taken away my comfort and my joy; I thought myself as good as anybody living, and he has made me feel as if I were rotten right through." "Oh!" said his friend, "that medicine is working well, you must take some more of it." But the more of the sermons he read, the more unhappy he became, the more he saw the hollowness of all his former hopes; and he came into a great darkness, and the day did not break, and the shadows did not flee away. But, on a sudden, he was brought out into the light. As he told me the story, this morning, his eyes were wet, and so were mine. This is how the Lord led him into peace; I wish the telling of it might bring the same blessing to some of you. He said, "I went with my friend to fish for salmon in Loch Awe. I threw a fly, and as I threw it, a fish leaped up, and took it in a moment." "There," said the friend to him, "that is what you have to do with Christ, what that fish did with your fly. I am sure I do not know whether the fly took the fish, or the fish took the fly; it was both, the bait took the fish, and the fish took the bait. Do just so with Christ, and do not ask any questions. Leap up at him, take him in, lay hold of him." The man did so, and at once he was saved; I wish that somebody else would do the same. I never ask you to answer the question whether it is Christ who takes you or you who take Christ, for both things will happen at the same moment. Will you have him? Will you have him? If you will have him, he has you. If you are willing to have Christ, Christ has already made you willing in the day of his power. Throw yourself upon Christ, as the salmon opened his mouth, and took in the bait; so do you take Christ into your very soul. Writing to the Romans, Paul says, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth." What is the thing to do with that which is in your mouth when you want to keep it? Why, swallow it, of

course! Do so with Christ, let him go right down into your soul I put him into your mouth, as it were, while I am preaching. Accept him, receive him, and he is yours directly. Then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away, and your Beloved shall have come to you over the mountains of division, never to leave you again, but to abide with you for ever. God bless you! Amen.

Luke 12:22-48.

Verses 22-23. *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

If you are God's servants, he will clothe you. There is no servitor of the Lord of hosts who will have to go without his livery, and not one who belongs to his vast household, even though he is but a menial in God's kitchen, who will ever be permitted to starve.

24-26. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*

How little you can do for yourself after all! Therefore, leave the whole with God.

"Make you his service your delight,

He'll make your wants his care."

The best cure for the cares of this life is to care much to please God. If we loved him better, we should love the world far less, and be less troubled about our portion in it.

27, 28. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of those. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

What a title to address to us,—*"O ye of little faith!"*—but, depend upon it, we deserve it when we are full of anxious care. Much care argues little faith. When faith is strong, she casts all her care on him who careth for us. Oh, that we could but be rid of that which, after all, is not our business, and give our whole mind, and heart, and soul, to what is our business, namely, to please our Creator, our Redeemer, our Friend!

29, 30. *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all those things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

Is not that a sweet word? *"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."* There used to be a hymn which was sung a good deal at revival meetings, it had a very sweet refrain, *"This my Father knows."* If you cannot yourselves understand your ease, your Father knows all about it. If you cannot make other people comprehend it, yet your Father knows all that needs to be known. Whatever you really require, even for the present life, need not be any cause of anxiety to you, believers, for *"your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."* There is no need, therefore, for you to seek *"what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink."*

31, 32. *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all those things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

He gives others a good many things, but he will give you the kingdom. Just as Abraham gave portions to the sons of Keturah, and sent them away; but Isaac had the covenant blessing; so, *"it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*

33. *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

Not only give to the poor till you pinch yourself, but even pinch yourself to do it.

33-35. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;*

Never be undressed, as it were, in a moral or spiritual sense: "Let your loins be girded about." Never be in the dark spiritually. Keep in the light; let your lamp be ever burning. Not only walk in the light of God but let your light shine before men.

36. *And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

Brethren, whatever theory we hold about the future, may God grant that it may never prevent our looking for the coming of Christ as an event which may happen at any moment, and being on the watch for it as a matter the date of which we do not know! The practical essence of all Scriptural teaching upon that subject is just this, "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding."

37. *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

I will not attempt fully to explain this passage of Scripture in the few moments which I can give to it, but it is very wonderful. Our Lord has been here once, and girded himself to serve us; but is it not extraordinary that here is an intimation of a second girding of himself that he may serve us? Oh, how fond is Christ of being the servant of servants, ministering unto those who delight to minister unto him! What an honor does the Captain of our salvation put upon the meanest soldiers in this war when he declares that, if we be found faithful, he will gird himself, and come forth and serve us!

38-40. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

Peradventure he will not come when the modern prophetic say that he will appear, but he will come when least of all he is expected. Therefore, expect the unexpected; look for your Lord to come when the many go to sleep. Perhaps, while yet I am speaking, ere this gathered assembly shall disperse, there may be heard the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Are our loins girded? Are our lamps burning? God bless his own truth to the effecting of both those ends!

41-43. *Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

Distributing the bread of life, giving milk to babes and meat to strong men; not behaving as if he were master, but acting only as a steward who serves out, not his own, but his master's stores. Oh, that we who are ministers of Christ may be always doing this! So shall we obtain the blessing promised to "that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

44, 45. *Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all the he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;*

First, he becomes lordly, he acts as if he were master, beats his fellowservants, he is harsh and ungenerous, and assumes great dignity and gives himself airs. Let him mind what he is at, for his Master will come, and catch him usurping his place. The next danger is that he begins to enjoy himself, to be voluptuous, self-indulgent: "To eat and drink, and to be drunken." He becomes intoxicated with pride, he is carried away with divers errors; in making much of himself he loses his head, and acts like a fool.

46. *The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

Truly, our Lord uses very strong words; the Savior is not one of your effeminate preachers like those of modern times, who seem as if the very word "hell" would burn their lips, and who will not warn men to flee from the wrath to come. It is an unkind and heartless want of humanity which prevents their being faithful to the souls of men. The great Lord, who is full of tenderness, does not hesitate to use the sternest figure, and the most terrible language, simply because he does not consult his own feelings but aims at the highest good of those with whom he deals. This is a terrible word for us if we are unfaithful at the last: "He will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." It is an awful thing that the unfaithful servant gets his portion with those who do not believe in Christ. The Lord preserve all of us from such a doom!

47, 48. *And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with a few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

Under the shadow of such solemn texts as these, let us draw near to God in earnest prayer.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—810, 766.

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