



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 46: 1900

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 46: 1900* by Charles Spurgeon

Title: Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 46: 1900
URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons46.html>
Author(s): Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (1834-1892)
Publisher: Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library
Date Created: 2002-08-27
CCEL Subjects: All; Sermons;
LC Call no: BV42
LC Subjects: Practical theology
Worship (Public and Private) Including the church year, Christian symbols, liturgy, prayer, hymnology
Times and Seasons. The church year

Table of Contents

<i>About This Book</i>	p. ii
Sermon 2656. The Death of Christ for His People.	p. 1
Sermon 2663. A Leap Year Sermon.	p. 8
Sermon 2664. Things Unknown.	p. 18
Sermon 2665. A Day To Be Remembered.	p. 27
Sermon 2666. The Sorrowful Man's Question.	p. 37
Sermon 2667. A Pressed Man Yielding to Christ.	p. 47
Sermon 2670. Pride Catechized.	p. 57
Sermon 2690. Meditation on God.	p. 64
Sermon 2693. Priest and Victim.	p. 75
Sermon 2695. Christian Conversation.	p. 83
Indexes.	p. 92
Index of Scripture References.	p. 92
Index of Scripture Commentary.	p. 92

The Death of Christ for His People

A Sermon

(No. 2656)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 7th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

On a Lord's-day Evening in the winter of 1857.

"He laid down his life for us."—1 John 3:16.

COME, believer and contemplate this sublime truth, thus proclaimed to thee in simple monosyllables: "He laid down his life for us." There is not one long word in the sentence; it is all as simple as it can be; and it is simple because it is sublime. Sublimity in thought always needs simplicity in words to express itself. Little thoughts require great words to explain them; little preachers need Latin words to convey their feeble ideas, but great thoughts and great expressers of those thoughts are content with little words.

"He laid down his life for us." Here there is not much upon which any man can display his eloquence; here is little room for metaphysical discussion or for deep thought; the text sets before us a simple yet sublime doctrine. What, then, shall I do with it? If I would speak of it profitably to myself, since I need not employ my wit to dissect it, nor my oratory to proclaim it, let me exercise my adoration to worship it; let me prostrate all my powers before the throne, and, like an angel when his work is done, and he has nowhere else to fly at his Lord's command, let me fold the wings of my contemplation, and stand before the throne of this great truth, and meekly bow myself, and worship him that was, and is, and is to come,—the great and glorious One who "laid down his life for us."

It will be well for me, in commencing my discourse, to remind you that there is no understanding the death of Christ unless we understand the person of Christ. If I were to tell you that God died for us, although I might be telling you a truth, and you might possibly not misunderstand what I meant, yet I should be at the same time uttering an error. God cannot die; it is, of course, impossible, from his very nature, that he could even for a moment cease to exist. God is incapable of suffering. It is true that we sometimes use words to express emotions On the part of God; but, then, we speak after the manner of men. He is impassive; he cannot suffer; it is not possible for him to endure aught; much less, then, is it possible for him to suffer death. Yet we are told, in the verse from which our text is taken, "Hereby perceive we the love *of God*." You notice that the words "of God" are inserted by the translators. They are in italics because they are not in the original. A better translation would be, "Hereby perceive we love." But when we read "of God," it might lead the ignorant to fancy that God could die; whereas, God could not. We must always understand, and constantly remember, that our Lord Jesus Christ was "very God of very God," and that, as God, he had all the attributes of the Most High, and could not, therefore, be capable either of suffering or death. But then he was also man, "man of the substance of his mother," man, just like ourselves, sin alone excepted. And the Lord Jesus died not as God; it was as man that he gave up the ghost; as man, he was nailed to the cross. As God, he was in heaven, even when his body was in the tomb;

as God, he was swaying the sceptre of all worlds even when the mock sceptre of reed was in his hand, and the imperial robe of universal monarchy was on the eternal shoulders of his Godhead when the soldier's old purple cloak was wrapped about his manhood. He did not cease to be God, he did not lose his Omnipotence, and his eternal dominion, when he became man; nor did he, as God, die or suffer; it was as man that he "laid down his life for us."

Come, now, my soul, and worship this man, this God. Come, believer, and behold thy Saviour; come to the innermost circle of all sanctity, the circle that contains the cross of Christ, and here sit down; and, whilst thou dost worship, learn three lessons from the fact that "he laid down his life for us." The first lesson should be,—Did he lay down his life for us? Ah! then, my brethren, *how great must have been our sins* that they could not have been atoned for at any other price! Secondly, did he lay down his life for *us*? Ah! then, beloved, *how great must have been his love!* He would not stop short anywhere, until life itself had been resigned. Thirdly, did he lay down his life for us? Ah! then, my soul, be of good cheer; *how safe art thou!* If such an atonement hath been offered, if such a sure satisfaction hath been given to Almighty God, how secure thou art! Who is he that can destroy him who hath been bought with the blood of such a Redeemer?

I. Come, then, let me believingly meditate on the first sad fact. Did Christ lay down his life for me? Then, **HOW GREAT MUST HAVE BEEN MY SINS!**

Ah! my brethren, I will speak a little of my own experience, and in so doing I shall also be describing yours. I have seen my sins in many different ways. I saw them once by the blazing light of Sinai; and, oh! my spirit shrank within me, for my sins seemed exceeding black. When the sound of the trumpet waxed loud and long, and the lighting and fire flashed into my heart, I saw a very hell of iniquity within my soul, and I was ready then to curse the day that I was born, that I should have had such a heart, so vile and so deceitful. I thought that then I had seen the exceeding blackness of my sin. Alas! I had not seen enough of sin to make me loathe it so as to leave it, for that conviction passed away. Sinai was but a volcano, and it was hushed to silence; and then I began to play with sin again, and loved it as much as ever.

I beheld another sight one day; I saw my sins by the light of heaven. I looked up, and I considered the heavens, the work of God's fingers; I perceived the purity of God's character written on the sunbeams, I saw his holiness engraved upon the wide world, as well as revealed in Scripture; and as I compared myself with him, I thought I saw how black I was. O God! I never knew the heinousness of my own guilt, until I saw the glory of thy character; but now I see the brightness of thy holiness, my whole soul is cast down at the thought of my sinfulness, and my great departure from the living God. I thought that, then, I had seen enough. Ah! I had seen enough to make me worship for a moment; but my gladness was as the early cloud and as the morning dew, and I went my way, and forgot what manner of man I was. When I had lost the sense of the majesty of God, I lost also the consciousness of my own guilt.

Then there came to me another view, and I beheld God's lovingkindness to me; I saw how he had dandled me upon the knee of Providence,—how he had carried me all my life long,—how he had strewn my path with plenty, and given me all things richly to enjoy. I remembered how he had been with me in the hour of trial, how he had preserved me in the day of hurricane, and kept me safe at the moment of storm. I remembered all his goodness to me; and, struck with surprise at his mercy, I looked upon my sin in the light of his grace; and I said, "O sin, how base thou art, what dire ingratitude dost thou manifest against a God so profoundly kind!"

I thought, then, surely I had seen the worst of sin, when I had laid it side by side, first with the character of God, and afterwards with his bounties. I cursed sin from my inmost heart, and thought I had seen enough of it. But, ah! my brethren, I had not. That sense of gratitude passed away, and I found myself still prone to sin, and still loving it.

But, oh, there came a thrice-happy, yet thrice-mournful hour! One day, in my wanderings, I heard a cry, a groan; methought 'twas not a cry such as came from mortal lip, it had in it such unutterable depths of wondrous woe. I turned aside, expecting to see some great sight; and it was indeed a great sight that I saw. Lo, there, upon a tree, all bleeding, hung a man. I marked the misery that made his flesh all quiver on his bones; I beheld the dark clouds come rolling down from heaven, like the chariots of misery; I saw them clothe his brow with blackness; I saw even in the thick darkness, for mine eyes were opened, and I perceived that his heart was as full of the gloom and horror of grief as the sky was full of blackness. Then I seemed to look into his soul, and I saw there torrents of unutterable anguish,—wells of torment of such an awful character that mortal lip dare not sip, lest it should be burned with scalding heat. I said, "Who is this mighty sufferer? Why doth he suffer thus? Hath he been the greatest of all sinners, the basest of all blasphemers?" But a voice came forth from the excellent glory, and it said, "This is my beloved Son; but he took the sinner's sin upon himself, and he must bear its penalty." O God! I thought, I never saw sin till that hour, when I saw it tear Christ's glories from his head,—when it seemed for a moment even to withdraw the lovingkindness of God from him,—when I saw him covered with his own blood, and plunged into the uttermost depths of oceans of grief. Then I said, "Now shall I know what thou art, O sin, as never before I knew it!" Though those other sights might teach me something of the dire character of evil, yet never, till I saw the Saviour on the tree, did I understand how base a traitor man's guilt was to man's God.

O heir of heaven, lift now thine eye, and behold the scenes of suffering through which thy Lord passed for thy sake! Come in the moonlight, and stand between those olives; see him sweat great drops of blood. Go from that garden, and follow him to Pilate's bar. See your Matter subjected to the grossest and filthiest insult; gaze upon the face of spotless beauty defiled with the spittle of soldiers; see his head pierced with thorns; mark his back, all rent, and torn, and scarred, and bruised, and bleeding beneath the terrible lash. And O Christian, see him die! Go and stand where his mother stood, and hear him say to thee, "Man, behold thy Saviour!" Come thou to-night, and stand where John stood; hear him cry, "I thirst," and find thyself unable either to assuage his griefs or to comprehend their bitterness. Then, when thou hast wept there, lift thine hand, and cry, "Revenge!" Bring out the traitors; where are they? And when your sins are brought forth as the murderers of Christ, let no death be too painful for them; though it should involve the cutting off of right arms, or the quenching of right eyes, and putting out their light for ever; do it! For if these murderers murdered Christ, then let them die. Die terribly they may, but die they must. Oh! that God the Holy Ghost would teach you that first lesson, my brethren, the boundless wickedness of sin, for Christ had to lay down his life before your sin could be wiped away.

II. Now we will come to the second head, and here we will lift up our hearts from the depths of sadness to the heights of affection. Did the Saviour lay down his life for me? We will read it now, "He laid down his life for me;" and I pray the Lord to help each of you, by faith, to read it so, because, when we say "us", that is dealing in generalities,—blessed generalities, it is true,—but let us, at this time, deal in specialities, and say, each one of us who can do so truthfully, "He laid down his life for *me*." Then, HOW GREATLY HE MUST HAVE LOVED ME!

Ah, Lord Jesus! I never knew thy love till I understood the meaning of thy death. Beloved, we shall try again, if we can, to tell the story of our own experience, to let you see how God's love is to be learned. Come, saint, sit down, and meditate on thy creation, note how marvellously thou hast been formed, and all thy bones fitted to one another, and see love there. Mark, next, that predestination which placed thee where thou art; for the lines have fallen unto thee in pleasant places, and, notwithstanding all thy troubles, thou hast, compared with many a poor soul, "a goodly heritage." Mark, then, the love of God displayed in the predestination that has made thee what thou art, and placed thee where thou art. Then look thou back, and see the lovingkindness of thy Lord, as displayed to thee in all thy journey up till now. Thou art getting old, and thy hair is whitening above thy brow; but he hath carried thee all the days of old; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord thy God hath promised. Recall thy life-story. Go back now, and look at the tapestry of thy life, which God has been working every day with the golden filament of his love, and see what pictures of grace there are upon it. Canst thou not say that Jesus has loved thee? Turn thine eye back, and read the ancient rolls of the everlasting covenant, and see thy name amongst the firstborn, the elect, the Church of the living God. Say, did he not love thee when he wrote thy name there? Go and remember how the eternal settlements were made, and how God decreed and arranged all things so that thy salvation should come to pass. Say, was there not love there?

Pause at the remembrance of thy convictions; think of thy conversion; recollect thy preservation, and how God's grace hath been working upon thee, in adoption, in justification, and in every item of the new covenant; and when thou hast summed up all these things, let me ask thee this question,—Do all these things produce in thee such a sense of gratitude as the one thing that I shall mention now, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? For, my brother, if thy mind is like mine, although thou wilt think highly enough of all these things that God hath given thee, thou wilt be obliged to confess that the thought of the death of Christ upon the cross swallows them all up. This I know, my brethren, I may look back, I may look forward, but whether I look back to the decrees of eternity, or look forward to the pearl-gated city, and all the splendours that God has prepared for his own beloved children, I can never see my Father's love so beaming forth, in all its effulgence, as when I look at the cross of Christ, and see him die thereon. I can read the love of God in the rocky letters of the eternal covenant, and in the blazing letters of heaven hereafter; but, my brethren, in those crimson lines, those lines written in blood, there is something more striking than there is anywhere else, for they say, "He laid down his life for us" Ah, here it is ye learn love. You know the old story of Damon and Pythias,—how the two friends struggled together as to which should die for the other; there was love there. But, ah! there is no comparison between Damon and Pythias, and a poor sinner and his Saviour. Christ laid down his life, his glorious life, for a poor worm; he stripped himself of all his splendours, then of all his happiness, then of his own righteousness, then of his own robes, till he was naked to his own shame; and then he laid down his life, that was all he had left, for our Saviour had not kept anything back.

Just think of that for a moment. He had a crown in heaven; but he laid that aside, that you and I might wear one for ever. He had a girdle of brightness—brighter than the stars,—about his loins; but he took it off, and laid it by, that you and I might eternally wear a girdle of righteousness. He had listened to the holy songs of the cherubim and seraphim; but he left them all that we might for ever dwell where angels sing; and then he came to earth, and he had many things, even in his poverty, which might have tended to his comfort; he laid down, first one glory, and then another, at love's demand; at last, it came to this, he had nothing left but one poor garment, woven from the

top throughout, and that was clinging to his back with blood, and he laid down that also. Then there was nothing left, he had not kept back one single thing. "There," he might have said, "take an inventory of all I have, to the last farthing; I have given it all up for my people's ransom." And there was nought left now but his own life. O love insatiable! couldst thou not stay there? Though he had given up one hand to cancel sin, and the other hand to reconcile us unto God; and had given up one foot that we might have our sinful feet for ever transfixed, and nailed, and fastened, never to wander, and the other foot to be fastened to the tree that we might have our feet at liberty to run the heavenly race; and there was nothing left but his poor heart, and he gave his heart up too, and they set it abroach with the spear, and forthwith there came out thence blood and water.

Ah, my Lord! what have I ever given to thee compared to what thou hast given for me? Some poor things, like some rusty farthings, I have given thee; but how little compared with what thou hast given me! Now and then, my Lord, I have given thee a poor song upon an ill-toned instrument; sometimes, my Lord, I have done some little service for thee; but, alas! my fingers were so black, they spoiled what I intended to have presented to thee white as snow. It is nought I have done for thee, my Lord. No, though I have been a missionary, and surrendered home and friends; no, though I have been a martyr, and given my body to be burned, I will say, in the last hour, "My Master, I have done nothing for thee, after all, in comparison with what thou hast done for me; and yet, what can I do more? How can I show my love to thee, for thy love to me, so peerless, so matchless? What shall I do? I will do nothing but—

"Dissolved by thy goodness, I'll fall to the ground,

And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.'

"That is all I can do, and that I must and will do."

III. Now, beloved, we will change the theme, and go one note higher. We have run up the gamut a long way, and now we have just reached the height of the octave. But we have something else to get out of the text: "He laid down his life for us." Did my Saviour lay down his life for me? Then, **HOW SAFE I AM!**

We will have no controversy to-night with those who do not see this truth; the Lord open their blind eyes, and show it to them! That is all we will say. We, who know the gospel, see, in the fact of the death of Christ, a reason that no strength of logic can ever shake, and no power of unbelief can remove, why we should be saved. There may be men, with minds so distorted that they can conceive it possible that Christ should die for a man who afterwards is lost; I say, there may be such. I am sorry to say that there are still to be found some such persons, whose brains have been so addled, in their childhood, that they cannot see that what they hold is both a preposterous falsehood and a blasphemous libel. Christ dies for a man, and then God punishes that man again; Christ suffers in a sinner's stead, and then God condemns that sinner after all! Why, my friends, I feel quite shocked in only mentioning such an awful error; and were it not so current as it is, I should certainly pass it over with the contempt that it deserves. The doctrine of Holy Scripture is this, that God is just, that Christ died in the stead of his people, and that, as God is just, he will never punish one solitary soul of Adam's race for whom the Saviour did thus shed his blood. The Saviour did, indeed, in a certain sense, die for all; all men receive many a mercy through his blood, but that he was the Substitute and Surety for all men, is so inconsistent, both with reason and Scripture, that we are obliged to reject the doctrine with abhorrence. No, my soul, how shalt thou be punished if thy Lord endured thy punishment for thee? Did he die for thee? O my soul, if Jesus was not thy Substitute, and did not die in thy very stead, then he is no Saviour to thee! But if he was thy Substitute, if he

suffered as thy Surety, in thy stead, then, my soul, "Who is he that condemneth?" Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us. There stands the master-argument: Christ "laid down his life for us," and "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If the agonies of the Saviour put our sins away, the everlasting life of the Saviour, with the merits of his death added thereunto, must preserve his people, even unto the end.

This much I know,—ye may hear men stammer when they say it,—but what I preach is the old Lutheran, Calvinistic, Augustinian, Pauline, Christian truth,—there is not one sin in the Book of God against anyone that believeth. Our sins were numbered on the Scapegoat's head, and there is not one sin, that ever a believer did commit, that hath any power to damn him, for Christ hath taken the damning power out of sin, by allowing it, to speak by a bold metaphor, to damn himself, for sin did condemn him; and, inasmuch as sin condemned him, sin cannot condemn us. O believer, this is thy security, that all thy sin and guilt, all thy transgressions and thine iniquities, have been atoned for, and were atoned for before they were committed; so that thou mayest come with boldness, though red with all crimes, and black with every lust, and lay thine hand on that Scapegoat's head, and when thou hast put thine hand there, and seen that Scapegoat driven into the wilderness, thou mayest clap thine hands for joy, and say, "It is finished, sin is pardoned."

"Here's pardon for transgressions pest,
It matters not how black their cast;
And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
For sin's to come, here's pardon too!"

This is all I want to know; did the Saviour die for me? Then I will not continue in sin that grace may abound; but nothing shall stop me of thus glorying, in all the churches of the Lord Jesus, that my sins are entirely removed from me; and, in God's sight, I may sing, as Hart did sing,—

"With Christ's spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

O marvellous death of Christ, how securely dost thou set the feet of God's people on the rocks of eternal love; and how securely dost thou keep them there! Come, dear brethren, let us suck a little honey out of this honeycomb. Was there ever anything so luscious and so sweet to the believer's taste as this all-glorious truth that we are complete in him; that in and through his death and merits we are accepted in the Beloved? Oh, was there ever anything more sublime than this thought, that he hath already raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, far above all principalities and powers; just where he sits? Surely there is nothing more sublime than that, except it be that a master-thought stamps all these things with more than their own value,—that master-thought that, though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, the covenant of his love shall never depart from us. "For," saith Jehovah, "I will never forget thee, O Zion;" "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." O Christian, that is a firm foundation, cemented with blood, on which thou mayest build for eternity! Ah, my soul! thou needest no other hope but this. Jesus, thy mercy never dies; I will plead this truth when cast down with anguish,—Thy mercy never dies. I will plead this when Satan hurls temptations at me, and when conscience casts the remembrance of my sin in my teeth; I will plead this ever, and I will plead it now,—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

Yea, and after I die, and even when I stand before thine eyes, thou dread Supreme,—

"When from the dust of death I rise,

To take my mansion in the skies,

E'en then shall this be all my plea,

'Jesus hath lived and died for me.'

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,

For who aught to my charge shall lay ?

While through Christ's blood absolved I am

From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Ah, brethren, if this is your experience you may come to the table of communion now right happily; it will not be coming to a funeral, but to a feast of gladness. "He laid down his life for us."

A Leap Year Sermon*

A Sermon

(No. 2663)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, February 25th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Lord's-day Evening, February 29th, 1880.

"One born out of due time."—1 Corinthians 15:8.

PAUL THUS DESCRIBES himself. It was necessary that Paul, as an apostle, should have seen the Lord. He was not converted at the time of Christ's ascension; yet he was made an apostle, for the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the way, as he was going to Damascus, to persecute the saints of God. When he looked upon himself as thus put in, as it were, at the end of the apostles, he spoke of himself in the most depreciating terms, calling himself "one born out of due time."

Those who are acquainted with the Greek tongue know what a despicable term Paul here applied to himself,—as though he was scarcely a man at all,—at any rate, as the very last of the family, "born out of due time;" and not only the last, but also the very least, for he says, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Scholars will know why I cannot exactly explain the word which Paul uses, but rather keep to the rendering of our translation, which, although it may not have the force and full meaning of the Greek expression, is perhaps none the less useful for public reading: "One born out of due time."

Paul thought very humbly of himself; he reckoned himself less than nothing, put himself down at the very lowest estimate, and mentioned that he was brought to Christ, and made an apostle, when the time for such a work was apparently over. Out of date altogether, beyond the period, when it might have been thought that another apostle would, be called of God, there was he found as "one born out of due time."

My subject to-night is, first, *the singular time of Paul's spiritual birth*. There are many of God's true: children who, like the apostle, were "born out; of due time." When I have expatiated upon that fact, I shall speak of *the sure evidences of his spiritual birth*, and show you that, although "born out, of due, time," he was born, and there were sure evidences of his spiritual birth, which evidences, I trust, may be seen in many of us also.

I. First, then, let us think of THE SINGULAR TIME OF PAUL'S SPIRITUAL BIRTH.

There are still some who like the apostle, are born to God "out of due time." They are truly born again, regenerated, converted, *at a most unlikely season*. There have been multitudes brought to Christ, under earnest sermons, when the appeals of faithful men have thrilled the congregation, and the truth has been effectually carried home to the hearts of many of the hearers. But there have also been times when God's ministers have waxed faint, when the sermon has appeared to be destitute of all force, when nobody has seemed to have felt, the power of the discourse, and, apparently, the truth has fallen quite flat; yet, on many such occasions, there have been some sinners converted to God when we should hardly have thought it to be possible. Mr. Tennant, a famous American minister of Whitefield's time, one of the most earnest and seraphic men who ever

proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, had a hearer, who remained unmoved under many a score of his most faithful sermons. Others were saved, but not this man; he seemed unmoved and immovable; but it came to pass, on a certain Sabbath, that a very unusual thing happened. Mr. Tennant had prepared his sermon with great care, it was what we are wont to call a laborious discourse, into which he had put all the thought and all the pains possible; but he had not been preaching long before his memory completely failed him, his mind refused to work, and, after floundering about for a while, he was obliged to sit down in great confusion, and say that, he could not preach to the people that day. The man I have mentioned, who had never before been impressed under Mr. Tennant's ministry, was that day called by sovereign grace, as "one born out of due time," for he was led to see that there was a spiritual and supernatural force which had usually helped the pastor to preach, and that, when this divine influence was withdrawn, he was as weak as other men, and could not speak with power: as he had been accustomed to do. This truth, somehow or other,—for human minds are strangely constituted, and things, which have no effect upon certain people, very greatly affect others who are present, at the same time;—this truth, I say, induced the man to think; thinking, he was led to believe in God, and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. He was, without doubt, one "born out of due time."

I would like to break down, as Mr. Tennant did, if some of you would be born to God by that means; I would rather be dumb, and win a soul for Jesus, than speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet, men's hearts should not be impressed by the truth I proclaimed. How often I have found that, when I have gone, home, and sighed, and cried, and groaned over a discourse in which I felt no liberty, but thought it was an utter failure, it has afterwards been proved that, here one, and there another, have, come forward blessing and praising God for that very testimony, which seemed to me so faulty and feeble, but which the Spirit of the Lord has savingly impressed upon them. So, still, there are some who, in this way, are "born out of due time," through the, Holy Spirit's use even of the preacher's weaknees and apparent failure.

Another illustration may be taken from the opposite side of the same truth. Some are converted when they seem themselves to be in a state of mind in which they are the most unlikely to be impressible. I remember being in Dr. John Campbell's house, one day, when he told me that a minister was preaching at Whitefield's old Tabernacle in Moorfields, one evening, when there were present, under very strange circumstances, two young men who had fallen into dissipated habits, and who had made an appointment with each other for the commission of some gross sin that very night, had they committed what they had planned, it may be that they would have plunged themselves into a career of vice from which they might never have been extricated. They were passing by the Moorfields Tabernacle, which some of you remember, and as they wanted to know the time at which they were to meet for this unholy purpose, one of them said to the other, "Go in, and see the time; there is sure to be a clock in there." But the clock was not fixed as it is here, at the back of the preacher, but the other way; so the young man had to go some little distance further in than he intended, in order to see the clock. If I remember rightly, the preacher that night was Matthew Wilks, and he was just uttering some quaint remark, something that arrested the young man's attention, and held him fast in the aisle. His companion waited, outside for a time, but it was cold, so he thought he had better go in, and look at the clock himself, and fetch his friend out. He went in; the arrows of the Lord pierced the heart of both of them, and the second of those young men was John Williams, the famous missionary, and at last the martyr of Erromanga. Thus, they also were "born out of due time." You would not have thought it possible that those men should become,

as they did, preachers of the gospel, when they were, at that very time, desperately set on the commission of a great sin against God, and their hearts were wholly given up to the pleasures and follies of this world; but so it happened, and our Lord still knows how to stop men as he stopped Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. He, is the man who says that he was "born out of due time;" and he is a wonderful instance of this method of divine interposition. He has in his possession, the letters from the high priest which will enable him to bind the saints, the carry them off to Jerusalem; he is riding towards Damascus, the is within sight of the, city when, in the very midst of his high-handed course of persecution, the Lord Jesus Christ himself intervenes, and smites him down to the ground. Presently, he rises to pray, and, in his three days' blindness and fasting, to seek the Lord, and then to find him, to the salvation of his soul and the joy of his spirit, and thus to become an apostle of that very Savior whom, in his ignorance, he had been persecuting. After such a triumph of divine grace, let us never despair of any sinner, however far he may have gone, into, sin. You know how Paul, writing to Timothy, said of himself, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." The God who blessed the broken sermon of Mr. Tennant can bless our imperfect work in the pulpit, the Sunday-school, or anywhere else; and the God who saved such men as John Williams and his companion, when they least thought of such a thing happening, can also save some who have strayed in here to-night, little dreaming what designs of love God has toward them in bringing them at this time under the sound of the Word.

I consider, next, that a convert may be described as one "born out of due time" when he is brought to Christ *after some great revival or notable religious movement has come to an end*. There are some of you who attended the recent special services conducted here by Messrs. Fullerton and Smith. What power there was in those hallowed gatherings! Some of your neighbors wept under conviction of sin; but you did not. Some of them came to Christ, and are now rejoicing in him; but you did not come to him. You were not even impressed during the meetings, though, possibly, you wished to be; or it may be that you began with a desire after better things, but you ended in indifference. And now the special services are all over, and the good men who came amongst us to preach and sing the gospel are gone, and you have been saying to yourselves, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Ah! but our Lord has a blessed way of picking up the stragglers behind the army. When the main body has marched on, with sound of trumpet, praising God, there are a few left behind; and the Lord Jesus sometimes comes, and picks them up. I do earnestly pray that some of you may be thus picked up by him just now, so that you may be able to say, "We were not born for God when many others were; like Saul of Tarsus, we were 'born out of due time;' but, blessed be God, we were born again by the effectual working of his Spirit, we were brought to Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, and now we also have become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Pray that it may be, so dear friends. O you Christian people, bow your hearts before God, and ask that it may be so] Perhaps the very fact that those services are over, and that a gracious opportunity has gone, may be impressed upon the minds of some who were present during the meetings, but who were; not converted, and they may now seek the Savior, and find him to their everlasting salvation and happiness.

The Lord can bless strange methods to the awakening of the, ungodly. When Puritanism seemed to be trodden under foot, in the reign of James I., and the king issued the Book of Sports, and gave commandment that every clergyman was to read from the pulpit, on Sunday, that, it was the royal will and pleasure that the young people should play at football, cricket, and other games and pastimes

on the Lord's-day afternoon, godly ministers, who really loved the Lord, did not know what to do. One of them thought, perhaps, it would be well to do as the king ordered, and to say something beside, so, when the Sunday came for reading the Book of Sports to the people, he said, "I am commanded by the king and the authorities to read to you the following document; but it grieves my heart and conscience to have to read it. I know it is wicked, and wrong, and shameful, and abominable to desecrate the Sabbath as you are invited to do, and I wonder what will become of my country when even from the church itself Sabbath-breaking is recommended." So, the good man spoke, to the relief of his own conscience, and in hope of arousing the consciences of others. It happened that there was in the congregation, that day, a young man who had always been a ringleader in the Sabbath sports; he was no sooner out of church, in the morning, than he was on the village green, fast and furious in all the amusements of the time; but, when he heard that Book of Sports read, he said to himself, "well, I acted in that way on my own account, and it, was wrong enough for me to do so; but now I say with the minister, "What is to become of all the country if everybody is to be as bad as I have been? What will happen to the nation if this kind of thing is to go on?" The thought struck him so forcibly that he became first a serious character, and then a true seeker after God, and afterwards a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. So it came: to pass that, when the devil thought he was going to have everything his own way, that very day, this young man was born to God,—truly, "born out of due time."

I recollect reading a very striking saying of Mr. Bunyan's. He said he had good reason to believe that, in the generation after him, there would be many more saints than in the one of which he formed a part, and his belief was based upon the fact that, wherever he went, he found that there were so many great sinners that he hoped they would be converted, and become eminent servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, there was a blessed truth at the back of that hope of his; for, very often, where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound; and when the Word of God seems to grow scarce, and the candle of the gospel burns but dimly, we may pray and expect that even then, some may be "born out of due time" to the praise of the glory of that grace which saves as it wills, and often selects the very chief of sinners to be the subjects of its almighty power.

There have been some dear friends, who may be said to have been "born out of due time," for they have been converted to God *after it seemed impossible that they ever should be*. I recollect, well reading of one who imbibed sceptical notions, and became exceedingly furious against the preaching of the Word. One day, in Edinburgh, he heard it said that, a certain eminent minister of the gospel intended, if he met, him, to speak with him about his soul; whereupon the man uttered some very strong expressions, and, amongst other wicked things, he said, "I shall never be converted unless I lose my senses:" All who were acquainted with him, and who knew how desperately he was set against the gospel, thought that his was indeed a hopeless case; but, in the infinite mercy of God, it turned out to be quite the opposite. He began to suffer from great incoherence of thought, his mind gradually wandered, when he was trying to speak, he often spoke utter nonsense. He became unfit for business, and had to be put into the custody of someone who watched him as his keeper. Reason was not actually gone, but it was reeling upon its throne; and while he was in that sad state, the case of Nebuchadnezzar came to his mind, and he wondered whether God had given him up, altogether, on account of what he had said,—that he would never be converted while he was in his senses. He turned his mind, all shipwrecked and battered as it, was, towards God and out of the depths of his half-bewildered spirit, he cried unto the Lord as Nebuchadnezzar did, and his mind returned to him, and he became a humble, gentle, holy believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you not think, dear friends, that he also was "one born out of due time"? The time of salvation seemed utterly past so far as he was concerned. He had made a covenant with death, and a league with hell; he had cast off those ordinary beliefs which many men hold even though they do not obey them; yet, notwithstanding all that, the surprising grace of God dealt with him after its own sovereign manner, and laid him low, that it might bring him up again. I do not pray that such a thing may happen to anybody here; but I do pray that God may bring you to Christ somehow, and anyhow; and if, in order to attain that end, you have to be driven to the very gates of hell,—so long as you do not actually pass through them,—I will rejoice if, afterwards, you are led to flee to Christ for refuge.

Another instance of "one born out of due time" occurs in the case of one *converted after the spiritual father is dead*. We sometimes see posthumous children, that is, those who are born after the father is deceased; and there is generally much sorrow mingled with the thought of such births, for the poor widow's heart is doubly troubled by the extra care needed for the little stranger who arrives after the bread-winner of the family is taken away. But if a man is the means of bringing another to Christ after he himself is dead, there need be no sorrow about that matter. There have been many, many instances in which earnest Christian people have sought the conversion of their relatives or friends; they have prayed for them, and wept over them, and pleaded with them, but all their efforts have been unsuccessful; yet, after their death, the memory of their holy zeal has touched the conscience, of the one who would not yield before, and brought him to Christ. I wish, dear friends, that your godly mother, who is in heaven, and who died leaving her son unsaved, might seem to come to you just now. I ask for no apparition, but that she may be consciously present to your mind, and that her dying words may ring in your ear, for perhaps the remembrance of what she said may be blessed to you even now. When I am taken away, I can but wish that any true and faithful word that I have spoken may still continue to speak to, you from my grave. When good Mr. Payson died, he begged that his people might come and see him, if they wished, before he was interred; and those who did so read these words on his bosom, "Remember the word which I have spoken unto you being yet present with you." It was thus his desire, you see, that he should have posthumous spiritual children, that they should be born to God even though they should seem to be "born out of due time." Ah! you wives, who have been praying for your husbands these many years, never give them up, because they may be brought to Christ when you yourselves will be in heaven. Mothers and fathers, never cease pleading for your children, for they, too, may be brought to Jesus when you are among the angels. Up in one of the northern counties of England, there was a woman, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose prayer went up continually for her husband; but he never entered the house of God, and despised her for doing so. She was accustomed to go to her usual place of worship alone, so far as any human companions were concerned, yet she was not quite alone, for there was a dog that always went with her. This dog curled himself up under the seat, and lay quite still during the service, and then walked home with his mistress. The first Sunday after she was dead, the poor dog went off to the meeting-house as usual, and curled himself up in his old place. He did the same the next Sunday, and the husband, noticing the dog start out so regularly, was struck by its action, and wondered where the dog went now that his mistress was gone; so he thought he would go and see. The dog went before him to his, mistress's old seat, and curled himself up; the man went in after the dog, and sat down in his wife's place, and God helped the minister, that day, to show him that his good works and self-righteousness in which he had always trusted, would not be sufficient for his salvation, and he preached to him the full salvation

of Christ Jesus, and the man believed and lived. Was not he also "born out of due time," for his wife's prayers for him were a all over, and she was gone? Yet was he brought to Christ.

The subject is one upon which I might enlarge indefinitely, but I would rather have you to supply further instances of similar blessing, by urging you to persevere in prayer, you who are seeking the salvation of others.

Some have been "born out of due time" because they have been *converted to God in extreme old age*. I should like to encourage any very aged person who is here, and still unsaved, and to drive away altogether the notion that it is too late to seek the Lord. It never is too late so long as life lasts, and there is the power to repent of sin and to turn to the Lord.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

I will not quote cases, but I have a vivid recollection of a good many persons who have been saved at the age of seventy or eighty. We have had persons, past both of those periods, baptized upon profession of their newly-found faith. The world's proverb says, "It is never too late to mend:" but Christ would tell you, if he were here in bodily presence, that it is never too late for him to mend you, or rather, for him to make you anew, for that is the work he undertakes to do. It is never too late for him to stretch out his pierced hand, and help the man, who is tottering on his staff, to become a babe in Christ. Yet, surely when very old men are born again, they seem to be "born out of due time."

Many of you have not yet come of old age, yet, if God should save you to-night, you would be as those who are "born out of due time," because you are *on the very* brink of the grave. Consumption has laid its cruel hand upon you, and pulled down all your strength. In all probability, you will not be long in this world. You have come out to-night, but you are half-afraid that you have done wrong in coming in the state you are in, with that terrible cough that you have; yet you have not found the Savior. O my dear young friend, wherever you may be, it is a sad, sad thing to be carrying about with you your death-warrant, as you certainly are doing, and yet to have no warrant to believe that, when you die, it will be well with you! Oh, I pray you, do not let Satan tempt you with the idea that, now, when sickness is upon you, there is no hope for you! Come to Jesus, however consumptive you look. Come to Jesus, young man, with that chest that scarcely allows you to breathe. Come unto him, for he will not cast you away. I remember one, whom I met at Mentone, who had gone there in the hope of lengthening his life; but that was quite out of the question, for he was too far gone when he came. He, had two sisters, who were sent for to come to him, for it was certain that he could not live long. He himself was under deep concern of soul, earnestly seeking the Lord, but he could not find him. Day after day, week after week, he had been getting worse and worse, and showing all the signs of his approaching departure; but he could not find peace with God. At last, his sisters came from England. They arrived just in time. They found him very anxious about his soul; that night, they spoke with him of Jesus, and in the morning, early, when they woke, they went to him and he was sitting up in bed, all pale and ghostlike, he said, "Sisters, Christ has forgiven me;" and he fell back on his pillow, and he was gone home. There was an end of his suffering and weakness here below; but the consolation of that last word to them, and of the joy that, beamed from his poor eyes, was enough to make them gladly commit his body to the tomb. "Sisters, Christ has forgiven me." Ah! he was indeed "born out of due time," "born between the very jaws of death; but death's jaws could not close upon him till he had received forgiveness from his Savior. I beseech

any of you, who are in a similar condition to his, do not put off seeking the Lord, but, hasten to find him even now.

Once more, there are some who are "born out of due time" because they are *born all of a sudden*. They suddenly come to Christ; they suddenly find peace; they are suddenly saved. I wish that might happen to some here tonight. There is no need of any set period for this all-important matter; time, is no element in the case. God can work conviction and conversion in a single instant. You know that, sometimes, you see a flash of lightning, and then you wait severed seconds before you hear the thunder; but when a storm is right, overhead, the flash and the clap are simultaneous, and down comes the pouring rain at the same time. And, in like manner, the Lord knows how to send flash of conviction, and, at the same instant, to make his deep voice of mercy to be heard, in the soul, and to send the waterfloods of grace upon the spirit there and then. Why should, he not, do so to-night for any of you who need these blessings.

Now I will tell you the special reason why I chose this text; that is because this is the 29th of February, and it is a Sunday. There is a large number of you who never saw a 29th of February on Sunday before, and there is a larger number still who will never see the 29th of February on a Sunday again. I suppose it will be eight-and-twenty years before that will occur again. So, this is a Sunday thrown in, as it were; it is an odd kind of day, an extra day in the calendar. If you ask our friends of the Greek Church, the Russians, they will tell you that there is not such a day at all, for they keep to the old system of reckoning time. This plan of putting in an odd day, every four years, to make our days square with the sun, is a very good and proper one; still, it is a kind of a day thrown in; and it seemed to me that, if the Lord would convert some souls on this odd day in this leap year, it would make the, 29th of February, that came on a Sunday, to be specially memorable. You will not forget it if it is the day of your conversion; you will say to your children, it may be, eight-and-twenty years hence, if you are alive, "Ah! I recollect when the 29th of February last came on a Sunday, and that was the day when I sought and found the Lord. Mr. Spurgeon said that I was like the apostle Paul, 'one born out of due time,' and so I was; yet I was born in due time, I know, according to the covenant of grace." Oh that the Lord, of his infinite mercy, having given us this special day, would now give us a special blessing, and bring many to himself this leap year! Oh, that all of you, who are still unsaved, would make a leap right, out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, his Holy Spirit enabling you so to do by a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ! And you Christian people, pray for a special and unusual blessing, a 29th of February blessing. Ask God to give it to us, in his infinite mercy, that many and many a soul may be "born out of due time" this very night.

Who shall it be? And where shall the work of repentance begin? Does not somebody over there say, "Lord, let it be me"? There is said to, be a special opportunity of making proposals in leap year; but I can tell you, if you make a proposal to come to Christ, that he has long ago set his heart on you. You would never have thought of proposing to him if he had not first of all ordained to bring you to himself. If you come to him, he will receive you; and oh! in his great mercy, may the Holy Spirit incline you to come to him this 29th of February float falls upon a Sunday.

II. Now I have only two or three minutes left for the second part of my subject,—THE SURE EVIDENCES OF PAUL'S SPIRITUAL BIRTH.

Though Paul was in spiritual sense, "born out of due time," he was truly born again; and those persons, who have been converted at singular times, and; under strange circumstances, have been

really converted. How do we know that Paul was born again, and that he was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

I answer, first, because *he had seen the Lord*. After mentioning those who saw the risen Christ, he says, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." The first, evidence that he was an apostle was that he had actually beheld the Lord. Now, in a spiritual sense, one of the marks of a true believer is that he has seen the Lord. My dear friend, if you have looked to Christ for forgiveness, even though you have only looked to him to-night, and this is an odd night—the 29th of February, yet, if you have by faith seen Jesus on the cross, and truly trusted him, you are as much saved as the man is who believed in Christ fifty years ago. Looking to Jesus is the evidence that we are born again; and happy is everyone who can truthfully say, concerning Christ. "He was seen of me also."

"I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood."

I looked to him; he looked on me; and we were one for ever. I trusted to him, and therefore I am saved. If you can say that from your heart and the Holy Spirit bears witness that what you say is true, you need not raise any question about your new birth. If thou art trusting in Jesus, it is well with thy soul in time and to eternity.

The next evidence of his spiritual birth, which Paul gave, was that *he confessed his sin*. Read the verse following our text: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." See how he confessed his sin and forsook it. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Are you, dear friend; willing now to confess your sin? Do you turn from it with loathing. Do you desire, henceforth, to be delivered entirely from it? Well, then, your repentance is another sure evidence that you are born again. If you have seen Jesus taking your sin upon himself, and suffering its dread penalty; if you have confessed your sin, and by faith laid it upon him as your Sacrifice and Substitute, you are born again, though you may, have been, in a certain sense, "born out of due time."

Next, we are sure that Paul was really born again because *he was thoroughly converted*. Never was there a greater change in any man than there was in him; he never went back to his former life, and he had no hankering to return to it. With him, old things had passed away, and all things had become new; he was, indeed, a new creature in Christ Jesus.

I am sure he was converted, also, because *he praised the grace of God*. Read the 10th verse: "By the grace of God I am what I am." Even when he truthfully says, "I labored more abundantly than they all;" he humbly adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." It is a sure sign of conversion when a man knows that he is saved by grace alone, and does not, attribute it to his own merit, or his own work, but praises and adores the sovereign mercy and grace of God. Have you that evidence, dear friend? Then are you born aright, even though "born out of due time."

And, lastly, Paul proved that he was a true citizen of the New Jerusalem because he became, of all men, *most zealous for Christ*, zealous for the gospel, zealous for the winning of souls, he seemed to try to, do all he could to undo the mischief he had wrought in the days of his unregeneracy, and to, work with both his hands and all his heart to establish and extend the kingdom which once he tried to overthrow. O God, by thy great mercy, cause another Paul to be born in this house of prayer to-night! Thou canst do it; wilt thou not bring to thyself, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, some wild, threatening, blustering, blaspheming hater of Christ, lay him at the dear feet. Of the

Crucified, and cause him to look up and live? Pray for this, dear Christian people. Pray for it to-night, when you reach your homes as well as now; and then we shall have special reason to recollect this 29th of February. Possibly, someone, who will in days to come stand on this very spot preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, will say to you, "Do you remember the 29th of February, 1880? Do you recollect the text, 'One born out of due time'?" I trust that some of you will be here to hear him say, "I recollect it better than any of you do, for that was the night when I was born to God, glory be to his holy name!" Now pray for it with all your hearts, for our *Lord Jesus Christ's* sake. Amen.

John 3:1-18.

If you were sent for to visit a dying man, and you wished to select a chapter which would set the truth before him very briefly and very clearly, you could not make a better choice than this 3rd chapter of the Gospel according to John. So, as we are all dying men and women, let us read it with that same desire, and may the Holy Spirit apply it to our hearts as we read it

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night,—*

That was better than not coming at all. "Better late than never." Better come to Christ in the dark than not come to him at all.

2. *And said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

This was good reasoning on the part of Nicodemus. If he did not at first go as far as he afterwards did, it argued well for him that he went as far as he could. O thou who art troubled with unbelief, believe as much as thou canst; and then cry, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief; and, especially, help me to get rid of it." Confess to Christ what thou dost believe, and he will add more to thy belief.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom, of God.*

He cannot understand what it is; he cannot know anything about it; he cannot see it.

4, 5. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

If the "water" mentioned here relates to baptism,—which I greatly question,—then, certainly, it shows the way of entrance for a believer, publicly, into the kingdom of God. But if it relates to the purifying power of the Spirit of God,—as I believe it does,—then it teaches us that no man enters into the kingdom of God, and becomes a partaker of its privileges,—which is something more than merely seeing it,—except the Spirit of God shall be to him as water purifying him from sin. This is the reason why a man cannot enter into the spiritual kingdom until he is born again, born from above.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh;*

And "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

And only the new creature, which is thus born, can, by any possibility, understand or enter into the possession of the spiritual things which belong to the kingdom of God.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit is mysterious, like the wind, and so is the creature that is "born of the Spirit." The spiritual man often cannot understand himself, he is so mysterious a being;—how then shall he be able fully to comprehend how that wondrous new life is created within him? All we know is that he is a new creation, as much the work of eternal power as our first creation.

9, 10. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? if Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

"These things" that lie at the very root of everything. "Art thou a Rabbi and dost thou not know this?" Alas, good Master, there are still many Rabbis who do not understand this; many, who have taken the highest degree the University can give them, yet do not know in their own souls what it is to be born again!

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

Spiritual men declare that there are spiritual things. They know them, and have seen them; and they have a right to be believed, for they are not liars. They are honest men, and speak what they do know; yet, often, their witness is not received. They need not be surprised at this, for it was the same with their Master.

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

If these elementary truths about the new birth stagger you, what is the use of my going on to anything higher? You would not understand it, or receive it.

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

He alone knows the secrets of God who has been with God, who has come from God, and who is still with God.

14-18. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever, believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever—lasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

God give us, even now, deliverance from condemnation through faith in his dear Son, and prevent our being condemned through our unbelief, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 222, 511.

*Although 1900 is not observed as a Leap Year, the last Sabbath in February is the nearest corresponding date to the Leap Year Sunday in 1880, when the accompanying discourse was delivered. It is therefore issued for reading on that day with the earnest prayer that it may be as profitable to those who read it as it was to those who were privileged to hear it.

Things Unknown

A Sermon

(No. 2664)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 4th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark,

On a Lord's-day Evening, early in the year 1858.

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."—Jeremiah 33:3.

GOD'S PEOPLE WILL NEVER THRIVE on anything less substantial than bread from heaven. Israel in Egypt might live on garlic and onions, but Israel in the wilderness must be fed with the manna that came down from heaven, and with the water that gushed out of the rock, when it was smitten by the rod of God. The child of God, while he is yet in his sins, may, like other men, revel in them, and the pleasures and follies of this world may be his delight; but when he is once brought out of Egypt, by the high hand of God's purpose, and the almighty hand of God's strength, he will never live on anything less than God's promise and God's truth. It is in vain for men to try to remove his doubts and strengthen his self-confidence, it is in vain for men to endeavour to feed him with man-made doctrine or with rationalistic ideas, he must have something that is divine, that has the stamp of revelation upon it; in fact, unless we can come forth every Sabbath with a "Thus, saith the Lord," we are no capable ministers of the New Covenant, and it is not in our power to comfort the Lord's children.

In this chapter we find the prophet Jeremiah in prison; he was shut up in the court! of the prison, and in order to comfort him, the Word of the Lord came to him saying, "Thus saith the Lord." Something less than it may suffice, in the time of our prosperity, to make our hopes buoyant; for, alas! there is enough of the natural man in the Christian to make him rejoice even in carnal things when he is far from being thoroughly sanctified; but when we are in trouble, when affliction and adversity, sickness and suffering, are trying us, there, is no man-made raft upon which our soul can float through floods of tribulation and waves of deep distress, but we must have the divine life-buoy of a "Thus saith the Lord." That is what the Christian wants in every time and in every place, but this is what he more especially needs when he does business in deep waters, and is sorely exercised by affliction, "Thus saith the Lord." My text is a "Thus saith the Lord." "Thus saith the Lord, call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

Here is, first, *a large promise*; here is, secondly, *an implied imperfection*; and here is, thirdly, *a particular application of the promise, making up for that imperfection.*

I. Here is, first A LARGE PROMISE: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee."

Now, if any friend should write us a letter containing such words as those, "Call unto me, and I will answer you," we would naturally understand by them, that whatever we might ask of our friend, he would most assuredly give us; and if he were a person in whose ability and kindness we had confidence, we should not be very slow in availing ourselves of his permission to seek his aid. If we were in debt, we should apply to him for financial help, so that we might be able to meet our

liabilities; if we were tried by sickness, we should apply to him that he might give us medicines to relieve our pains; if our friends had been ungrateful to us, we should most likely call upon him for sympathy; and if our spirits were distressed from some unknown cause, if we believed him to have immense wisdom, we should ask him for some cordial to raise us from our distress.

But how different is the case when we read these words as coming from the lips of God! Then, my brethren, how strange it is that, instead of making use of them, we just read them as a matter of course, but we seldom think of making use of them. "Yes," we say, "it is a very comforting doctrine, that God answers prayer; it is truly consolatory to hear our minister inform us that, whatever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive." But there the matter ends; and, except with a few choice spirits, it remains a matter of doctrine, and not a matter of practice to us. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe," our Master might well say to us; and if he should come into our heart, he would administer a thousand rebukes to us for our slackness in proving the truth of his promise. For God means what he says; and inasmuch as he has said, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee," he intends that his words should stand good; and he wishes us to believe them to be true, and therefore to prove our faith by acting upon them. Alas! the truth is too plain to be disputed, that the most of us, while, in a sense, we receive this doctrine because it is in the Bible, do not so receive it as to put it into practice. In introducing, to your notice, the great general truth, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee," I shall probably have to answer a host of objections and questions.

"Well," says one person, "would you wish us to believe, sir, that whatever we ask in prayer we shall receive?" I must, reply to you with discretion. In the first place, who are you who now ask that question? Are you a child of God, or are you a worldling! Have you been born again, or are you still what you were by nature, without any renewal from the Holy Spirit! For, upon your answer to that question, mine must depend. If you are still without the Spirit of God, and are unrenewed, I would remind you of that passage which says, concerning the wicked, "Even his prayer shall be abomination;" and if your prayer be an abomination, of course you cannot expect God to accept an abomination, and answer it. You must, therefore, know that, you yourself are a partaker of to grace of God, or else this promise does not belong to you.

You grant me that, and then you ask me this question, "Sir, I hope I am a child of God; am I, therefore, to understand that, whatever I shall ask for in prayer, I shall receive of God?" To you also I must answer with discretion; lest, in endeavoring to state a truth, I should utter a falsehood. I must first ask you in what state of heart you are as a child of God. Have you been lately communing with Christ. Have you been constant in the study of his Word? What are your wishes? What are your wants? What are your desires? For, upon your answers to these questions, my reply your enquiry must depend, it may be that you are a Christian; but, nevertheless, though an Israelite, you, like Israel in the wilderness, are asking for meat that you may satisfy your own lust, even as they did; but when they craved for flesh and the Lord sent them quails, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse the Lord came upon them.

We are sure to have our prayers answered, if it is right that they should be answered. Sometimes, even the Lord's people ask for things which it would not be for God's glory to give, nor for their profit to receive, if you should tell your child you would give him anything he liked ask for, you would not for a moment suppose that you included in the promise any absurd request he might make. Suppose he should! ask you for a dose of arsenic, suppose he should request you to kill him, would you fulfill your promise? Certainly not. You would say, "My child, I love you too well to listen to the ravings of your madness; I desire your good too much to grant your absurd request,

and I cannot hearken to you. God says the same: "'Call upon me, and I will answer you,' but I will not always answer you as you wish to be answered. If you ask for a thing which is not fit for you to receive, I will give you something better. I will not give you that very thing; I will hear your prayers, but I will not give you exactly what you ask for, but I will grant you something infinitely superior to the thing itself."

It would be a sad thing if God always heard our prayers, and gave us just what we asked of him. If he always gave us the exact thing we asked for, we should ruin ourselves. You may have heard the story of a woman who had a child who was very ill; and when her pastor called, to see her, she asked him to pray for the child's life, and in the prayer he very properly said, "O Lord, spare this child's life, *if it be thy will.*" The mother interrupted him, and said, "No, I cannot have it so; this child must live. I want you to pray to God that the child may live whether God wills it or no." The minister said, "Woman, you will have cause to tremble on account of this petition. If you ask such a thing as this of God, there will be a curse upon it." Nevertheless, the prayer was prayed; and, twenty years afterwards, that woman, with an aching heart, saw her son riding in a cart to Tyburn, where he was going to be hanged. Better would it have been for him and also for her that he had perished at the breast, and be carried to an untimely grave, than that he should send her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. God, therefore, makes this very kind reservation that, if we ask for ask for absurd things, things which would not be for our profit, he will not grant them.

But the question is put to me again, "Sir, if I ask for a thing which is obviously a good thing, which is most assuredly for my profit, may I be certain, after I have asked in prayer for that thing, that I shall have it?" Once more, I must ask another question. Have you yet learned the heavenly art of believing God? Because, you may be a Christian, you may believe in Christ enough for your soul's salvation; but you may be so small a Christian that you have never yet attained the mountain height of belief in all your Lord has uttered. And, mark you, the promise of an answer to our prayers is only given to our faith. The Lord Jesus Christ put it thus to his disciples: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Now, if you go on your knees in prayer, and ask God for anything, and do not believe that he will give it to you, it may come in God's extraordinary bounty, but it will not come in answer to your prayer. Your prayers shall be answered in proportion to your faith; so, if you believe, and ask for a thing at is for your good and God's glory, you will have it as surely as the promise is a promise and God is God. I have talked with many Christians, and some of my aged friends have talked with far more than I have, but both they and myself can bear witness that we have never yet met with any Christian that could charge God with breaking his promise. We have met with many who have been far from having the faith they ought to have, but we have never discovered one go faithless to God as to charge him with not answering the prayer that was stamped with believing. Whenever there is faith, there will be the answer to the prayer of faith; you will never hear a Christian deny that truth.

It was my privilege, some two years ago, where at Bristol, to visit the Orphan house of Mr. Muller, and I never saw a more striking or startling exhibition of the power of faith than I did there. Mr. Muller supports three hundred orphan children on no resources but his own faith and prayer. When he needs anything, he calls them together, offers supplication to God, and asks that necessities may be supplied; and, although there are three hundred to be fed, to be clothed, and to be housed, and though they have often been brought so low that there has not been a farthing in their coffers, nor a handful of meal in their barrel, when mealtime has come, there has always been abundance of bread in the house in answer to prayer. I shall never forget my interview with that holy man of

God. Some gentleman said to me, "I wish you would ask Mr. Muller a question or two, if you see him, as to the foundation of a new Orphan House which he proposes to build to hold seven hundred more children.. Now, I feel that three hundred is quite enough for one man to care for; I think it is very absurd for him to have seven hundred more; he will never be able to support a thousand. AS to the preset Institution, I believe that generous persons hear about it, and send him subscriptions for it maintenance; but as to his supporting seven hundred more orphans, that is impossible." I replied, "I think there is something in what you say. I will ask him when I see him." But when I saw him, I could not, and dare not, ask him any such questions; and when I saw what a great work he had done by his faith, and began to remark upon it, he said, "Oh! it is only a little thing that I have done; faith could do far more thou that. If it were God's will that I should feed the universe on prayer and faith, I could do ft. If I had more faith, it could be accomplished." I was just going to say that, possibly, a thousand orphans would be more than he could support, when he said, "When I got three hundred children, I began to pray God to send me money to build an Orphan House to hold seven hundred more; and I have already £17,000 sent in for it, although I have never solicited a contribution from anybody but the Lord. I believe God has made me to be here, to be to the world, a proof that he hears and answers prayer." I thought so, too, when I saw that huge building, and the many dear children rising up to praise their God, and singing so sweetly in honor of the good Shepherd, who had gathered them like lambs to his bosom, and had gently folded them there.

Brethren, we do not speak without solid facts to confirm our assertion, when we affirm that, whatever a saint asks in prayer, if he asks in faith, and it is for his own profit, and for God's glory, he will be sure to have it. I daresay you have read Huntington's "Bank of Faith." He certainly gives us too many of those instances for most people to believe, but I fancy there are plenty of persons alive who have had as many answers to their prayers as ever William Huntington had, and who, if they were to write the minutiae of their lives, could bear most solemn testimony to the truth that never could they re, member God being unfaithful to his promises, or their prayers unanswered. This, however, must always depend upon the person himself, for if we ask waveringly, or without faith, we must not expect to be answered. We must not forge that what God implies, when he does not grant unbelieving requests, is just this, "Inasmuch as you have no faith, I have nothing to give you." We must do as the people did at Christmas time in the olden days. It used to be the custom for the poor inhabitants in a village to go round with basins to the rich people in the parish, and beg bread and other victuals of them; and the rule was, that every gentleman was to fill the bowl that was brought to his door. Of course, the wisest amongst the poor folk brought a very large bowl for the Christmas gathering, but those who had little faith in the generosity of their wealthy neighbours took a small bowl, and that was filled; but those who took a big bowl had theirs filled too. So, dear friends, you must always try, in your prayers, to bring a big bowl to God. Bring great faith, and rest assured that, according to thy faith, it shall be done unto thee. If thou has little faith thou shalt have little answer; if thou hast tolerable faith, thou shalt have a tolerable answer; and if thou ht a mighty faith, thou shalt have such a mighty answer that thou shalt wonder at it, yet thou shall feel that it is according to the promise of our text, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee."

II. Now we come to the second part of our subject, and we notice AN IMPLIED IMPERFECTION: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." It is implied that God's people do not know everything.

Did you ever meet with a man who knew everything? I have happened to meet with half-a-dozen such. I once met with a minister who knew all things,—according to his own account, I mean, not

according to mine. He told me when I saw him, that, in the parish where he lived, there were not more than a dozen people who knew the Lord Jesus Christ in truth. I was interested in that man, for I knew a little about him, so I said to him, "Well, who are they?" So he began, "Well, there is myself, and my wife, and my two deacons," and so on, "Oh!" I answered, "the only person I should dispute out of that number would be yourself, because I think you know too much by a great deal; you seem to have climbed up, and to have looked into the secret roll of God's decrees. No child of God would do that. Children do not look into their father's secrets; it is only thieves who do that. I should doubt your claim to be a child of God."

Each of us, at times, meets with an interesting individual who knows far too much, in whose company one always feels uncomfortable. We never introduce any subject, we leave him to do that, because he is the Pope of our circle. He hates Popery, of course; two Popes cannot agree; so, naturally, he has a very strong objection to the Pope of Rome. He himself knows all things. You utter a sentiment; he tells you directly that it is not sound; he knows, of course. You talk about a matter of experience; but he says, "That is not the experience of the living child of God." He is umpire, of course; he knows all about it; he is the judge who ends all strife; he settles everything. Bring him in, his vote is the casting vote, which it were almost profane to controvert. He is King, Lords, and Commons, all rolled into one; he makes the laws, and he fulfils them. He is, in his own sphere, the Autocrat of all Christians. Now, God's children belong to a very different order of beings from this very respectable and very venerable individual; they do not know everything, and they do not pretend to be full of all knowledge. One of the best of them, whose name was Paul, said, "Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark or the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

An old man once met a young one who had been to College about six months; and he said to him, "Do you know much?" Yes," the young man answered, "I am getting on very fast." The old man said, "You will not say that in a year's time, or else I shall have no hope for you." In a year's time, he asked him whether he knew much more than he did six months before, He replied, "Sometimes, I think I know a great deal more, but, at other times, I think I know a great deal less. I have discovered my own ignorance more than ever this last year." Then the old man said, "By the time you have been in college four years, you will confess yourself to be a very great fool;" and when he met him, during to four year, he said, "What do you know now" The student replied, "I think perhaps I know more than when I entered College; but, in my own opinion, I know much less. When I first came, I thought myself competent to give a decisive opinion upon every subject; now, I am obliged to weigh everything before I am able to state anything positively. My own ignorance has been discovered."

Now, depend upon it, dear friends, it will be the same with each of you. We may think, when we first join the church, "We know almost everything." Some people suppose that all the truth is found in to Baptist denomination; others imagine it is all in the Episcopalian, Independent, or Wesleyan denomination, or in whatever sect they belong to; but when we have been members of the Baptist denomination for one considerable time, we discover that there are several faults amongst us; and we think, perhaps, that if we were fashioned according to the Presbyterian model, we might be improved. By-and-by, we find a friend who attends an Episcopal church, where he hears the

gospel very plainly preached by a very earnest clergyman, and we say we think there is something good in the Episcopalians; and the longer we live, the more we find that there is something good in all; and that, after all, we do not know so much as we thought we did, and that our church, though it seemed to be the very model of perfection, is found to be full of infirmities, as well as any other church, and it is not exactly the Church after all.

I repeat, then, the assertion that is implied in the text, that we have, all of us, a certain amount of ignorance and imperfection; for if we knew all things, we should have no necessity for this promise, that God would show us great and mighty things, which we do not know. That, as we are still imperfect, and growing in our knowledge, this promise is exceedingly precious to us. I can scarcely think that I have any person here of that particular clique, who fancy they know everything. If I have, I would say a word to him. There is a certain body of excellent men, who call themselves "God's dear people!" That is just what they are; they are dear to anybody, nobody would think of buying them. If they were to be given away, they would be scarcely worth having. They are God's *dear* people. They hear their minister preach a sermon, made up of the extract of gall and bitterness, and that just pleases them. His people rejoice in that kind of talk, and say that he is a faithful minister. If he were to leave off being bitter, he would not be faithful,—faithfulness, according to their meaning, consists in finding fault with all the world besides. They tell you to go to "Little Bethel," "Rehoboth," or "Bethesda," because there is no truth anywhere else. It is only there that the truth is to be had, and all other congregations are schismatics, whom it is their duty to denounce and persecute with the utmost rigour of the gospel, and you are aware that the utmost rigour of the gospel is worse than the utmost rigour of the law. The rigour of the gospel is more intolerable than even the rule of Draco himself; for those pensions exclude, denounce, and condemn every man who is not to the very turn of a hair's breadth in conformity with their views. To every such person we say, "Dear brother, you are very wise! All hail to you! We will put you in the chair as the marvellous Doctor of Divinity. You are the man, wisdom will die with you; and, while we humbly bow at your feet, we are obliged to say that you do not know everything yet; there are a few things that need to be revealed even to you; and while we keep ourselves at a respectful distance from anything like your superior knowledge, we are compelled to think that you have not yet attained unto perfection, and we cannot admit that you are the only man in all the world who understands and knows the gospel." Well, though our brother will not join with us in saying, "We do not know all things," I think that all who are here present will bow their heads, and each one will say, "Lord, teach me what I do not know; for the little that I know is noticing to be compared with the volumes of thy wisdom which I have not read, and do not yet understand."

III. Now we come to the third head of our subject, which is the best of all. We have here THE PARTICULAR APPLICATION OF THE PROMISE: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

First, we understand this promise to relate to *gospel doctrines*. I confess that when I first preached in a country village as its past, I read all Dr. Gill's "Body of Divinity" and Calvin's "Institutes"; and when I had done that, I thought, "Now! have got hold of *the truth*, I am certain I have; and I can meet all opponents, and if they are not conformed to the views of that most learned man, Dr. Gill, and that excellent confessor, John Calvin, I will soon cut them up root and branch." Well, I begun to preach what I had learned from these great and good men, and I have never been ashamed of having done so, for, as a successor of Dr. Gill, I am not ashamed to endorse his views even now, and to subscribe to the doctrinal statements that John Calvin uttered. However, I soon began to find

out that there was a good deal to be said, after all, concerning some matters that Dr. Gill and John Calvin did not mention, and I found at I was obliged somewhat to stretch my charity, and to take to my heart some brethren who did not quite see all things which those enlightened men saw. And, moreover, I found out that I did not know everything, and that I had a good deal stall to learn, and I find the same thing every day. I hope at all times to hold firmly all the truth I have received. I intend to grasp tightly with one hand the truths I have already learned, and to keep the other hand wide open to take in the things I do not yet know.

Perhaps I have some young man here who has a notion that some minister has got all the truth, or that he himself has embraced all the truth. Now, young man, there are a great many things that you do not know; there are some doctrines you do not understand. If you will wait a little while, and study your Bible more, you will go down on your knees, and say, "Lord, I never knew my own ignorance much as I do now; wilt thou teach me thy truth?" Do we desire to understand the faith of God? Let us not be discouraged. In answer to our prayer, God will show us "great and mighty things" which we do not know now. You are a Christian, yet you do not comprehend the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of effectual calling puzzles you. You are a Churchman, perhaps, yet you do not know anything about these things. You are like a man I met once in a railway carriage. He said he was a High Churchman, and I said I was a High Churchman too. "How can that be?" he enquired, "you are a Dissenter." "But," I replied, "I believe many of the doctrines of your Church." He said, "I think not." "Well," I said "I believe in the doctrine of election, predestination, and so on." "Oh!" he said, "I do not." "But," I said, "they are in your Articles." He said, "I believe the Catechism, but I have not read the Articles." "Then," I rejoined, "I am the better Churchman of the two; you are the Dissenter, and I am the High Churchman. You ought to be turned out of the Church if you do not believe the Articles. They ought to take me, and give me a first-rate living, the make me one of their bishops; for I have read the Articles, and studied them."

A great many people do not know what they believe. No person has a right to say he is a Churchman, till he has read the Prayer-book. You have no right to say you are Wesleyan till you have read Wesley's sermons; and you have no right to say you are a Calvinist till you have read what Calvin believed; and you have no right to say you are a Christian till you have read your Bible, for the Bible is the standard of Christian faith and practice; and when you come to read your Bibles, you will find this one thing out, that your own little views were not quite so wide as the Bible, after all; and you will have to say, "Lord, show me great and mighty things, which I know not now." I am persuaded that neither the Church of England, nor the Wesleyans, nor the Independents, nor the Baptists, have got all the truth. I would not belong to any one of these denominations, for all the land that is beneath the sky, if I had to endorse all that is held by them. I believe that the Church ought to be governed by at Episcopalian Presbyterian Baptist Independency. I believe we are all right in a great many of our doctrines, but that we all have something yet to learn. The doctrine of "man's responsibility" is not to be denied, nor the doctrine of "God's sovereignty" to be disputed. I hope that, some day, we shall all bring our views to the test of the Sacred Scriptures. Then shall we have one Church, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Then shall we know great and mighty things which we know not now. I would persuade you, my Baptist friends, that your system is not perfect, and you members of the Episcopalian Church, that your polity is not altogether without imperfection; and I would entreat you, my friend, though you are a member of an excellent body of believers, however excellent that church may be, not to think it is infallible. Go down on your

knees, and ask God to teach you what you do not know, and to make you better than your creed; or else, in nine cases out of ten, you will not be worth much.

But, next, "great, and mighty things, 'which thou knowest not,' God will show thee *in providence*. A poor man is in trouble; he has not wherewithal to buy daily bread. Let him call upon God, and ask for it; and though he has never seen the Lord thrust out his hand from heaven, or feed him by the ravens, or quench his thirst with water out of the rock, let him go down on his knees, and he will find that there are more wonders in providence than you and I have seen yet. In answer to prayer, we shall see how God's providence, though it is far beyond our ideas, is according to our prayers. There are many Christians who have been in great trouble, and have experienced a most marvellous deliverance in providence. If we have great trouble, let us bring them to our great God; let us cry unto him, and in providence we shall see "great and mighty things" which we know not as yet.

In the next place, very briefly passing over these points, "great and mighty things, which thou knowest not," God will show thee *in matters of Christian experience*. Let us search God's Word, and give ourselves unto prayer, and then, in matters of experience, we shall see "*great and mighty things*" which we know not yet. A Christian is immeasurably beyond the worldling, and there is a possibility of a Christian becoming as much beyond himself as he now is beyond a sinner dead in sins. There is no telling how great he may become even on earth. I do not think we can ever on earth become perfect, but we know not how near to perfection we may come. We may not, whilst on earth, dwell in heaven; but; who can tell how much of heaven may dwell in us whilst we are here? Did you ever sit down and read the Life Of Herbert, or Whitefield, or Haliburton? After we have read such books, we say within ourselves, "What poor worms we are,!" We feel like Robert Hall, who, when a certain minister came to see him, said, "I am so glad to see you! Mr. So-and-so has been here; he is so far above me, that I felt myself to be nothing in his presence, but now I begin to feel myself a man again." Have you never felt, when in the company of some great and mighty man, as if you were nothing at all? When I first read Henry Martyn's Life, I could not refrain from weeping for some hours afterwards, to think how much below such a life as his I was living. Yet you know not but that you may climb where these men did; the steps of the mountain of piety may be steep to look upon, but they are accessible to the feet of diligence. Go on, and you shall yet stand where Moses stood, and behold Canaan from the top of Nebo. Remember that you are as yet upon the lowlands; be not ashamed to acknowledge that you are desirous to climb upwards. Bend you knees, and God will show you in experience "great and mighty things" that you know not yet.

If any man is content with his own experience, it is entirely through ignorance. I will defy anyone to take Rutherford's Letters, and sit down, and after he has read them, to help saying, "Rutherford seems to have been like an angel of God; I am only a man, I never can stand where Rutherford stood." Frequently, when I return home from chapel on the Sabbath evening, I get down George Herbert's book of songs; and when I see how much he loved the Lord, it seems to me as if he had struck upon his harp the very notes that he had heard in Paradise, and sung them all again. Let us not be discouraged, we may yet become Herberts, and Rutherfords, and Whitfields; nay, there is no reason why we should not become as great as the Old or New Testament saints. There is no reason why we should not be, as great as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; for why should not every child of God, in these days, become a mighty a man of faith as was Abraham of old? Let us lead the promise of the text: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

And, to conclude, the same truth holds good *with regard to the universal Church of God*. I do not know whether you may have noticed that the devil, in his wisdom, has just tried to pervert all our services. My heart has been made glad by the opening of Exeter Hall for the preaching of the gospel! Never did my heart so leap for joy as when I heard that our brethren of the Church of England had to begin to preach in Exeter Hall, though I felt sad when those doors were shut against them. Now our joys are blasted, and our happiness is clouded. It appears that, because some have lately endeavoured to turn to good account the earnestness of the people to hear the Word in their own churches and chapels, next Sunday we shall see the lamentable spectacle, in this great metropolis, of a place, not open simply for the preaching of the Word, but actually for a Sabbath Concert.* We shall read of multitudes assembled in a building, the property of one connected with a theatre; we shall hear of people being gathered together, and there will be a person found who will profess to preach the gospel to them, and the "Messiah" will be performed as the great inducement for attracting them. Perhaps there is no person who feels more sorrow than I do that this fearful cloud has fallen upon us. The devil may one day open the Crystal Palace, the Museum, and every other place on Sunday; but the Lord reigneth; and if this nation shall be given up to Sabbath breaking, let us not despair. God sits as the ruler in heaven and, as surely as he is God, he will get the victory. The devil will outwit himself, as he has always done; Satan will fall into his own pit. I hope, however, that the Christians of Great Britain will be very earnest in calling upon God. Pray continually to the Most High, that he will prosper the preaching of the gospel to the multitude; but that he will never allow our entering into unconsecrated places to be twisted and turned to unhallowed uses, and that God will bring forth greater good out of the great evil, and so glorify himself, and thus show us great and mighty things that we know not.

I can only now beseech the Lord to pour his blessing upon each of you. May you be earnest in prayer, and constant in supplication; and if you have never known Christ yet, may he soon be made known to you by the Holy Spirit, and may your prayers be lifted up to heaven that he may show you his salvation, which is one of the "great and mighty things" which you know not now!

*MR. SPURGEON was referring to the arrangements which had been made for a sacred concert and a gospel address combined at the Alhambra Palace. Happily, the minister who took the service, abandoned it after one attempt, being convinced that more harm than good would result from it; but, unhappily, since then, not only have sacred concerts been regularly established, either with or without gospel addresses; but many places are open, on the Lord's-day, for secular concerts, at which there is not even the pretence of any religious service. Our comfort still is, as it was MR. SPURGEON'S over forty years ago, that "the Lord reigneth," and he will get the victory over all his adversaries.

A Day To Be Remembered

A Sermon

(No. 2665)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 11th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 1st, 1882.

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."—Luke 19:9.

OBSERVE, DEAR FRIENDS, that our Lord spoke this sentence to Zacchaeus. Some of us may have fancied that he said it to the objecting people, but he did not. They may have heard it, and their objection may have been answered by it, but the main purpose of our blessed Lord, in uttering those words, was not to answer objectors, but to comfort one who might feel dispirited by their murmuring remark. Therefore, "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

It is always better to comfort believers than to answer cavillers. The cavillers scarcely deserve a reply, for they are pretty sure to find fault again; it is according to their nature to do so. But as for the poor distressed people of God, who gladly receive the truth, and yet have to endure unkind observations, let these be cheered, for has not the Lord himself said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people"? Now, what could give Zacchaeus greater consolation than for the Lord Jesus Christ to bear witness to the fact of his salvation. "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

I fancy that I can hear some of you say, "We should count it the happiest day in our lives if the Lord Jesus would come and tell us that salvation had come to us." But, beloved, you cannot have him come, in the flesh, to say that to you, for he has gone away, to carry on his service elsewhere; among other things, he has gone to prepare a place for you who believe in him. But his Spirit is equally divine, and he is with us as always; and you may have the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirit that you are the children of God. Nay, I trust that you not only believe that you may have this witness, but that you actually have had it—you have had that secret, silent, inward evidence which no man understands but the one who receives it; and you know, in your own soul, that you have passed from death unto life, because the Holy Spirit has sealed that truth upon your heart. Therefore, dear friend, be joyful; yea, be exceedingly glad. If anything can make a man leap for joy, it ought to be the assurance of his eternal safety. If salvation has come to your heart, you ought to be as happy as an angel; I think that there are some reasons why you should be even happier, for an angel cannot know, by personal experience, the bliss of having his sins forgiven. You, who have realized this wondrous blessing, ought to cause the wilderness and the solitary place to resound with the melody of your thanksgiving, and with the music of your grateful delight you should make even the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Oh, what bliss it is to be assured by the Holy Spirit himself that you have passed from death unto life, and that salvation has indeed come unto you! May many of you enjoy that bliss from this very hour!

Now let us come directly to the text. "This day," says Christ, "is salvation come to this house." You will not forget the outline of the sermon, for it is very simple, and one that can be easily remembered. First, *This day*,—*what*? Secondly, *This day*,—*why*? Thirdly, *This day*,—*why not*?

I. First, THIS DAY,—WHAT? What about this day?

Christ says, "This day is salvation come to this house." He seemed to cut that day out of all the rest of time, and to say concerning it, "This day,—this particular day,—on this very day,—is salvation come to you." Then, let this day be a holy day, and let it be a holiday; let it be remembered for many a year; yea, let it be recollected throughout all time and throughout eternity, too: "this day."

You know that there are some people who observe certain days which God has not ordained to be kept in any special manner. The Galatians did so, and therefore Paul wrote to them, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." We do not, judge those who act in a similar way to-day; but, still, like Paul, we are afraid of them; that is to say, we fear they are mistaken in what they do. But there are some days which God commanded to be observed.

The first was, the day when the work of creation was finished, concerning which we read, "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." The completion of the creation, when, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," deserves to be remembered. And does not the new creation also deserve to be remembered? When the Lord creates in a man a new heart and a right spirit, shall we not say, one to another, "This day—this joyful day—this divine day—this, new creation day—is a day to be observed very specially"?

It is clear, from the practice of the apostles, that the Lord intends us to observe the first day of the week, because that was the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead, the day of the completion of our redemption; and well may we commemorate the complete redemption even more than the complete creation. Shall not each saved man specially celebrate the day when he was redeemed from sin? Shall he not count it worthy to be observed, with holy rites of preaching, praise, and prayer, and to be had in grateful remembrance as long as he lives? Each believer can say of the Lord's day, "This day, the Lord redeemed my soul out of the land of the enemy, and set me free for ever." God has appointed but one day to be kept sacred above all others; that is the Lord's day. Your Christmas days, and your Good Fridays, and all such seasons, are only observed by man's ordinance; but the Sabbath is ordained of God, and that is to be observed as the emblem of rest. Now, surely, when a man comes into rest, and "we which have believed do enter into rest," then that day should be specially observed by him. It should become a Sabbath unto the Lord throughout the man's whole life,—that happy day in which salvation came to him. Let, then, "this day" stand as a special day in your calendar; mark it with a red line, if you like; or mark it with a golden seal, and let it be had in remembrance evermore.

Our Lord said to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house." From these Words I learn, first, that *salvation is a speedy blessing*. It can come to a house in a day; nay, more, it can take possession of a man's heart in a day; nay, to go further, this great work can be "accomplished in a single moment. I suppose that the new birth is actually a thing which requires no appreciable period of time;—a flash, and it is done. If a man be dead, and he is restored to life:, there may be, in certain respects, a gradual operation upon that man, and some time may elapse before he is able to walk; but there must be a certain instant in which there is life in the man, whereas, a moment before, there was no life in him. The actual quickening must be a thing that is instantaneous, so that the working of salvation in a man may not only be performed this. day, or this hour, or this quarter of an hour, but this minute, or even this second. Between light and darkness there is usually

a period of twilight, and so there is in the soul; but, even in twilight:, there is a measure of light, and there must be a moment when the first real beam of light begins to smite the ebonite darkness. So there must be a moment when grace first enters the soul, and the man, who before was graceless, becomes gracious. I think this is a good point to be remembered. You poor deluded souls, who hope to save yourselves by your own works, will have to keep on throughout your whole lives at that useless occupation, and even when you lie dying, you may be sure that you are not saved if you have been trusting to your own works. But he that believes in Christ Jesus is saved there and then, and he can joyfully sing,

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

This is a blessed fact, that salvation can come to a soul this very hour; nay, as I have already reminded you, long ere the hand of that clock shall have reached the end of this hour, salvation may have entered into many hearts that are in this place, as truly as it entered into the house of Zacchaeus.

Next, I learn from our text that *salvation is a discernible blessing*: "This day is salvation come to this house." Christ could see it, so that it was something which could be seen. Ay, and salvation was also seen by Zacchaeus himself, and the fruits of it were soon seen by those who were in the house with him. Do not suppose that a man can be saved, and yet know nothing about the great change that has been wrought in him. It is not every man who can say for certain that he is saved, for faith is a thing of growth and assurance may not come at once; but when a man is really and completely saved, he has but to use the proper means, and he may become absolutely certain of it. God the Holy Spirit is willing and waiting to give the full assurance of faith and of understanding to those who seek it at his hands.

Next, *salvation is a perfect blessing*: "This day is salvation come to this house." Well, but only as late as yesterday, that man had not even Seen Jesus. Half an hour ago, he was climbing a tree, like a boy might have done, with no wish but just to get a sight of Jesus; and, now, is that man saved! "Yes," says Christ, "this day is salvation come to this house." "But, surely, you don't talk as positively as that concerning a man who came here to-night unsaved, and who has just trusted in Jesus. You must mean that he has reached a hopeful stage in his experience, and that, after several years, he may perhaps come to be really assured that he is a saved man." I mean nothing of the sort; I mean just what the text implies, which is that, the moment the Lord Jesus Christ crossed the threshold of the house of Zacchaeus, his sins were forgiven him, his heart was renewed, his spirit was changed, and he was a saved man. "But," someone asks, "is anybody ever saved before he dies?" Yes, certainly. Were those persons dead of whom Paul wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." They were living men and women, yet the apostle said that they were saved, and so they were. And, at the present moment, here are hundreds of thousands of believers in Jesus, upon the face of this earth, who are as truly saved now as they will be when they stand before the burning throne of God "without spot, or wrinkle or any such thing." In God's judgment, by virtue of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on whom they are resting by faith, they have been delivered from condemnation, they have escaped, from the dominion of sin, and, in a word, they are saved. So, you see dear friends, that salvation is a perfect blessing.

Notice, next, that *it is a much-containing blessing*. A man who believes in Christ is saved directly, but he does not fully know how much that word "saved" means yet. It is like a big box

that comes into the house, and you begin to open it, and to take out first one thing and then another. "There," you say, "that is all." "Oh, no!" says somebody, who looks more carefully, "here is another packet." "Well, then, that is surely all; there is nothing but straw now at the bottom of the box." You put your hand in, and you cry, "Why! there is something more, and something more; what a boxful it is!" And what a boxful salvation is! You have no idea what there is in it, not only the pardon of sin, but justifying righteousness; not only that, but regeneration, a new heart, and a right spirit; not only that, but sanctification, adoption, acceptance, power in prayer, preservation, perseverance, victory;—yea, we are to be more than conquerors through him that hath loved us;—and all that is in the box. Ay, and more too; for we are to have a safe and happy departure out of this world, and an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God our Father. All that is in the box; and all that had come into the house of Zacchaeus when the Lord Jesus Christ came there; and you also have all that if you have Christ, for it is all in Christ. You know how he said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." You will never get to the bottom of that box which bears the name "salvation." However great your needs may be, you may keep on taking out of it all that you require, and still there shall be more left; or, to change the figure, salvation is a springing well, from which the more you draw the more there is remaining, for drawn wells are always the sweetest, and usually the fullest. So, bring your buckets to this great well of gospel grace that is springing up at your very feet. Thus, you see that salvation is an all-containing blessing.

And, next, *it is a spreading blessing*, for salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus,—not to himself only, but to his wife, his children, and his Servants, I hope it means. I never like to have the servants left out, though I am afraid that they often are. You servants who live in Christian families, mind that you do not get left out; for, remember that Noah, although he was a good man, did not get a servant into the ark with him and his family. Recollect Lot also, he was a good man of a very poor sort, and he only got his two children out of Sodom, and no servant went with them. It is a sad thing when you live and labor in the midst of Christian people, and yet you yourselves remain unsaved. I hope and believe that, in the case of Zacchaeus, all in his house were saved when salvation came there.

But, once more, the salvation which had come to the house of Zacchaeus, was *an abiding blessing*, for I never read that it went away again. If salvation comes to a man's house, it comes to stay there, as Christ said to Zacchaeus, "I must abide at thy house." I can never believe in a man being saved for a time, and then falling from grace, and having to begin all over again. If he does not hold on his way to the end, it is clear that he never was really saved at all. As I have often told you, I can understand a man being regenerated; that is, being born again; but then some people tell us that it is possible for him, afterwards, to fall away from grace. But what is to become of him the next time? Why, I suppose that he must be re-regenerated—born again and again; but I never read, in Scripture, anything of the kind. A man may be born again once, but he cannot be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again. That cannot be; when the work of regeneration is done once, it is done for ever. The work of man comes to an end, but the work of God fails not. That which is born of God is as immortal as God himself; the new life, that comes into the converted man from God, cannot die. How often do we ring in the ears of our friends those glorious words of our Lord, "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 me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Happy is the man to whose house salvation comes, for it comes to stay world without end.

That must suffice for the first head, This day,—what?

II. Now, secondly, we are to think of another aspect of the subject, that is, THIS DAY,—WHY? Why had salvation come to the house of Zacchaeus that day?

I answer, because, that day, *Zacchaeus was called by effectual grace*; and whenever effectual grace comes to anyone, it brings salvation. "Wherefore, brethren," as Peter says, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," for these are the "things that accompany salvation." If you are sure that you are called of God, you may be quite certain that you are saved, for "this day"—the day in which a man is effectually called by grace, this day does salvation come to his house. Look, dear friends, God chose his people in his everlasting purpose, but salvation did not come to their houses that day. They knew nothing of it at that time, for they were not then born. Christ redeemed his people when he died on the cross, but salvation did not come to their houses that day, for the most of them were not then in existence. But, in the fulness of time, the gospel was preached to them, and they heard it; yet, in all cases, salvation did not come to their houses that day, for though they heard it, they refused it. But the moment that effectual grace says to anyone, "To-day I must abide at thy house," that grace at once gains admission, and salvation comes there and then to that man's house. You remember how the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: "Whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." These great blessings are joined together, like the links of a chain, and you cannot pull them asunder. There is the calling that fits into the justification, and the chain is so made that the two links never can be separated. And then justification fits into glorification in such a way that you cannot possibly part them. It is no use for anyone to try to separate them. The devil may pull and hammer as much as ever he likes, but all his efforts will be in vain. I have sometimes likened that passage in Romans to a vast suspension bridge between earth and heaven: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." If you get your foot firmly resting on that great plank of effectual calling, you may be quite sure that you will be able to cross all the rest of the bridge, and will most certainly reach the other side, and be "for ever with the Lord."

But how do we know that Zacchaeus was really called? I answer in such a way that you may know whether you also are called or not. The call of Zacchaeus was an effectual call, first, because *it was a personal call*. He was up in the sycamore tree, and he heard Christ call, "Zacchaeus." "Why!" he said to himself, "That is my name; he is calling me." "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down." "Then he can see that I am up here; his description exactly fits my case." Now, when you come and hear me preach the gospel, I try to put the truth before you in a clear and very pointed manner. Some people say that it is wrong to be personal in preaching, but I always try to be as personal as ever I can. Yet I know that many of my hearers pass on to their neighbors and friends what I say to them. "Oh! that just fits Mrs. So-and-So," says somebody. No, my dear sir,—it is meant for you, but you will not take it home to yourself. But when the Lord Jesus Christ himself calls, then the man says, "Dear me! I do not believe that the preacher can see me right away here, yet he is speaking straight at me; I am sure that he is. How singular! He just mentioned something

that cannot have occurred to anybody but me; he has exactly described my case." Those are the times when God is about to bless the soul,—when the man feels himself picked out from the rest of the congregation, and the gospel sharpshooter is just covering him with his rifle of grace. I pray that the blessed bullet of the gospel may find its billet in the very center of your heart, and bring you down at the feet of Jesus as a weeping penitent: "Zacchaeus!" The Lord knew that was the name of the man up the sycamore; and he also knows your name and your character; and when he means to call you by his effectual grace, he will hold your photograph up, and make you say, "Yes, that is my portrait; there is nobody else exactly like that."

Next, *it was a royal call*. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "To-day I must abide at thy house." One of our proverbs says, "Must is for the king;" and when *the* King speaks, he must be obeyed. We who are his ministers try to be very pressing and urgent; but when the Master himself utters the call, where: the word of that King is there is power. I hope he is saying to someone here, "To-day I must abide in thy heart." Now you have come to the point when you also will have to say, "I must." There must be no turning back now, dear friend; you must not say to Christ, "Go thy way for this time." No; but you must say, "This time present, is the time when I also will say 'must' as Christ says it to me." That is an effectual call when it comes as a royal mandate, a warrant from the King: "I must."

Then, next, *it was a call which produced immediate obedience*. The Lord said to Zacchaeus, "Make haste, and come down;" and we read, "He made haste, and came down." I think I see him coming down that tree a great deal faster than he had gone up; he had not moved at such a rate as that for a long while; but he scurried down, for he was told to make haste by One whose command compelled him to obey. When the Lord Jesus Christ calls any of you effectually, you will not put off your decision till the next morning; you will not say, "I will wait till I can get home and pray;" you will not even say, "I will wait till the end of the service, and then talk with a Christian person;" but your prayer will be, "Lord, help me to look to Jesus now. I yield myself up to thee this very instant. I am in a hurry about it. Lord, I am making haste to get to thee; make haste to come and save me. I would not delay a single second longer. I want to be thine alone, and thine at once." That is a mark of effectual calling, when immediate obedience is given to the call.

Another mark in the case of Zacchaeus was, that *it was joyful obedience*; "He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." Oh! the joy of the heart that receives Christ when Christ himself does really come to the soul! The moment I believed in Christ, I wanted to shout "Hallelujah"; and if I had done so, I think that I might have been forgiven. The moment one believes in Christ and knows that his sin is all gone, what extravagance would be extravagant under such circumstances! Is not the man justified in being joyful when at length his iniquity is blotted out, and his transgression is covered? It is a mark of effectual calling when we receive Christ joyfully.

In the case of Zacchaeus, observe that *his obedience was complete*, for Christ said, "To-day I must abide at thy house;" and "he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully" at his house, for the people murmured because Christ had gone to be his guest. Now, dear friends, will you also receive Christ? That is the point. Are you willing to let him come unto you, and be your salvation? Are you eager that he should come? Do you beg him to Come? Depend upon it, he will come to you when you are ready to receive him; but mind you do not trust for salvation to anything else or anyone else but Christ. Be satisfied with nothing but the everliving Savior to be your Savior from first to last.

There was yet one more mark of the effectual calling of Zacchaeus, and that was that *he received Christ in a spiritual sense*, for he did not only take him into his house, but he took him into his heart. I know that he did so because he began at once to purge his heart by driving out covetousness. That was a splendid way of getting rid of it when he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor?" Then he began to drive put his former grasping habit, for he said, "And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." That was clear evidence that he meant to receive Christ, in all his holy, gracious teaching, no merely as a man and a stranger; but, spiritually, as his Master, his Ruler, his Teacher, his Guide,—in a word, as his Savior.

III. Now, lastly, THIS DAY—WHY NOT?

And now I change the day altogether, for I mean this very day when I am speaking to you, this first of October in the present year of grace 1882. "This day." This day,—why not. Why should we not, "this day," give ourselves to Christ. I have tried to think of any reason why a man should not give himself up to the Lord Jesus Christ this day, and I cannot find one. Then, why should he give himself to Christ this day, on this particular day I think I know several reasons why he should do so.

First, *it is late enough*. Surely you do not want to wait any longer, How old did you say you are, friend? Seventy-six? Eighty-six? What! as old as that, and not yet saved? You do not need one like me, so much younger, to urge you to speedy decision. Or did you say that you are not more than my own age,—not yet fifty? Well, I find it is quite late enough for me. There are certain influences and sensations creeping over me, which make me realize that I am somewhat different from what I used to be, and I expect it is the same with you. I think it is getting rather late in life for you to be still undecided. Perhaps some younger person says, "But I am only one-and-twenty." Well, that is late enough to be without Christ; it is a thousand pities that the devil should have had one-and-twenty years of your life. I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ when I was fifteen, but I wish it could have been fifteen years before. Oh, that I had known and loved him as soon as I knew an thing, and had lisped his name with the first words I ever uttered! I think every Christian will say the same. Whatever our age is, the time past may well suffice to have wrought the will of he flesh. Do not you think so, my friend? Have not you had quite enough of sin? What profit have you ever received from it? It is surely quite late enough for you to receive Christ as your Savior.

And, further, *it is late enough in the year*. It seems to me, when the leaves are falling all around you, as if they all said to you, "We all do fade as a leaf." Is it not fully time to seek the Lord? I know of no season that seems more suited for pensive thought than just now when the year seems to be weeping itself into its tomb, and burying itself amid falling leaves. Now is the time to yield yourself to the Lord; there cannot be a better period than just now,—ere yet the year is fully gone.

The mercy is, dear friend, that, though it is quite late enough, *it is not too late for anybody here*. There is yet time for you to seek the Lord. It is a pity to have put the Lord off until you yourself have got into the sere and yellow leaf; but yet there is time to turn unto him. What! have you reached the eleventh hour of life? It is late, it is very late; but, still, it is not yet too late. It is not yet too late even if you are to die this week; and there are some out of this great company who will, I suppose, pass into the unseen world this week. Dear friend, I know not who you are, but you who stand nearest to your eternal destiny, it is not yet too late even for you. I pray you, clutch at once at the great mercy now offered to you. God help you so to do!

Every week, I have to hear of some out of our number who have passed away. There have been some this last week, and some whom I certainly thought we might have had with us for a long time.

They were, apparently, in good health, yet now they are to be buried at the beginning of the week, for they have gone from us quite suddenly. And why may not some of you be the next to be taken! Do not postpone your decision any longer; I would that we could say to-night, "This day, October 1st, some soul did receive salvation. Let the recording angel mark it down." The harvest is not quite over, though I thought it was. We down south have almost forgotten it, but there is a farming friend up-with us to-day, who said to me, "We have not finished our harvest, for we have not got the beans in yet." So, you see, the harvest is not quite over, but I do not want you to have to say, The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." I would like to get some of you to come in with the beans, just with the last crop. Oh, that you might be brought to Christ just at this fag end of the harvest! The Master is willing that you should come to him even now, so do not delay. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

Remember, also, that *to-day is gospel time*. Still is Christ preached unto you, still is the door of mercy set open before you, still is the cry "Come" uttered by the Spirit, and the bride, the Lamb's wife echoes it, "Come." Still the water of life is freely flowing for all who are willing to receive it.

Recollect, too, that *this is praying time*. You are still on praying ground; a prayer will find God yet. A traveler tells us that, when he was in the East, he saw the procession of a Sultan passing through a certain city. The monarch was there, all bedizened with gems and every kind of barbaric ornament, and surrounded by his guards. There was a poor wretch who wanted to get a petition to the Sultan, and he did not know how to manage it. He had no money with which to bribe the officials, and he could not force his way through the armed men; so, in his desperation, he got near enough to throw the petition down at the monarch's feet, but one of the soldiers stuck a spear through it, and he held it aloft, and that was the end of it, for the Sultan took no notice of the incident, he was much too great a man to attend to the petition of his poor subject. It is never so with God. Cast your petition, now you may, at his dear feet, he will answer it, and send you on your way rejoicing.

You are not only on praying ground, for to-night seems to me to be a very auspicious season, for it is *communion time*. God's people are presently coming together around his table to remember Christ. Will not you also remember him? We are about to receive Christ spiritually through the emblems of bread and wine which will et him forth to us. Why should not you also receive Christ, in a spiritual fashion, by faith, as your Savior? Oh, that you would press through the throng, and bow at the feet of Jesus Christ, our Lord! If you do so, he will accept you, and again it shall be said, "This day is salvation come to this house." God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Luke 18:35-43; and 19:1-10.

Luke 18:35-39. *And it carne to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericio, a certain blind man sot by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace:*

"Hush!" they cried; "how can you disturb the blessed Master's discourse? Be quiet."

39, 40. *But he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood,—* Prayer held him fast. Here is a stationary Savior, held in his place by the cries of a blind man. Oh, the power of prayer! It stays the onward march of the Son of God: "Jesus stood,"—

40, 41. *And commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

It is a great thing to know what you really do want. There are some persons who are so blind that they do not know that they are blind; and because they say, "We see," therefore is their blindness the more intense. I fear that there is many a person, who professes to pray, yet who, if Christ should come into the room, and say, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" would not know how to answer the question. This man did; and he said, very briefly, and very clearly, but in a very full way, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

42. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight:*

Often, the blessing from Christ's lip is the echo of the prayer which fell from ours. The blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Echo answered, "Receive thy sight."

42, 43. *Thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight,—*

See, how the prayer, the word of Christ, and the immediate effect of it, all tally. "That I might receive my sight." "Receive thy sight." "He received his sight."

43. *And followed him,—*

Christ likes not blind followers: "and followed him,"—

43. *Glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

They seemed to be greatly impressed, but we shall see that some of them soon spoke in another fashion.

Luke 19:1 *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.*

There was to be a miracle at each end of Jericho. Long before, it had been cursed; now it was to have a double blessing.

2. *And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus which was the chief among the publicans,—*

That is, tax-gatherers—

2. *And he was rich.*

As they often were, for they farmed the taxes, and then squeezed every farthing they could out of the people.

3. *And he sought to see Jesus who he was and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.*

That was a fortunate thing for him. We need not all wish to be so tall as some people are. Perhaps Zacchaeus would not have gone up the sycamore tree if he had been a tall man; but the whole story turns upon something which many regard as a disadvantage: "he was little of stature."

4-7. *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured,—*

There is a great contrast between this verse and the last one in the previous chapter: "All the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God." Here it is, "When they saw it, they murmured." Yet, very likely, many of them were the same people; certainly, they were the same sort of people that we hear of every now and then: "When they saw it, they all murmured." There are far too many of that kind about still; we do not quite know who they are, nor where they are, they have a sort of nondescript, mysterious existence that finds expression in the words, "They say so-and-so and so-and-so." They have been saying something about the minister, something about the Sunday-school, something about the Bible-class, something about your work and mine. You see, there always were such people about, and they always would talk, and their talk often took the form of complaining: "When they saw it, they all murmured,"

7. *Saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

If he had not done so, he could not have gone anywhere, for all men are sinners. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But this man was a sinner above others, for he had sold himself to the hated Roman power, and was authorized to collect the conqueror's taxes from his own people; so, of course, in the estimation of the Jews, he was the worst kind of sinner that could be found anywhere.

8. *And Zacchaeus stood,—*

And he did not talk at all like a sinner,—

8. *And said unto the Lord; Beheld, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;—*

Some of those saints, as they reckoned themselves, had not done anything like as much as that: "The half of my goods I give to the poor;"—

8. *And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

Which restitution was an act of justice; and when charity and justice go hand in hand, what more can we expect of men?

9, 10. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

And that day he had both sought and saved one of the lost ones, for he had found Zacchaeus up in the sycomore tree, and he had brought salvation to the tax-gatherer's house. May he do the same for many who are here!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 408, 658.

The Sorrowful Man's Question

A Sermon

(No. 2666)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 18th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 8th, 1882.

"Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"—Job 3:23.

I AM VERY THANKFUL that so many of you are glad and happy. There is none too much joy in the world, and the more that any of us can create, the better. It should be a part of our happiness, and a man part of it, to try to make other people glad. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," is a commission which many of us ought to feel is entrusted to us. If your own cup of joy is full, let it run over to others who have a more trying experience. If you yourself are privileged to have the flashing eye, and the elastic step, and the bounding heart, be mindful to speak words of good cheer to such as are in bonds. Feel as if you were bound with them; and try to revive their drooping spirits. That is what I am going to aim at to-night, so you will excuse me if I bid "good-bye" for a while to you joyous ones, and just seek after those who have no such delight as you now possess; but who are, on the contrary, suffering from extreme depression of spirit. Sometimes, we must single out the wounded ones of the flock; that is what I am about to do; yet I feel sure that, while some few will be distinctly sought after, there will be something that may be of use to the many who are in a less sorrowful condition. The ninety-and-nine shall get their full portion although the shepherd goes specially after the lost one.

The question of our text was put by Job when he first opened his mouth in the extreme bitterness of his anguish: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" His case was so sad and so trying that life itself became irksome to him. I suppose that by "light" here he means the power to see the light, the life which lives in the light. "Why," he asked in his agony, "is that continued to a man when God hath filled him with sorrow upon sorrow!" The verses preceding our text are to the same effect: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave." The patriarch was weary of living; and perhaps we shall not wonder so much at his pitiful lamentation if we recollect the extreme distress into which he had been brought. He had lost all his property; by stroke upon stroke, all his wealth had been taken away from him. He might have borne that if it had been his only loss; but close upon the heels of it had come sore bereavement. His happy children, for whom he daily cared, and whom he had tenderly loved, were all destroyed in a moment, while they were feasting in the house of one of their brothers. The calamity seemed all the greater because it came in the very midst of their joys. Then as if that was not trial enough, Job was himself smitten from head to foot with sore boils. If you have ever seen a person in that condition, I am sure that you must pity him. There is a dear friend of ours, now with God, whom I visited when he was in much the same state as that. Perhaps he had not to endure quite all that Job suffered, but something

exceedingly like it had befallen him. The irritation, the pain, and the depression of spirit that come with that particular form of disease, all tend to make us treat very gently the petulant expressions of Job. We may not excuse them, but only he amongst us that is without; fault may take up the first stone to cast at him. I will warrant that, if we had suffered as he did, and been brought to poverty, and left childless, and then been tortured as he was from head to foot, and even his wife rendering him no comfort, but, on the contrary, adding to his grief and woe, we might have said even worse things than Job did. For remember, dear friends, that he said nothing against God in the time of his deepest sorrow. He cursed most vehemently the day of his birth, and wished that he had never existed, or that he might speedily pass away to sleep with the generations that are dead; and he used unwise and foolish expressions, but any of us might have used far worse words if we had been in his case, so we will not condemn him, but we will see what lessons we can learn from his experience.

I think that Job's experience teaches us the very small value of temporal things. To have spiritual blessings, and to enjoy them, is one thing; but to have earthly things, and to enjoy them, is quite another thing. You may have an abundance of them, and yet they may be utterly tasteless to you, or they may even be bitter as gall to you, and you may curse the day that gave them to you. I am sure that it is so, because Job speaks thus concerning life, which is the chief of all earthly things. It is true, although Satan said it, "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" yet we may be brought into such a condition that we may wish that we had never been born. Life itself may become, so wearisome to us that we may even wish to escape from it, that we may be at rest, as we hope. Job had once enjoyed every comfort that heart could desire, and he still had this blessing of life left to him; but even that had become curdled and soured, the last thing to which a man usually clings had become distasteful and disgusting to him, so that he set no store by it, but longed to get rid of it. O beloved, seek eternal treasures, for there is no moth that can eat them, no rust can mar them, no fermentation or corruption can injure them; but, as for the things of time and sense, if you do possess them, use them as though you had them not, and never make them your gods, for they are but as a shadow that passeth away in a moment. They come, and they are gone; and if you make idols of them, the Lord may permit you still to retain them, but take away from you all power to enjoy them. You may have abundance, and yet not be able to relish even the bread you eat, or the drink that refreshes you. You may have a loss of health, or a loss of all power to be happy, though everything that men think to be the cause of happiness may be laid abundantly at your feet.

With this as a preface, I now come to my text, and ask you to notice, first, *the case which raises the question*, secondly, *the question itself*; and, thirdly, *answers which may be given to the question*: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"

I. First, notice THE CASE WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"

That is to say, "Why does God permit men to live *when their souls are under deep depression and gloom*? Why does he not let them die at once? When their days are spent in weariness, and their nights yield them neither rest nor refreshment,—when they look upward, and see nothing to give them hope, or onward, and behold nothing but that which is even more dreadful than the present,—why is it that God continues life to those who are in such sad circumstances?" Well, dear friends, if life were not continued to any but those who are bright of eye, and fleet of foot, and joyous of heart, how few would live! And if, the first time that darkness fell upon a man's pathway, he were to be permitted to die, well, then, the whole population of the globe would soon be swept away. If our murmuring the petulance demanded that we should die rather than suffer, then we

should soon pass away, and be gone. But that is the case which is supposed in Job's question, if a man find, himself entirely in the dark, if God's presence be completely hidden from him, and he can find no joy in anything whatever, and his spirit is tossed to and fro with worries and perplexities, the question is, "Why does he continue to live?"

Yet, further, the man here described is in such trouble that *he can see no reason for to trouble*. His "way is hid." Job could not perceive, in his own case, any cause for the distress into which he had been plunged. as far as he knew, he had walked uprightly. He had not sinned so as to be now suffering the result of his sin. He had not committed a crime, else he would have understood the punishment when it came upon him. He looked back upon all that he had done, and he could not, at his first glance, see in himself any cause for his affliction. Nor, indeed, dear brethren, was there any cause why all these things should have happened to Job by way of punishment, for the inspired record concerning him is that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."

Even the devil himself, who kept a sharp look-out with his malicious eye, could not find any fault whatsoever with which he could charge Job. He deserved the character which God had given to him, though Satan did insinuate that he had acted from interested motives, he asked, "Doth Job fear God for nought." That question has always seemed to me to be a very crafty one, yet very foolish, for if it could have been proved that Job had feared or served God for nought, then the devil would have said at once that God was a bad master, and that there was no reward for those who served him. But now that he finds God putting a hedge of roses round about Job, and sheltering him on every side, he declares that Job was only pious because he found it profitable. He could find no other fault with him; and even that accusation was not true.

Job, on his part, remembered how he had fed the widow, and succoured the fatherless,—how he had acted justly towards his fellow-creatures in the midst of an unjust generation, and how, amidst a mass of idolaters, he had worshipped God, and God alone. He had never kissed his hand in adoration to the moon, as she walked along her shining way in all her queenly brightness, nor had he ever bowed himself down to the host of heaven, as nearly all around him had done. He stood alone, or almost alone, in that age, as a true and faithful servant of Jehovah; yet his sorrows and trials were multiplied. And so, his way was hidden, he was hedged in by God, and he could not make it out. You know, dear friends, that it is often a great aggravation of our troubles when we do not know why they come. A man, when he is ill, usually wants to know what is the nature of his disease, and how he came to be attacked by it. When we see a person suffering, we generally ask "Where did you catch that cold?" or, "What was it that brought on that congestion?" We always like to know the cause of the complaint, and Job wanted to ascertain the reason for his trouble, but he could not find it out, and this rendered it all the more mysteriously grievous to him, and therefore he enquired, "Why do I continue to live, when I have come into such darkness as this?"

It was equally trying to Job that *he did not now what to do*. There seemed to be nothing that he could do. He was stripped of all his earthly possessions. Those ashes where he sat formed his uncomfortable couch, and the sole property that remained to him was a potsherd, with which, in his desperation, he began to scrape himself because of his sore boils. What could he do in such a case as that? There was no physician there to cure him of his sad complaint.

True, there were his three friends; but all that they could do, or, at least, the best thing they did, was to sit still, and say nothing. When they opened their mouths, it was only to pour vinegar into

his wounds, and to increase his agony tenfold. What could poor Job do under such circumstances. His very helplessness tended to increase his wretchedness.

Am I addressing anyone who is in that kind of perplexity I think I hear someone moaning, "I don't know which way to turn. I have done everything I can think of, and I cannot tell what is to come next. I sit in darkness, and can see no light. Why I am brought to this pass, I cannot tell; or what is the reason for it, I cannot make out anyhow. If I could light upon some great and grievous fault which had brought me where I am, I could understand it; but as it is, I am in thick Egyptian night about it all, and I know not what to do. Why does a man continue to live when his way is thus hidden, or hedged up." If that is the way you talk, you are in very much the same sort of plight that the patriarch was in when he uttered the mournful question which forms our text.

What was still worse to Job was that *he could not see any way out of his trouble*. He said that God had hedged him in, not with a hedge of roses, but with a barrier of briars. Whatever he tried to do, he found himself obstructed in doing it. And there are men, now in this world, whose sorrows are the more grievous because everything they do to alleviate their distress seems only to increase it. Their efforts are all fruitless; they are like men who have become entangled in a bog; the more they struggle to get out, the deeper they descend; They strive to their very utmost, but it is all in vain; they rise up early, they sit up late, and they eat the bread of carefulness mingled with their tears; but there is a blight on all that they do. Nothing prospers with them; they are at their wits end. Then they begin to cry, "Oh, that we had never been born, rather than that we should have been born to such trouble as this! 'Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?'"

I have thus stated the case which gave rise to Job's question, and I should not wonder if I have, at the same time, stated the case of some who are here. Do not think it has been a waste of time for any of you to hear this sorrowful description of a very sad condition of heart and mind. If I should only have been describing one such individual, let us all feel sympathy for him or for her, and let us unite in breathing the silent petition, "Lord, bring thy servant out of prison."

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider THE QUESTION ITSELF: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" in other words, Why is the light of life given to him who is ill the darkness of misery?

Well, first, let me say that *it is a very unsafe question for anyone to ask*. Brethren, We are sure to get into mischief as soon as we begin catechising God, and asking "why?" and "wherefore?" Such questioning comes not well from our lips. He is the Potter, and we are the clay in his hands. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonor?" God's eternal purposes are a great deep, and when we try to fathom them, we utterly fail. Divine Sovereignty is an ocean without a bottom and without a shore, and all we can do is to set our sail, and steer by the chart which he has given us, and all the while believe that, as we sang just now,—

"E'en the hour that darkest seemeth,
Will his changeless goodness prove;
From the mist his brightness streameth,
God is wisdom, God is love."

Voyaging in that fashion, we shall be safe indeed. But to try to cross such a sea, without rudder, or chart, or compass,—this is a venture—some piece of sailing which we had better not undertake. I tremble whenever I have to think of the wondrous ways of God; I mean, when I have to think of

them after the manner of the reasoner, and not after the style of the believer. Well did Milton describe the fallen spirits sitting, in little groups, discussing predestination and the counsels of the Eternal. You know how Paul answers the man who calls in question the dealings of God either in providence or in grace: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God." Job received his answer when the Lord spake to him out of the whirlwind, and said, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" What God said to him was not so much a vindication of the ways of providence, but a revelation of his matchless power as the Creator and the Ruler of the universe; and, though men may not like to hear it, yet there is, in the thunder of God's power, an answer, which, though it may not always answer the sceptic, but ultimately overpower and silence him. As for God's child, he sits down in the shadow of that black cloud which is the canopy of Deity, and he is well content to be still in the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Imitate him, my brother, and do not keep asking God the why and the wherefore of what he does. It is an unsafe thing to ask such questions.

Next, *it reflects upon God*. In this question of Job, there is really a reflection upon the wisdom of the Almighty. He has given the light of life to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God hath hedged in, yet Job asks, "Why did he do it?" I think that, far too often, we indulge our questionings of divine providence. Is God to stand and answer to you and me for what he does? Is he bound to tell us the reason why he does it? Job's friend Elihu said, "God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters." If there be his equal anywhere, let him meet him in the field, and they shall speak together; but to us worms of the dust answers shall not be given if we haughtily put questions to him of "what?" and "why?" and "wherefore?" To accept the Lord's will with absolute submission, is after the manner of the Son of God himself, for he prayed, in the hour of his greatest agony, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." But to cavil and to question, is after the manner of the prince of darkness, who is ever seeking to dispute the sovereignty of God. Therefore, beloved, let no question of ours reflect upon the Lord's love, or the dispensations of his providence.

Further, We may rest quite certain that *there must be an answer to this question*, a good answer, and an answer in harmony with the character of God. If there are men and women to be found still sitting in the darkness of grief and sorrow, and we ask why they are allowed to continue to live, there is a reply possible to that enquiry, and a reply consistent with boundless grace and infinite compassion; but, mark you, that reply may never be given, or, if it is given, we may be incapable of understanding it. There is much that God does that could not be understood, even by those great men, of modern times, who would fain sit on the throne of the Eternal and judge him,—

"Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,

Rejudge his judgments, be the god of God."

I say that there are some answers, which God might give if he pleased, but which even they could not comprehend with all their wit and wisdom, and you and I must often come to a point where we have to stop and say, "We cannot understand this;" and we shall be still wiser if we add, "Nor do we wish to do so." Brothers and sisters, I, for one, have had enough of searching into reasons; I am perfectly satisfied to accept facts. I am ready to bow my reason before the Lord, and to accept whatever he says. If I do not, how little shall I ever know! What is there that I do really understand? I confess that I see profound mysteries about the commonest phenomena around me; I cannot fully comprehend anything when I get right to the bottom of it. There is, on every hand, a deep which I cannot fathom; how, then, shall I understand the ways of God, and measure him with my finite mind, comparing so many inches with the Infinite, weighing so many ounces against

the Omnipotent, and reckoning so many seconds in contrast with the Eternal? No, brethren, for such calculations, you have nothing to measure with; you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, yea, bottomless. So, the less of such questions as Job's any of us ask, the better, for, even if we had the answer to them, we might not be able to understand it.

Let me remind you also that, however important this question may seem to be, *it is not the most profitable question*. I have heard of a farmer, whose boy said to him, "Father, the cows are in the corn; however did they get there? Boy," he replied, "never mind how they got there; our work is to get them out as soon as we can." That is our main business also, to get the cows out of the corn; how they got there is a matter that can be thought of by-and-by when we have nothing else to do. The origin of evil is a point that puzzles a great many people; but I hope you will not worry your brain over that question; if you do, you will be very foolish. But if you are wise men, you will not trouble yourself so much about the origin of evil, as about how to conquer it, in yourself, and in others. Get the cows out of the corn, and then find out how they got in, if you can, by so doing, prevent their getting in again.

There will be space enough, and time enough, and better light, to discuss these questions when we get up yonder before the throne of the Eternal. If their solution is of any real consequence to us, we shall get them solved then; but, meanwhile, we are color-blind; or, if we are not, it is so dark and so misty here, and we have so many other more pressing matters to attend to, that we had better leave these whys and wherefores, and rely on the infallible wisdom and the infinite love of God. If he has done any—thing, it is quite certain that it is right and just; yea, if it has come from his dear hand, it is also gracious and kind. There is more sublimity in being like a little child in the presence of the Eternal than there is in trying to ape the Deity, for that is but a mockery,—a thing to be despised;—nay more, it is the greatest insult we can offer to God, and it is a pity and a shame that any of us should so live and act. Put aside everything of the kind, I implore you, and in very truth submit yourselves unto God.

III. But now, in the last place, speaking to the sorrowful person, I want to mention **SOME ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO HIS QUESTION**. "Why do I continue to live," asks he, "in such sorrow as this? Why does not God take from me the light of life when he does not permit me to enjoy the light of comfort?"

Supposing that you are a child of God, I will give you one answer which ought to satisfy you, though, perhaps, it will not if your spirit is rebellious. *God wills it*. If you are one of his true children, that is all the answer that you will require; and you will say, with those early christians, "The will of the Lord be done;" and with your Lord himself, "Not my will, but thine, be done." It was enough for Christ that his suffering was in accordance with the Father's will, so he bowed before him in unquestioning submission; and shall not you, the disciple, be content to fare as your Master did? Will not you be perfectly satisfied with that which satisfied your Lord? it is the will of the Lord; then what need is there of any further question if you are his child?

But supposing that you are an unconverted person, and you say, "I cannot bear to live in such sorrow as this, why is my life prolonged" the answer is, "Because of God's mercy to you." Where would you go to be better off than you are here? You who have no hope in Christ, and yet who say, "I wish I were dead," you know not what you are saying. You wish you were dead? But what would be your portion after death? What! Do you really wish to hear that dread sentence which must be passed upon you if you die unregenerate: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Do you really desire to feel the full weight of divine justice! Ah! I

hope that you are not so foolish. You have spoken in petulance, and do not mean what you have said; It may be hard for you to live, but it would be harder far for you to die, and then to live forever in a death that never dies. God grant that, you may never know that awful doom!

Moreover, the answer to your question is that the Lord spares you *because he would fain save you*. You are kept alive that you may hear again that voice of mercy which says, "Repent ye, and be converted." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." God comes to you in this time of suffering, that he may stop you in your sin, and make you think. Even to the most careless and giddy among you, during the poignancy of your grief, he says, "Now, my prodigal child, thou hast wasted thy substance in riotous living, thy belly is hungry, and thou hast nothing with which to fill it; arise, and go unto thy Father, for he will receive thee."

Come then, sorrowful one, it may be that thy sorrows will end when thy sins end; certainly, when thou comest to Christ to be forgiven, thou shalt find divine consolation, even if all thy griefs do not at once disappear. Anyhow, it would be better to be whipped all the way to heaven than to be carried down to hell "on flowery beds of ease." Pray this prayer, "O Lord, let me enter into life with one eye and one hand, halt or maimed, rather than, having two eyes and two hands, to be cast into hell!" This is one answer to your question: the Lord lets you live, even though it is in pain and grief, because he has purposes of love and mercy towards you. Therefore, be not anxious to die; but be thankful that you are still permitted to tarry upon gospel ground. Nay, do not be content to tarry there, but fly at once to the God of grace; look this very instant to Jesus, for—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—
Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."

One believing glance of the eye to him who is the sinner's Substitute, and all transgression is forgiven; therefore, yield yourself unto him, trust to his finished work, and eternal life is yours. And when you have that unspeakable blessing, why need you sorrow more?

As for the child of God, to whom I now again speak, if you ask, in a timid, childlike way, "Why do I continue to live in such sorrow as I have to endure?" I would, as your brother, try to answer you. First, it may be that all this trouble has come upon you *to let you know what is in you*. None of us know what there is in us until we are put to the test. We are wonderfully sweet-tempered until somebody touches one of our sore places; and then, ah, me! there is not much sweetness of temper left after that. We are remarkably patient until we get a sharp neuralgic pain, perhaps; and then, where is all our boasted patience gone. We are very generous until we ourselves are somewhat pinched, and then we become as tight-fisted as others whom we have condemned. We do not know what is really in us while all goes smoothly and well; but sickness, and sorrow, and bereavement, and poverty, and hunger, will soon let us see what we are. They make a mental or moral photograph of us, and when we look at the picture we say, "Oh, no! that cannot be our likeness;" but we look again and again, and then we say, "Alas! it is even so; but we did not know we were like that. Now we see our faults and our follies. O Lord, thou hast searched us, and tried us, and shown us the wicked ways that are in us; now purge us from them, and make us clean and pure in thy sight!" That is one reason, and a very good reason, for sharp affliction,—to let us see ourselves as we really are.

The next is that, *often, our trials bring us very near to our God*. Your children run down the meadow to play, and they get a good way off from home in the sunny day, as they ramble along

gathering their buttercups and daisies; but by-and-by, the sun sets, and night comes on, and now they cry to be at home. Just so; and you, in all your pretty ways of pleasure in your happy home, though you are a child of God, sometimes forget him. Sorrowfully must you remember that sad fact. But now the night comes on, and there is danger all around you; so you begin to cry for your Father, and you would fain be back to fellowship with him; and that is a blessed trouble which brings us near to our God. Christ's sheep ought to be thankful for the ugly black dog that keeps them from going astray, or fetches them back when they have wandered from the Shepherd. Perhaps Christ will call that black dog off when he has answered the Master's purpose, and brought you near his side.

Dear child of God, anything that promotes your sanctification, or increases your spirituality, is a good thing for you. I have had my share of physical pain, and perhaps more of it than most who are here; and bless God for it. If it comes again, I ask him for grace to bless him for it then; and now that it has gone for a while, I freely bless him for it, for I cannot tell you all the good that it has wrought in me. Oh! how often a proud spirit has been cut back by affliction and trial, like a vine that is made to bleed, that the clusters that followed the pruning might be all the better and richer! The mown grass is very sweet and fine; and so, often, are believers who have been deeply tried. This tribulation, as Paul says, "worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Wherefore, bow humbly before the Lord, my tried and afflicted friend, and see at least some of the reasons why he thus puts you in the dark chamber of tribulation.

Perhaps, dear brother, you are being very greatly tried, more than most people, *to fit you to be an example to others*. The Lord means to make a veteran of you, so you must be the first in the breach, or you must lead the forlorn hope. He puts you on the hardest service because he wants others of his children to be able to learn from you. I do not know that we should ever have heard anything of Job if it had not been for his troubles; he was a most respectable Eastern farmer, with a considerable estate, very much like a great many country gentlemen we have in England, who may be heard of at the Quarter Sessions, or the corn and cattle market, but nothing more will be known of them unless you go to the parish church, and see some memorial of them stuck up there. Job would have been much the same sort of man as that,—an Oriental magnate, who would have lived, and died, and been forgotten; but now his fame will last as long as the world endures, and "ye have heard of the patience of Job. You have all heard of it, and Job is one of the undying names. So it may be with you, beloved. You are, perhaps, to sail through seas of trouble to reach your crown. God means to use you in his service, and make you a blessing to others, and a teacher of others, by passing you again and again through the fire. One of the ancient warriors said, "I cannot use in battle a sword that has not been oftentimes annealed; but give me a Damascus blade that has been so prepared, and I will cut through a coat of mail, or split a man from head to foot at a single stroke. It gets its temper and keenness of edge from having slept with the flames again and again." So must it be with believers. Full often, they are unfit for God to use till they have been sorely tried.

Perhaps, dear friend, the Lord is putting you through all this trouble—(only I hardly like to say it aloud, I must whisper it in your ears somehow) *because he loves you more than anybody else*. Dear Samuel Rutherford, when he wrote to a lady who had lost, I think, seven children, congratulated her, and said, "I am sure that the Well-beloved has a strong affection for your ladyship, for he will have all your heart. He has taken away all these children that there may not be a nook or a corner for anybody else but for him." So the Lord loves you much, and he is testing you to set whether

you can bear his will,—whether you love him so much that you will take up your cross, and deny yourself, just as, sometimes, architects will ask for their work to be put to the severest possible tests. "Yes," they say, "see what it will really bear." No doubt Stephenson felt great joy when the heaviest train went safely across his tubular bridge; and other engineers have said, "Yes, put on as much pressure as you like; it will stand it." Fathers often take delight in the athletic feats of their sons, and princes revel in the brave deeds of their warriors; and so does the Lord delight to see what his people can do, and he often puts upon them more and more, to prove whether they love him so much that they can bear it all for his sake. Did not the Lord do this to let Satan see that Job did love his God, and would still say, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? . . . The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." We cannot tell what a blessing must come from such a state of heart as that.

It is very possible, dear friend, also, that God is putting you through all this trouble *that he may enable you to bear great prosperity*. Job was to have twice as much as he had ever had before, and that was a very great deal, for he said that he washed his steps with butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil; but how much richer he was when everything was doubled! Job was hardly fit to manage such a large estate as that until he had been made to see the vanity of it all, and to get nearer to his God. So, dear friends, you are going to be pressed, and squeezed, and tried, in order that you may be fitted to come right out into the front rank, and to be magnified and made much of by the Lord your God. I have noticed this kind of thing happen more than once. I have seen a man suddenly taken from the very dregs of the people, and put up to preach, and he has been popular all at once. Nobody has abused him, nobody has said a word against him; but, before long, he has passed completely out of sight. He could not bear the weight that was put upon him, and gave way. You have seen others, who have been called of God to preach the Word, and they have been abused year after year. They could not say anything that was not perverted; they were called mountebanks, impostors, and I know not what. And then, when happier days came, and almost all men spoke well of them, they could bear it, for they had learnt to despise alike the flatteries and the abuse of men. Now, something like that must happen to all God's servants who are to be greatly honored. If they are to bear prosperity, they must go through the fire first. Perhaps that is what the Lord is doing with you, my dear friend; if so, be content with your lot.

And, once again, do you not think that the Lord means thus *to make you more like his dear Son than other people are*? Some other Christians have not as much trouble to endure as you have. No; why is it? You know how an artist can, if he likes, dash off a picture. There! A little red, and a little blue, and so on, and it is done; and away it goes! Ay, but when he wants to paint something that will be observed and admired, then he takes more pains. See how he works at every part of it; note what care and what trouble he takes with it. It is the same with the lapidary or the sculptor when he has choice work in hand; and you are, I hope, the kind of material that will pay for cutting and carving; and the Lord is using his chisel upon you more than he does upon most folk. He wants to make you just like his dear Son; so now he is chipping out a thorn-crown, and you must wear it round your brain. He is fashioning the image of his Son out of the block of your renewed nature, and you must patiently bear the blows from his hammer and chisel till that work is done.

Finally, if I cannot tell you why all this trouble falls to your lot, I know it is right, for *the Lord has done it*, and blessed be his name. Aaron held his peace when his two sons died. He got as far as that in submission to the will of the Lord; but it will be better still if, instead of simply holding your peace, you can bless and praise and magnify the Lord even in your sharpest trouble. Oh, may

you be divinely helped to do so! Let every troubled soul march out of this place feeling, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Rise, dear friend, out of all despondency and despair, shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments of praise and joy, remembering that—

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

You can see the tracks of the martyrs along the road you are journeying; better still, you can see the footprints of the Son of God, your Lord and Savior. Therefore, you may rest assured that you are on the right road, so press bravely forward on it, and, in due time, you will come to that place of which Job said, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest;" and you shall be for ever without fault before the throne of God. May he grant this happy portion to you all, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—209, 197, 750.

A Pressed Man Yielding to Christ

A Sermon

(No. 2667)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 25th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Thursday Evening, October 12th, 1882.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on he Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."—John 9:35-38.

D LAST Sabbath morning,* I spoke to you concerning one who was impressed into the King's service. That was Simon, the Cyrenian, who was compelled to bear Christ's cross. He was not a volunteer, but; a pressed man; yet, I think that, after he had been forced to bear the cross, he willingly carried it, and I hope that he afterwards became a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, strange to say, here is another pressed man; for I do not think that this man, whose eyes had been opened by Christ, had thought of becoming a believer in the Son of God until the Lord Jesus found him out. Before he had reached that point; indeed, before he knew that the prophet who had opened his eyes was the Son of God, the Pharisees had cast him out of the synagogue, so that he was compelled to bear the cross for Christ although he did not then fully know Christ, and certainly had not believed upon the Son of God. Yet, in his case also, it appears that he cheerfully took up the cross which had been at the first forcibly laid upon him. It may happen that there are some persons here who are in a similar position, some who have been ridiculed for being Christians even before they are Christians, who have been mocked at merely because they go to a place of worship, though as yet they have not yielded themselves to Christ; well, if that is the case; with any, seeing that the cross is laid upon their shoulders, I do trust that they will not throw it off, but that they will bravely bear it for Christ, and freely suffer what, up till now, has seemed to them to be a piece of injustice, for they have been treated as if they were believers in Christ, when really they are not yet on the Lord's side.

This man, then, bearing Christ's cross in a certain way, was cast out of the synagogue, and then Christ found him, and blessed him. Observe, dear friend, where Christ began with him; for it will show us where and how the blessing usually enters. The door by which the richest of heaven's favors must come to us is indicated by our Lord going to that door, and opening it. He said to the man, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God." So that faith in the Son of God is the gate of benediction. Faith is that window of agate and gate of carbuncle by which the divine light of Jesu's love comes streaming into the soul. This is the way by which God's mercy enters the heart of man, and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ himself begins there; and in all our dealings with the unconverted, it will be wise for us also to begin there. That is the place where the decisive battle will have to be fought; for, upon the believing or the non-believing on the Son of God, the eternal destiny of each individual will turn. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not

the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." That wrath abides even now upon him if the life of God is not in him. Let us hammer away at that all-important point of faith in Christ. This is the Thermopylae, of Christian experience. If this pass can be stormed and carried, we can capture the citadel of men's hearts; but if unbelief continues to guard that narrow passage to eternal life and to hold it against the gospel and its invitations, and exhortations, and promises, and threatenings, then nothing whatever can be done. So, in this enquiry of our Lord, we have most instructive teaching. His object, no doubt, was to bless this man by working in him saving faith, and therefore he said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

I think our text will help us, first, to speak of *true faith*,—*how it is known*; secondly, *true faith*,—*how it progresses*; and thirdly, *true faith*,—*how we can promote it*.

I. First, I want to speak concerning TRUE FAITH,—the faith that saves—HOW IT IS KNOWN.

First, *it is absolutely essential that it should be faith in the Son of God*. Our blessed Lord knew that this man believed in him as a prophet; so might he not have been content with that? No; because, to believe in Christ merely as a prophet is not saving faith. It may be a step towards salvation, and it may lead up to it; but the faith that is absolutely necessary is that belief in him as the Son of God; and he who does not believe in the Deity of Christ has not a Saviour who can save him. The work of saving a soul is a divine operation, and no one but a divine being can accomplish it. It is he who sitteth upon the throne who saith, "Behold, I make all things new!" There cannot be anyone except the Creator who can create; and the Creator must, in every case, be God. To save a soul, there must be a work performed which is analogous to the resurrection; but, in order to raise the dead, there must be the presence and power of God. It is one of those operations which it is not conceivable can be performed by an angel or by any created being. The Highest alone can accomplish it; has he not said of himself, "I kill, and I make alive"? The power of life and death must rest with God alone. Hence, then, the work of salvation needs a power nothing less than divine. He who believes in Christ as a mere man has not believed in a person who can give him salvation; and Christ cannot accomplish the stupendous task if he be only man, for the Saviour must be God.

There is no true and logical standpoint, in reference to the Deity of Christ, except one of two things. Either our Lord was the Son of God, equal with the Father, or else he was an impostor, for he most distinctly claimed that he was the Son of God. In the chapter preceding our text at the 54th verse, we read that Jesus said to the Jews, "If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God." Then they took up stones to cast at him because he said that he was the Son of God; and, in this case of the blind man whom he had healed, he took pains to find him out that he might communicate to him in private the fact that he was himself the Son of God. He never withdrew his claim to the Deity; if he had only said to the Jews, "No, I am not the Son of God; you are mistaken in supposing that I said I was. The expressions I used are not intended to convey that idea," then they would not have crucified him. This was the chief point of their quarrel with him, and I must again say that either he was God, or he wilfully misled the people by using words which made them think that he was God. His words have led millions of Christians, from those days until now, to worship him as God; and they were perfectly justified, by his utterances, in doing so; and if he meant anything less than that, then he was a deceiver. But he did really mean that he was God, and it is our joy and glory to rest in him as being alike the Son of Mary and the Son of Jehovah himself, "Light of Light, very God of very God," co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; and here we feel that we can rest for our soul's salvation, we can lean with our whole weight on One who is indeed "mighty to save? Seeing that all power

is his, and that he is equal with God, he can and he will save all those who put their trust in him. Do not any of you, I beseech you, be content with any faith less than that. If you have any sort of faith which does not recognize Christ as God, do with it as the man did with the bank note, when he found that it was bad,—he laid it down, and ran away from it, for fear anybody should suspect him of being its owner. Put away every kind of confidence that is short of faith in the Son of God, and abhor it, for it is a damnable delusion; and may the Lord bring you fully into this blessed state of salvation through believing on the Son of God!

A second point about saving faith is that *it rests upon a knowledge of him*. This man said to Jesus, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" He was not one whose notion of faith was that he need not know what he believed. The Church of Rome seems to inculcate some kind of implicit faith (or credulity) which can exist apart from knowledge; but how can I believe that which I do not know Paul puts it thus, "Faith cometh by hearing." You must first hear and know what it is you are to believe before you can believe it; otherwise, your faith is vain, like that of the man of whom I have sometimes spoken, who said, "I believe what the Church believes." "But what does the Church believe?" It believes what I believe." "Then what do you and the Church believe?" "Why, we both believe the same thing." That is not the kind of believing that can save the soul. It is through the knowledge of Christ that we are saved. To know Christ is sometimes said to be analogous to believing in Christ. You must know what it is that you have to believe; a faith that does not know is no faith at all. Read through the Epistles of John, and mark with your pencil every time the word "*know*" is used. The apostle makes that; word "*know*" come in again and again, for a man must know that which he is to believe and hence this man says to Christ, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"

For my part, I could never be content without unquestioning certainty as to my soul's salvation. Do you think that is more than a man ought to wish for. Are any of you at ease while you are afraid that you have a mortal disease working within you? Oh, no! You want to know, from a qualified physician, the truth about your case. And if it were whispered in your ear, at this moment, that your house was being broken into or was on fire, would you sit still here, and not trouble yourself as to whether the report were true or not? Would you not want to go at once, and see for yourself. If you knew that you bought an estate, some time ago, but you have since heard that the title to it is a very uncertain one, in fact, that, in all probability, you will lose all you have paid for it, would you not say, "I ought to have taken care to be certain about the title, and I would not have bought the estate if I had not felt that the deeds relating to it were all right". Well, then, if you desire certainty about your bodily health, and about the safety of your house, and about the validity of your title-deeds, can you afford to go without certainty as to your soul's affairs? No, you cannot; therefore, rest not till you have it. If you have various questions about your spiritual condition, boldly face those questions, and answer them; but never let any questions about your eternal welfare be such that you dare not face them, and do not wish to search out the answers to them. Pry to the very bottom of them; and, better still, ask the Lord to search you, and know your heart, to try you, and know your thoughts, and to lead you in the way everlasting; and be not content till you can truthfully say, "I know whom I have, believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." This man, of whom I am speaking, knew that Christ had opened his eyes, therefore he must be at least a prophet. He also knew, further, that whatever that prophet told him must be true, for the man who had opened his eyes must have been sent by God, and God does not work miracles by liars. He said to himself, "This man is undoubtedly a faithful person, or God

would not employ him in such a wonderful work as that of opening the eyes of a man who was born blind;" and then he stood perfectly prepared to receive what—ever might be spoken by this prophet of whom he knew something, though he did not know enough to understand what was meant by the Savior when he asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God"? He, therefore, sat as an enquirer at the Savior's feet, waiting for something to be told him which should enable him to believe.

You, dear friend, may not be in exactly the same condition that this man was in; but, still, your case may be, in many respects, a parallel one. You say, perhaps, "I wish, above all things in the world, that I could believe in Christ." Do you intend to sit down, and try to make yourself believe in him? That would be a very unwise thing because faith is not wrought in the soul in that fashion. Suppose it was rumoured, at the present moment, that there had been another massacre in Alexandria, and that our troops had been driven out of the city; how would you decide whether the report was to be believed or not? Would you sit down in your pew, and say, "I will try to make myself believe it". Well, you might come, by a process of reasoning, to some sort of conclusion as to whether it was or was not a likely thing; but the mere sensible plan would be to enquire what foundation there was for the report; and if, on going to the War Office, you were informed, by someone in authority, "Yes, there has been a very great disaster," well, then, knowing the facts of the case, you could believe. The enquiry at headquarters would be the way to ascertain the truth of the report, and just so is it in connection with believing in Christ. If I am to believe in him, I ask, with this man, "Who is he." and until I know who he is, it is idle for me to talk about forcing myself to believe in him.

Now listen. He in whom you are asked to believe for salvation is, first, of all, himself God. Then, in infinite mercy, he came and took upon himself our nature, and dwelt among men. He voluntarily came,—being God,—but he was also sent of God, appointed and authorized to be God's Ambassador to man. He was, in addition to being sent of God, anointed of God, for the Spirit of God rested upon him without measure, qualifying him for his work. The life he led here on earth was unique, there was never another like it, and the imagination of man cannot write the history of another man that shall be at all comparable to the life of Christ. It stands apart in a lone, simple majesty, utterly inimitable, absolutely perfect. Then he died, and by that death he for ever put away the sin of his people. He took upon himself the sin which he had never committed; he was numbered with the transgressors, and he suffered as if men's transgressions had been his own; he died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And God has accepted those sufferings as a propitiation for all who believe in him; and now, this is the witness of God concerning him, that he has raised him from the dead, and taken him up to his throne, and made him to sit there, at his Father's right hand, where, at this moment, he is making intercession for all who come unto God by him. And, now, our prayers are accepted through him; and the infinite blessings, which are his, he distributes among us; and he is shortly coming again, with sound of trumpet, and attended by myriads of saints and angels. As he ascended from Olivet, in like manner also will he descend to earth again. King of kings and Lord of lords shall he be in that day; "and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." He is God, he still lives, it is the living, reigning Christ whom we preach unto you. He lives in glory, and he also lives here by the presence of his Holy Spirit, who is with us, and who is to abide with us evermore; and it is upon him as God incarnate, as Savior, crucified, risen, and gone into the glory, that you are asked to place your soul's confidence. If you would learn this truth more fully, read the four Gospels, and the Epistles, and ask the Spirit, who inspired the writers of them,

to explain and apply them to you. That is the way to obtain faith. Many a man has been reading in the Bible the story of the cross, and so he has believed in Jesus. Many another has heard about the Savior, and so has been led to believe in him. It is the simplest thing in the world to believe upon trustworthy evidence; and when we get the evidence of Christ's life and death manifesting the glory of his person, the graciousness of his character, and the efficacy of his atoning-blood, then are we led to believe in him. True faith is based upon knowledge of Christ, as it was in this man's case. Take care, dear friends, that you always remember that simple but important truth.

And, further, *true faith always expresses itself to the Lord*. This man, when he had believed in Jesus, said, "Lord, I believe." True faith ought also to express itself to men, as Paul puts it, in writing to the Romans, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" or, as the Master himself puts it, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore, the confession before men ought not to be neglected in any case; yet I fear, and hope, that there are some pilgrims who steal into heaven, scarcely known by men to be Christians,—at least, not avowed as such by open profession. I do not recommend that dodging behind the hedges, and getting to heaven along back roads; that is a bad plan, but, still, I trust some have managed it, though with much trouble and loss to themselves; but, in every case, every one who has believed has made the confession of that faith to the Master himself. He has said to Jesus, as this man did, "Lord, I believe," even though he has added, with another man, "Help thou mine unbelief." He has said to Jesus, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." There has been a personal acknowledgment, as we sometimes sing it,—

"My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine."

It is a very vital point about true faith that it thus recognizes its obligation to speak to him, and to avow itself to him. How sweetly doth faith, sometimes, come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved, and owning to him that she is his, and he is hers! She cannot help making this confession; she would be untrue to herself and to her Lord if She did not do so.

In one respect, We are better off than this man was, for we have many divine promises to help us to believe in Christ. Have you ever noticed, dear friends, how much we live upon the promises of our fellow-men? In buying a small article at a shop, you pay your twopence far it across the counter; but, the larger the business transaction gets to be, the less there is of metallic currency in connection with it, and then you often pay each other in promises. The commonest form of a promise is a bank note; and it is worth while to observe how much a bank note is made after the model of God's promises. How does the wording of this bank note run it is headed, "Bank of England;" and it begins, "I promise." You take this note readily enough instead of five golden sovereigns, because you read on it, "I promise to pay the bearer;" and God's promise is payable to "the bearer." Whoever has the promise in his possession, whoever has faith enough to lay hold of God's promise, may read it in this way: "I promise to pay the bearer." I remember when I first snatched at one of God's precious promises; I could hardly hope that I had any right to it, for I felt myself so utterly unworthy, but I snatched it up, and ran with it to the Bank of Faith, and as soon as I presented it, received its full value. God always honours his own promises; here is one: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Go to him with that gracious message, and it shall be fulfilled to you whoever you are. The note says, "I promise to pay the bearer." If a sweep takes that note to the Bank of England,

he will get the money for it;—I mean a sweep in character as well as by trade, for the declaration on it is, "I promise to pay the bearer."

What does it new say on the bank note "I promise to pay the bearer on demand." That is how all God's promises run: "on demand." It is worthy of note that, in the olden time, when the Lord had made many promises to his people, he added, "I will yet for this be enquired of by thee house of Israel, to do it for them; "as though the fulfillment of the promise was delayed until it was asked for. No doubt many of God's great and precious promises are not realized by you and me because they are not presented to the Lord as we should take a note to the bank to get it cashed. We do not enquire of God as much as we ought. You hear of enquirers going to see the minister; that may be a good thing, but the best sort of enquirers are those I heard before I came up here to preach to-night, when some good earnest, souls met down in the lecture-hall to enquire of God for a blessing, and to ask him to help his servant to speak the Word with power.

Now, coming back to this bank note, I daresay you would not mind having a pile of paper, of this kind, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and then you would say to yourself, "Now I am a rich man." But you have not a single farthing there, you have only a promise "to pay the bearer on demand the sum of five pounds." "Ah!" you say, "but that promise is good all the world over." Whose promise is it? Well, it is signed by the chief cashier, but he only signs it "for the Governor and Company of the Bank of England." That is where the value of the promise lies; and it is our comfort, to know that we have a noble name written below all God's promises, for the Lord Jesus Christ has signed them all in God's behalf, for the great Governor of heaven and earth, who has no need of any "company" to be joined with him, for his sole resources are fully equal to the fulfillment of every promise that he has ever issued. Now, if we treat men's promises with respect, and pass them from hand to hand as if they were genuine gold, and we constantly do so; shall we not treat God's promises with something more than respect, and trust them with implicit confidence. Will any man have the impudence to say, "I have faith in a note signed by the chief cashier of the Bank of England, but cannot trust a promise that is certified by the Lord Jesus Christ himself?" Shall I consider that bank note to be as good as the money it represents, and yet, when I hold in my hand God's Word, signed, and sealed, and ratified by the sprinkling of the very blood of his dear Son, shall I dare to say, "I find it hard to believe in that word"? If I talk so, I shall grieve the people of God, and what is far worse, shall grieve the Lord himself.

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject, which is, TRUE FAITH, HOW IT PROGRESSES.

Very often it has a very small beginning. Saving faith does not always come on a sudden. Some men are saved, as Saul of Tarsus was; they are struck down in the midst of their sins, and converted in a remarkable and unusual manner; but with many others there is, first, a faint twilight; then, by-and-by, a little more; and, at last, the sun has fully risen upon them. Perhaps you cannot tell when it did actually rise; but you know that it has risen, for there is the light and the brightness of its shining.

In the case of the man of whom I am speaking, *faith began with a preparedness to believe*. His eyes had been opened, and he was thereby made ready to believe anything that Jesus might tell him. And there is many a man who, looking back upon God's goodness to himself, and God's goodness to his father and mother, and God's goodness to gracious people in general, and thinking of the holy and lovely character of Christ, has in that way been prepared to believe when the truth was clearly set before him.

This man went a step further on the right road, for *he desired to believe*. He said, "Who is he, Lord," not, "that I might know about him, and talk about him"—but, "that I might believe on him?" He had a desire to possess true faith; and there are many like him, who desire to believe, but who have not exercised faith in Christ. This is very wonderful, but it is true. Of all things in the world, to believe in Christ is one of the most simple, yet that is the reason why many find it so difficult. If it were difficult, it would seem easy to them; but, being easy, it appears difficult. Some of you, dear friends, when I try to describe how we come to trust in Christ, will twist and turn what I say, even if I make it "as plain as a pikestaff." You think, "Oh, he must mean something very different from what he says!" You really cannot get this idea into your heads,—that you have just to depend upon Christ, to trust him, and then you are saved, for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Whenever we use a metaphor, or figure, or illustration to try to explain the simplicity of faith, straightway somebody finds a difficulty even in that. When I have been trying to catch a sinner, I find that he has as many hiding-places as there are days in the year. I have stopped up one after another, and I have said to him, "No, salvation only comes through believing." "Yes, sir, I know, but—" and down he runs into another hole. When I have dug him out of that, and fancied I should surely catch him, he says, "Oh, yes! we are to trust the Savior, but—" and again he is off. Somehow, men seem very ingenious in trying to find out reasons why they should not be saved, and all their foolish ingenuity seems to be employed in attempting to escape from this blessed divine simplicity, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." May God the Holy Spirit lead them to believe in him! He must lead them, for no man can see Christ until his eyes are divinely opened. We may put the truth as plainly as ever we can, and preach it so that we think we cannot be misunderstood; but men will misunderstand us still, even those who desire to believe in Christ, until the Holy Spirit shall work effectually in them.

This man went still further on the right road; for he not only desired to believe, but *he made enquiry in order that he might believe*. I put it to you very simply, just now, with regard to making enquiries concerning a certain piece of news. Well, this man did the same. He said to the Master, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him." If sinners would only make enquiries about the Savior, they would soon trust in him. You will find, as a rule, that the people who rail at the New Testament, have never read it. If they would but read it, their cavils might soon come to an end, and be followed by a blessed faith in Christ; but, instead of doing so, they read what some objection-manufacturer has said about the Bible, instead of going to the Book itself, and seeing what it really teaches, if I were very thirsty, I do not think that I should abstain from going to a well because somebody told me that it contained bad water; but I should go, and see, and taste for myself; and when a soul gets very thirsty, if it is wise, it goes to the Word for itself. I advise you to do that, dear friends. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

When this man had made his enquiry, and received Christ's answer, *he soon became decided*. He said, "Lord, I believe." I like that simple, clear avowal of faith. So often, when we are conversing with an enquirer, he says, "Yes, sir; I hope I believe." Oh, dear! is that all you can say? "Well, I trust! believe;" and so faith is surrounded by fog.—"I hope I believe; I trust I believe." Man, don't you know whether you believe or not? You may know it; one thing I know, you have no business to go to sleep till you do know this once for all; for, if you are not a believer, you are an unbeliever. There is no middle state between the two; and if you are an unbeliever, you are "condemned already," because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. This matter of believing

ought never to be left in doubt at all, but it should be definitely settled, so that you can say, with this man, "Lord, I believe."

Then, further, *he acted as a believer*: for "he worshipped him." This proves how his faith had grown. I should like to ask you who are the people of God when you are happiest. I think you will agree with what I am going to say; and if you do not, it will still be just as true to me. My happiest moments are when I am worshipping God, really adoring the Lord Jesus Christ, and having fellowship with the ever-blessed Spirit. In that worship, I forget the cares of the church, and everything else; and, to me, it is the nearest approach to what it will be in heaven, where, day without night, they offer perpetual adoration unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Hence, what a memorable moment it was for this man when he worshipped Christ! Now, if Christ was not God, that man was all idolater, a man-worshipper; and you and instead of being regarded as very excellent people, by those who call themselves "Unitarian Brethren," should be condemned as idolaters. If Christ was not God, we are not Christians; we are deceived dupes, we are idolaters, as bad as the heathen whom we now pity. It is making a man into a God if Christ be not God. But, blessed be his holy name, he is God; and we feel that it is the supreme delight of our being to worship him. We cannot veil our face with our wings, for we have none; but we do veil them with his own robe of righteousness whenever we approach him. We cannot cover our feet with our wings, as the angels do; but we do take his blood and his righteousness both as a covering for our feet, and as wings with which we fly up to him; and though as yet we have no crowns to cast at his dear feet, yet, if we have any honor, any good repute, any grace, anything that is comely, anything that is honest, we lay it all at his feet, and cry, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

III. Now I come to the third point, which is this, TRUE FAITH,—HOW TO PROMOTE IT.

Brothers and sisters beloved, there are many of you who are constantly looking out for souls, and trying to bring them to Christ; you have here an example of what you may do in endeavoring to lead them to exercise faith in Jesus.

First, if you have any choice as to those to whom you go, *seek out the oppressed*. You are to go, so far as you can, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" but if you may specially look for some more than others, seek out the sick, the sad, the weary, the poor, the broken-down ones, and especially such as have been put out of the synagogue. When our missionaries have gone among the Brahmins in India, they have had a few converts; but the most blessing has been given among the poor people who have no high caste of which they are proud. When the gospel was taken to them, they gladly received it. The gospel worker will be wise if, instead of shunning those whom even nominally religious people put away, he looks after them first. They are likely soil for the good seed of the kingdom to grow in, and bring forth fruit. Our Lord Jesus Christ, at Sychar, did not go to some goodly matron, who was an ornament to her sex; but you know where he found the woman who became his disciple and missionary, and you know what kind of woman she was; and, to this day, he delights to go about, as Whitefield used to say, "sweeping up the devil's castaways." Those whom nobody else wants, and nobody else will have, our blessed Lord and Master delights to receive. Do you, therefore, look after those out-of-the-way sinners. I like that expression, those out-of-the-way sinners; because our Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Out-of-the-way sinners are the sort he came to save; therefore, look out for them, you who would follow the example of the great Soul-Winner.

Then, next, when you come to close quarters with them, *ask them questions*, as Christ did. He said to this man, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Put the enquiry pointedly and personally. Here am I, up in the pulpit, firing the gospel gun, and the shot flies where God directs it; but you, downstairs, who love the Lord, can, as it were, hold a pistol close to the sinner's head. Take them separately, one by one; and make them "stand and deliver." Put the question as our Lord did, "Dost thou believe?" See, friend," you can say, "the minister has been preaching about faith. 'Dost thou believe?'" This is what nine people out of ten want, somebody to come and make a personal application of the truth to them. They are like soldiers out upon the battlefield; they lie there, wounded, bleeding, dying. Close by, there is all that is needed to bind up their wounds, and plenty of it; then, why do they lie there in agony? They need personal attention, and it is your business, as an army surgeon, to go and put on the lint, and bind up the wounds. Oh, that we had multitudes who would do this, and that all God's people were constantly looking out for opportunities of making a personal application of the truth to those who hear it! "Dost thou believe?" said the Lord Jesus to this man, and by that question he held him fast. That is the way to win souls, begin with a personal question.

Then, *be ready to answer enquiries*. This is what our Lord himself did when he revealed himself to this man. Tell them all you know; and if you cannot tell them all they want to know, try to bring them to somebody more advanced in spiritual things than you yourself are, so that, with prayer, and patience, and wise instruction, he may lead them to Christ.

Next, *pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself to them*, for that is the way faith comes. We cannot speak of Christ as he should be spoken of; but, when he reveals himself, then the sinners see him. All the portraits of a beauty never touch the heart like one glance from her eyes; and all the portraits of Christ, that ever were painted by his most admiring disciples, never make such an impression on the heart of man as when once he says, as he said to this man, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." None but Christ himself can preach Christ to the full. He must reveal himself, or the Spirit must reveal him, or else men do not see him.

Finally, *glorify Christ by you're your personal testimony*. Recollect that wondrous intercessory prayer of our Lord, in which he said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." It was so kind, yet just like him, not to say, "through my word," though it is his word that we are to proclaim; but we get it into our hearts, and so appropriate it that, when we utter it, we speak out of our own heart, and soul, and then it becomes our word, too, and so sinners believe on Christ through our word. Go on speaking your word, that is, Christ's word spoken by you, for this is how to win souls for him.

Now, in closing, I want to begin again, and give you another little sermon altogether, only I shall not be able to preach it to you, but just to give you the heads of it, and leave it with you.

The first head is, *when you are believing, mind that you believe in Jesus himself*. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" or is it somebody else in whom you are believing? Is it merely what others say about Christ that you believe? Is it your own opinion of Christ? Or is it really the Son of God upon whom you are believing when you are believing, believe in Jesus himself.

Next, *when you are enquiring, enquire of Jesus himself*. This is a beautiful thing, to my mind. Here is a man asking Christ about Christ,—asking Jesus, "Who is he?" and, all the while, speaking to the very person about whom he was enquiring. He did not know it was Jesus, yet he had gone to the very fountain-head. Now, perhaps some of you have made enquiries of Christian people, and you have read the Bible, and prayed, and yet you cannot find Jesus; then go direct to him, by faith,

and say, "Lord, show me thyself." That is the way to learn of him. Have I a book of which I cannot make heads or tail as I read it? If I knew where the author lived, I would call on him, and say, "Dear sir, will you kindly tell me what you mean by this expression? I cannot understand it." That is the way to find anything out; go to the fountain-head. So, go you to Christ always; and, when you are enquiring, enquire of Christ himself.

Next, *when you are seeking Christ, ask Christ to reveal himself to you*, for there is nobody who can reveal Christ as Christ can reveal himself by his blessed Spirit.

And, next, *when you are confessing your faith, confess it to Christ himself*. Say, as this man did, "Lord, I believe." Say to your minister, or to your mother, or to your friends, "I believe;" but take care, above all the rest, that you say, "Lord, I believe."

And, lastly, *when you are worshipping, worship Christ himself*: "He worshipped HIM," and no one else. Take care that your reverence and adoration are not given, in any degree, to the church, or to any person in it, or to any priest, or minister, or anything created or made; but worship God, and God in Christ Jesus; and the Lord bless you, beloved, for his name's sake! Amen.

*See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,683, "The Great Cross-Bearer, and his Followers."

Pride Catechized

A Sermon

(No. 2670)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, April 15th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"Should it be according to thy mind; he will recompense it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest."—Job 34:33.

DEAR FRIENDS, it is never wise to dispute with God. Let a man strive with his fellow, but not with his Maker. If we must discuss any point, let it be with imperfect beings like ourselves, but not with the infallible and infinitely wise God; for, in most of our discussions, these questions will come back to us, "Should it be according to thy mind? Art thou master? Is everyone to be subordinate to thee?"

I am going to speak, this evening, to those who have a quarrel with God concerning the way of salvation. They are very unwise not to take salvation just as God brings it to them; but they do not. They have some difficulty or other, so they raise a dispute, and they have been, perhaps for years, cavilling at the Saviour whose infinite goodness has provided a way of salvation exactly adapted to their needs. I am going to use Elihu's words, and apply them to their case.

I. To begin at the beginning, here is, first, A QUESTION: "Should it be according to thy mind?" You say that you are willing to find mercy, and that you are very teachable; but you object to the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

First, then, *what is it to which you object?* Do you object to the very basis of the plan, namely, that God will forgive sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Son? I know that some do object to this; they cannot bear to hear about atonement by blood, or justification by imputed righteousness. Others, who will not say that they object to atonement, spirit away the very meaning of it. They cannot endure that glorious doctrine of substitution which is such a joy to us. Christ standing in the sinner's stead, and the sinner then standing in the place of Christ,—Christ taking the sinner's sin, and the sinner wearing Christ's righteousness,—all this they absolutely reject. "No doubt Christ did something for sinners," they say; but they cannot define what he did; and, as for the sin of any man being actually put away by Christ being punished in the room and place and stead of the ungodly sinner, they will not believe it.

Yet, that is God's plan of salvation, and some of us know, in our inmost hearts, that we never had peace until we accepted that plan of salvation; and that now, if it should be taken away from us, we should lose all the joy of existence, and should go back to the despair which, at one time, was so heavy upon us that we could sympathize with Job when he said, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." We could better afford that the sun should be quenched, that the moon should be darkened, that all springs should be dried, that the very air itself should disappear,—we could better afford to die, and rot in our graves, than that we should lose our Saviour, and his atoning blood, and justifying righteousness. Whatever you, Mr. Objector, may say about

it, we say to you, "Should it be according to thy mind?" Would you have Christ to die, and yet not really secure salvation by his death? Could you invent a better plan, or even one half as good,—

"So just to God, so safe for man,"—

so consolatory to a wounded conscience, so constraining to gratitude when that conscience has been pacified? Would you, could you, propose anything one thousandth part as good as God's plan of salvation? Even if you could, "should it be according to thy mind?" Who are you, a guilty sinner, to despise the Saviour's blood? If you had your deserts, you would years ago have been in the lowest pit of hell; will you set aside the cross of Christ, and seek to put something else in the place of the crucified Redeemer?

But, possibly, you do not object to the doctrine of substitution, but your objection is to the way of salvation by faith. "I don't like that doctrine of justification by faith," says one, "for I am sure that, when it is preached, people will begin to think that there is no virtue in good works, and that they may live as they like." I have often heard such a remark as yours, my friend, but experience is dead against you. Whenever justification by faith has been uppermost in the preaching, the morals of the people have been purest, and their spirituality has been brightest. But whenever the preachers have extolled the works and ceremonies of the law, or the Arminianism which brings in something of trust in works, or human power, it is most certain that there has been a declension in point of morals, while religion itself has seemed almost ready to expire. You may go to those who preach up salvation by works to hear them talk, but you had better not go to see how they live, whereas those who preach justification by faith can boldly point to the multitudes who have accepted this truth, and whose godly lives prove the sanctifying power of the doctrine.

But if you object to this doctrine, how would you like to have it altered? "Oh, well! I would like to have some good feelings put in with faith." And how, then, would any man be saved? Can he command his own feelings? Those feelings come naturally enough after faith; but, if they be demanded without faith, how will they ever be presented to God? Besides, feelings would claim some credit if they were thus joined with faith. A man would be able to boast that he had felt his way to heaven, and he would have the same self-congratulatory spirit which we see in those who trust in works and ceremonies; and thus Christ would be robbed of his glory as the sinner's Saviour. Man would put his dirty hand upon the crown, and place it upon his own head; but that must never be the case. You shall be saved if you trust the Saviour; but if you do not like that way of salvation, you never can be saved. Why should the plan of salvation be changed for you? Is God to be tied down to act only as you please? Is he to alter his gospel to suit the fancies of rebellious men? That must not be. There is no mistake about this matter: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;" and our Lord himself said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." That is the only message for him if he continues in his unbelief; and it shall not be altered to suit the mind of any man that lives.

"Oh, but!" say some, "we object to the requirements of the gospel, especially to that verse where Christ says, 'Ye must be born again.' Where is the need of that? We were christened when we were children; We were confirmed as we grew older; we have taken the sacrament; but we do not agree with that hard saying, 'Ye must be born again.'" They will not walk with Christ if he insists upon that condition.

Moreover, he requires the giving up of all known sin, the hating of all sin, and the objector says, "But may I not retain my one darling sin? May I not keep my pet evil? I will give up all else, but that one I must have." And when men are told that, wherever Christ comes, he makes a radical

change, he casts out Satan and all his imps, drives them out by main force, and takes complete possession of the soul,—they bar the door of their heart against the Saviour, for they do not want such strong measures as his in their case.

Well, sirs, as you say that Christ's requirements are not according to your mind, what would you like them to be? Do you wish to be allowed to continue taking what you call your little drop, which is powerful enough to make you reel across the street? Then there is somebody over yonder who would like to keep his adulteries, and another who would like to keep his petty thefts, and another who would like to keep on with his swearing, and another who would like to retain his covetousness, so that he could still grind the poor to powder, and make money by crushing them, What sin is there, in the whole world, that would be put to death if men were left to pick and choose the Agag which each one wished to save? No; Christ came to save his people from their sins,—not in them; and it is essential to salvation that sin should be repented of, and, being repented of, should be renounced, and that, by the help of God, we should lead a new life, under a new Master, serving from a new motive, because the grace of God has renewed our spirit.

"Should it be according to thy mind?" No, certainly not; for, putting all reasons into one, it is not the slightest use for you to make any objection to the gospel, for you wilt be lost if you do not accept it just as it is revealed in the Scriptures. Christ will never alter the gospel one jot or tittle not the cross of a "t" or the dot of an "i"—to please the biggest man that lives. "Oh! but, really, I am a man of education; am I to be saved in the same way as the man who does not know A from B?" Precisely; there is no other way of salvation for you. There is not one gate for Doctors of Divinity and another for the poor and ignorant. "But I am a person of good character, a matronly woman; am I to be saved just in the same way as a Magdalene?" Precisely the same; there is no other Saviour for you than the one in whom Mary Magdalene delighted and trusted. "But, sir, you do not surely mean to say that all these street Arabs are to go to heaven in the same way as a man who has kept shop, and been respectable, all his life!" Yes, I do; all must go in exactly the same road. Queens and chimney-sweeps must enter heaven by the same gate, or not enter at all. There is but one name given among men whereby we must be saved; there is no other Saviour but Christ Jesus the Lord; he suits every class of persons, big sinners and little ones, if there are any little sinners anywhere. All must come to Christ, and at his feet confess their sin, for God's plan cannot be altered for anyone. My dear sir, we are not going to have any enlargement, or rather, any mystification, of the plan of salvation to suit your profound mind. There will be no golden handles put to the doors of heaven to suit you, my lord, with all your wealth and pride. Nay, nay, nay; come to Christ, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest; but there is no other way of obtaining rest of heart and conscience.

I have thus tried to mention a few of the objections which men make to God's plan of salvation. Now let me ask two or three questions. First, *should not God have his way?* Is it not intolerable that you and I should raise objections at all when the mercy of God, if it ever comes to us, is a pure gift of charity? God may well say to us, "Shall I not do as I will with mine own?" There is no man living who has any absolute right to receive anything from God except destruction. That terrible doom we have all merited, but nothing beyond that. If we were shut up in prison, and kept upon dry bread, so long as we were out of hell, we should still be under obligation to God. If the Lord should choose to show mercy to only one man in the world, he has a perfect right to do so; if he chooses to give it to a few, or if he chooses to give it to all, he has the right to do so. He is absolutely sovereign, and these are the words that he would have every one of us to hear and to heed: "I will

have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The crown rights of the King of kings must never be assailed; for us beggars to turn choosers, and to dictate to God what he shall give to us;—for us condemned criminals to begin to make bargains with God as to how he shall preserve our lives, if he chooses to do so,—oh, this will never do! You know, dear friends, that when we give even a trifling charity, we like to do it in our own way. I remember that, one Christmas-time, a certain gentleman had given away a quantity of meat to many poor people; he had been so generous that he had given away all he had. The next morning, a woman came to him, bringing back the piece of meat which she had received, which was meant for boiling, and she said she wanted to have a piece for roasting. There was none left for changing, so she had to take what had been given to her, or go without any at all. You are quite sure that, the next year, that woman's name was put down among the first to have a Christmas gift, are you not! On the contrary, the gentleman said, "She will not be troubled, next year, either with a boiling piece or a roasting piece from me; I will take good care of that." I think it was quite natural that he should say so, for our common proverb regards it as ingratitude when we "look a gift horse in the mouth." When anything comes to us entirely as a gift, it is not for us to cavil at it, but to accept it; and this is specially true of God's great gift of salvation. O Lord, if thou wilt but save me, save me anyhow! If I may be delivered from this accursed sin of mine, and made pure and holy, do it, Lord, after thine own gracious fashion! It is not for me to suggest any plan to thee, but to leave myself entirely in thy hands, and to let it be according to thy mind.

Further, *is not God's way the best?* The mind of God is so infinitely great, and good, and wise, that it cannot be supposed that, even if he left the plan of salvation to our option, we could choose anything half as good as what he decrees and appoints. Should he, for a single moment, hold his sovereignty in abeyance, and allow us to be kings and princes on our own account, what follies we should perpetrate! We should choose a way of salvation that would not honour God, nor destroy evil, nor even be good for our own selves. Some people would like a heaven into which they could enter without being born again; but what kind of heaven would that be! Some would like to have joy and peace without believing in Christ. Some would like to have eternal felicity, and yet indulge their lusts. This would be an evil of the most awful kind. It is better that sin should bring to man infinite sorrow than that it should be linked with eternal enjoyment. The mischief of it is that it does get linked with enjoyment for a while by foolish men, who forget what must come afterwards; but God has never joined these two things together, it is only wicked men who have pretended to celebrate this unholy marriage. God proclaims a perpetual separation between sin and happiness, and it is well that it should be so.

Now, to conclude this first part of our subject, suppose the plan of salvation should be according to any human mind, *whose mind is to decide what it shall be?* Yours? Nay, mine. And another says, "No, mine." Our proverb rightly says, "Many men, many minds;" and if we were to have salvation arranged according to the mind of each one of us, there would be a pretty quarrel before we left this place. You say, friend, that it is to be according to your mind; but why not according to your neighbour's mind? If man's mind were to decide it, what should we have? Why, you would all contradict each other, and there would be no plan of salvation at all if God did not settle it once for all.

Then, besides, should it be according to your mind to-day? "Yes," you say, "I have made up my mind." But you will take your mind to pieces to-morrow,—what little there is of it,—and then you will put it together again the next day, and say, "I have made up my mind; I am a man of mind,

you know." Ah, yes! we know you, sir. There is a certain tribe of people about, nowadays, who call themselves "men of culture," and they sneer at everybody who does not go in for that kind of boasting. If they were really men of mind, they would never talk like that, for the man who has the most culture generally has enough to be a little modest, and not to brag about what he is. Well, then, if salvation is to be according to man's mind, whose mind is to decide it, and on what day, and at what hour of the day is the verdict of that man's mind to be taken? It is vacillating, changing like the moon, never twice in the same mood on the same day; so salvation cannot be according to our mind, for it would be chaos, it would be destruction, if that were the case.

II. Now, secondly, here is A WARNING: "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose."

By this I understand that, *whatever our will may be, God will carry out his own purpose*. As surely as God is God, he will never be defeated in anything. He who is omniscient, and therefore sees the end from the beginning, is also omnipotent, and therefore can work his own will exactly as he chooses,—he will never be baffled by the will of men. I believe in the free agency of man as much as anyone who lives; but I equally believe in the eternal purpose of God. If you ask, "How do you reconcile those beliefs?" I answer,—They have never been at variance yet, so there is no need to attempt to reconcile them. They are like two parallel lines, which will run side by side for ever;—man responsible because he does what he wills, and God infinitely glorious, achieving his own purposes, not only in the world of dead, inert matter, but also through those who are free agents; without changing them in the least degree, leaving them just as free as ever they were, he yet, in every jot and tittle, performs the eternal purpose of his will.

I would also remind you that, though you cavil at God's way of salvation, *God will punish sin just the same*. There is many a man who has said, "I will never believe that God will send men to hell;" but he has himself gone there, and then he has changed his mind in a very remarkable and terrible fashion when it is too late. There are many who say, "It should be this, or it should not be that;" but they do not ask, "What saith the Scripture?" Yet that is the all-important point; for, whatever you may say as to what it should be or should not be, makes no difference to God. He will take less notice of you and your opinion than you do of a gnat or a midge that flies about you on a summer's evening. He is so infinitely great and good that any opposition you and I may think that we can raise against him shall be less than nothing, and vanity. Shall tow contend with fire, or the war with the flame? Shall nothing oppose itself to omnipotence? Shall the creature of a day, that is and is not, attempt to wrestle with the Eternal? No, this cannot be; therefore, God will have his way, and he will punish sin.

And, further, my friends, though you may object to God's way of salvation, *others will be saved by it*. Christ did not die in vain. He will rejoice in every one whom he purchased with his blood. He will not lose one of the jewels that are to deck his crown for ever. You may strive against his kingdom, but that kingdom will come when he pleases. The King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall surely reign for ever and ever; and if your voice is not heard in the great Hallelujah chorus of heaven, yet not one of its notes will be missing. Christ shall be glorified to the highest possible degree, whosoever may oppose him. It is well that those who object to God's plan of salvation should know these facts. That is how Christ treated objectors when he was upon the earth. When they murmured at what he told them, he did not tone down the unpalatable truth; he did not say to them, "You are robbing me of my honour and glory, and I shall never prosper;" but he said, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me draw him." On another occasion, he

said, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." He did not humble himself to them, but again proclaimed his own truth in all its majesty and sublimity, that they might bow before him and his message.

Just once more, upon this point, let me say that *God will certainly magnify his own name*, whoever may oppose him: "Whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose," shall make no difference to him. His grace comes like the dew, which tarries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. Oftentimes, he is found of them that seek him not; and to those who were not his people, he says, "Ye are my people;" thus magnifying his own amazing grace. Whoever may stand out against him, he shall lack none of his honour and glory, world without end.

III. This brings us to the third part of our subject, on which I desire to say exactly what Elihu said: "and not I." We cannot be absolutely sure what these three words mean; but, if they mean what I think they do, they teach us a lesson, Which I have called A PROTEST.

Whenever you find anyone opposing God, say to yourself, "and not I." When there is any wrong thing being done, and it comes under your notice, say, "and not I." Take care that you go not with a multitude to do evil; do not take upon your tongue just what others may be saying, but bear your individual protest against the evil; even if you stand alone, say, "and not I."

What Elihu did mean, I think, was this. Whoever opposes God should know that *he is not dealing with a man like himself*. If you hear a preacher make a statement, and you feel, "That is not the Word of the Lord," pray God to forgive him for his sin in making it; but if he speaks with the sound of his Master's feet behind him and what he says is the Word of God, then do not trifle with it. If it be clearly a revealed truth, it may grate against your feelings, and set your teeth on edge; but what of that? You had better get your teeth and your feelings put right, for the truth of God cannot be altered in order to please you. Someone says, "I cannot believe that statement, because it seems too shocking." That is just why I do believe it, for it does me good by shocking me; and if it is in God's Word, I am bound to accept it. "Oh!" you say, "but something within me revolts against it." It is only natural it should do so, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and it naturally cries out against the thing that is most surely true. The supreme majesty of God's Word is that before which we have to bow, and not the insignificant usurpers of our inward feelings, fancies, and whims. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

Elihu also means, I think, "*I will not be responsible for the man who refuses God's Word*. I will not stand in his place, or take the blame which is due to him. He shall be recompensed, and not I, for I have spoken the truth. I will not bear the responsibility of it. If men choose to refuse it, they must take the consequences; to the Lord alone they must stand or fall."

And, once more, Elihu means, "*If you refuse God's Word, it is not I*. I will not share in your rebellion against him." Ah! my dear hearers, there are some of you who think yourselves very intelligent, and wise, and thoughtful, and you imagine that you know a great deal more than I do, and therefore you refuse to receive God's Word. Well, if you do so, I will not; I am determined about this matter, and I say, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." And, mark you, by "Jehovah" I mean the old Testament God. I have never seen him superseded in his own Word, though some men profess that it is so. According to them, the God of the Hebrews was not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, though Jesus never said so, but quite the reverse. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is he whom we worship this day; and his character, as it is written out in full in the Old and New Testament, is that which we admire and delight in. Others may have new gods, newly come up, which our fathers knew not; but not I. He who made the

heavens and the earth, he who led forth his people out of Egypt, and divided the sea, even the Red Sea, he whose mercy endureth for ever, the God who shines forth all along as the God of a covenanted people to whom he did reveal himself, "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Learned men may dispute as much as they like about him, but we bow humbly at his feet. We question nothing that he does; we believe it to be right even when we do not understand it; and it is our hope that others will do the same; but if they will not, it will not affect our own decision.

IV. Our last head is, A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION.

If there are any who refuse the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for any reason known only to themselves, we venture to ask them to say what it is: "Therefore speak what thou knowest." It was not in Elihu's mind to tell Job to be silent, and never open his mouth again. Speech is the glory of man, and freedom of speech, as far as concerns his fellow-creatures, is the right of every man. It is far better that, when there is a difficulty or an objection, it should be fairly stated, than that it should lie smothered up within the soul to breed untold mischief. Therefore, if thou hast an objection to God's Word, write it out, and look at it. Or, if thou carest not to do that, state it, if not to thy friend,—if thou preferest privacy,—state it to thyself; only bring it out, and let it be known. But, at the same time, when thou art speaking, "speak what thou knowest."

Now, what dost thou really know of God? Little enough do the most of us know; but, still, I think we know enough to know that he is not the god of modern times, whom some preach. One single night of frost will destroy millions upon millions of creatures that were happy and enjoyed life; and this is done by that God of whom we are often assured that he cannot possibly punish sin, or put men to pain. But he does it. Hear the cry of the poor seamen, when the storm tosses the great barque, and drives it on the rock. See how everywhere the Lord is a great God and terrible. Even though he condescends to be a Father to those of us who trust in Jesus Christ, his Son, and is gentle as a nurse to us, yet is he the God of thunder and of fire, the great and almighty God, the King who will not be questioned by his subjects, and who will not alter his arrangements to please their fancies.

It is well for us to speak of God as we have found him. He has dealt kindly and graciously with us: "he hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; "else had we been cast away for ever. We long that others may be able to speak of God in the same way; not saying what they would have him to be, but what he has revealed himself to be, in nature, and in providence, and especially in grace. Let us all come humbly to his feet. He bids us look to his dear Son, and so find peace and salvation. If we will not do so, there is nothing for us but to be driven from his presence, and from the glory of his power, world without end. Will we dare to defy him? Have we the impiety so to do? O God, humble us! Beneath the terror of thy majesty, and the glory of thy righteousness, and the supreme splendour of thy love, bow us down, to accept thy grace, and to become thine for ever and ever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Meditation on God

A Sermon

(No. 2690)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, September 2nd, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

On a Thursday Evening, in the summer of 1858.

NOTE: This edition of this sermon is taken from an earlier published edition of Spurgeon's 1858 message. The sermon that appears in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 46, was edited and abbreviated somewhat. For edition we have restored the fuller text of the earlier published edition, while retaining a few of the editorial refinements of the *Met Tab* edition.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet."—Psalm 104:34.

DAVID, certainly, was not a melancholy man. Eminent as he was for his piety and for his religion, he was equally eminent for his joyfulness and gladness of heart. Read the verses that precede my text, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." It has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly said, that the contemplation of divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtful persons have supposed, doth not become the young; it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads, who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave; it may be well enough for those who are in poverty and deep trial; but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful and happy man, this is generally said to be out of the question.

Now, there is no greater falsehood. No man is so happy, but he would be happier still if he had religion. The man with a fullness of earthly pleasure, whose barns are full of store, and whose presses burst with new wine, would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the grace of God in his heart; rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity; it would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup; it would purify his heart, and freshen his taste for delights, and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb. Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy joyful at the same time that it can make the joyous ones more joyful still. It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness; it can make the eye sparkle with tenfold more brilliance; and happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the fountain of atoning mercy; if he knows that his name is registered in the book of everlasting life. Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the divine testament, which hath promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future, when he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He will be able to say, as our Psalmist does, "I will

sing unto the Lord. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Taking these few words as the motto of our sermon to-night, we shall speak, first, concerning *a profitable exercise*—"meditation". Secondly, concerning *a very precious subject*: "my meditation of him"; and, thirdly, concerning *a very blessed result*:—"My meditation of him shall be *sweet*."

I. First, here is A VERY PROFITABLE EXERCISE—*meditation*.

Meditation is a word that more than half of you, I fear, do not know how to spell. You know how to repeat the letters of the word; but I mean to say, you can not spell it in the reality of life. You do not occupy yourselves with any meditation. What do many of you that are merchants know concerning this matter? You rise up in the morning, just in time to take your accustomed seat in the omnibus; you hasten to your counting-house for your letters, and there you continue all day long, for business when you are busy, or for gossip when business is dull, and at night you go home too tired and jaded for the wholesome recreation of your minds, Week by week, month by month, and year by year, it is still with you one everlasting grind, grind, grind. You have no time for meditation; and you reckon, perhaps, that if you were to set apart half an hour in the day, to ponder the weighty matters of eternity, it would be to you a clear loss of time. It is very wise of you to economize your minutes, but I suppose if half an hour in a day could earn you a hundred pounds, you would not say you could not afford it, because you know how to estimate pecuniary profit. Now, if you really knew equally how to count the great profit, of meditation, you would deem it a positive gain to yourselves to spend some time therein, for meditation is most profitable to the spirit; it is an extremely healthful and excellent occupation. Far from being idle time, it is judicious employment of time.

Do not imagine that the meditative man is necessarily lazy; contrariwise, he lays the best foundation for useful works. He is not the best student who reads the most books, but he who meditates the most upon them; he shall not learn most of divinity who hears the greatest number of sermons, but he who meditates the most devoutly upon what he does hear; nor shall he be so profound a scholar who takes down ponderous volumes one after the other, as he who, reading little by little, precept upon precept, and line upon line, digests what he learns, and assimilates each sentiment to his heart by meditation—receiving the word first into his understanding, and afterwards receiving the spirit of the thing into his own soul. When he reads the letters with his eye it is merely mechanical, but that he may read them to his own heart he retires to meditate. Meditation is thus a very excellent employment; it is not the offspring of listlessness or lethargy but it is a satisfactory mode of employing time, and very remunerative to the spirit. Let us for a moment or two tell you some of its uses.

First, I think meditation furnishes the mind somewhat with rest. *It is the couch of the soul*. The time that a man spends in necessary rest, he never reckons to be wasted, because he is refreshing and renovating himself for further exertion. Meditation, then, is the rest of the spirit. "Oh," says one, "I must have rest. Here have I been, fagging and toiling incessantly for months; I must have a day's excursion; I must do this thing, and the other." Yes, and such recreation, in its proper place, is desirable; we ought to have seasons of innocent recreation; but, at the same time, if many of us knew how to spend a little time daily in the calm repose of contemplative retirement, we should find ourselves less exhausted by the wear and tear of our worldly duties,—to meditate, would be to us a salutary recreation, and instead of running ourselves out of breath, and laboring till a respite is compulsory, we should spread our intervals of ease and refreshing over the whole year, and

secure a small portion every day, by turning aside from the bustling crowd to meditate upon whatever subject we wish to occupy the most honorable place in our mind.

Just as a change of posture relieves the weariness of the body, a change of thoughts will prevent your spirits becoming languid. Sit down in a silent chamber at eventide, throw the window up, and look at God's bright stars, and count those eyes of heaven; or, if you like it better, pause in the noon-tide heat, and look down upon the busy crowd in the streets, and count the men like so many ants, upon the ant-hill of this world; or, if you care not to look about you, sit down and look within yourself; count the pulses of your own heart, and examine the motions of your own breast. At times, 'tis well to muse upon heaven; or if thou art a man who lovest to revel in the prophetic future, turn over the mystic page, and study the sacred visions recorded in the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Revelation. As thou dost enter into these hallowed intricacies, and dost meditate upon these impressive symbols, thou wilt rise up from thy study mightily refreshed. You will find it like a couch to your mind.

You will return to your business in a better spirit; you may expect (other things being equal) to earn more that day, than you ever earned before, by the painful system of uninterrupted drudgery; for the diversion of thought will rest, string up, and brace your nerves, and enable you to do more work, and do it better too. Meditation is the couch of the mind.

Again, meditation is *the machine in which the raw material of knowledge is converted to the best uses*. Let me compare it to a wine-press. By reading, and research, and study we gather the grapes; but it is by meditation we press out the juice of those grapes, and obtain the wine. How is it that many men who read very much know very little? What a host of pedantic scholars we have, who can recount book after book, from old Hesiod to the last volume in Ward's catalogue, but they know little or nothing after all. The reason is, they read tome upon tome, and stow away knowledge with lumbering confusion inside their heads, till they have laid so much weight on their brain that it can not work. Instead of putting facts into the press of meditation, and fermenting them till they can draw out inferences, they leave them to rot and perish. They extract none of the sweet juice of wisdom from the precious fruits of the vine-tree. A man who reads only a tenth part as much, but who takes the grapes of Eschol that he gathers, and squeezes them by meditation, will learn more in a week than your pedant will in a year, because he muses on what he reads. I like, when I have read a book for about half an hour, to walk awhile, and think it over. I shut up the volume, and say, "Now, Mr. Author, you have made your speech, let me think over what you have said. A little meditation will enable me to distinguish between what I knew before and the fresh subject you communicate to me—between your facts and your opinions—between your arguments and those I should make from the same premises. Animals, after they have eaten, lie down and ruminate; they first crop the grass, and afterwards digest it. So meditation is the rumination of the soul; thereby we get that nutriment which feeds and supports the mind.

When thou hast gathered flowers in the field or garden, arrange them and bind them together with the string of memory; but take heed that thou dost put them into the water of meditation, else they will soon fade, and be fit only for the dunghill. When thou hast gathered pearls from the sea, recollect that thou wilt have gathered with them many worthless shells, and much mud; count them over, therefore, and sort them in thy memory; keep what are worth preserving, and even then thou must open the oyster to extract the pearl, and polish it to make it appear more beautiful. Thou mayest not string it in the necklace of thy minds until it has been rubbed and garnished by meditation.

Thus, we need meditation to make use of what we have discovered. As it is the rest of the soul, so it is, at the same time, the means of making the best use of what the soul has acquired.

Again, *meditation is to the soul what oil was to the body of the wrestlers*. When those old athletes went out to wrestle, they always took care before they went to oil themselves well—to make their joints supple and fit for labor. Now, meditation makes the soul supple—makes it so that it can use things when they come into the mind. Who are the men that can go into a controversy and get the mastery? Why, the men who meditate when they are alone. Who are the men that can preach? Not those who gad about and never commune with their own hearts alone; but those who think earnestly, as well when no one is near them as when there is a crowd around them. Who are the authors who write your books, and keep up the constant supply of literature? They are meditative men. They keep their bones supple and their limbs fit for exercise by continually bathing themselves in the oil of meditation. How important, therefore, is meditation as a mental exercise, to have our minds in constant readiness for any service!

I have thus pointed out to you that meditation is in itself useful to every man. But you did not come here to listen to a merely moral essay; you came to hear something about the Gospel of God; and what I have said already is but an introduction to what I have to say concerning the great necessity of meditation in religion. As meditation is good for the mind, even upon worldly topics and natural science, *much more is it useful when we come to spiritual learning*. The best and most saintly of men have been men of meditation. Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate. David says, "As for me, I will meditate on thy statutes." Paul, who meditated continually, says to Timothy, "Give thyself to meditation." To the Christian meditation is most essential. I should almost question the being of a Christian, and I should positively deny his well-being who lived without habitual meditation. Meditation and prayer are twin sisters, and both of them appear to me equally necessary to a Christian life. I think meditation must exist where there is prayer, and prayer would be sure to exist where there is meditation.

My brethren, there is nothing more wanting to make Christians grow in grace now-a-days than meditation. Most of you are painfully negligent in this matter. You remind me of a sermon that one of my quaint old friends in the country once preached from that text—"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." He told us that many people who would hunt for a sermon, were too lazy to roast it by meditation. They knew not how to put the jack of memory through it, and then to twist it round by meditation before the fire of piety, and so to cook it and make it fit for your soul's food. So it is with many of you after you have caught the sermon: you allow it to run away. How often do you, through lack of meditation, miss the entire purpose for which the sermon was designed. Unless ye meditate upon the truths we declare unto you, ye will gather little sweetness, ye will acquire little profit, and, certainly, ye will be in no wise established therein to your edification. Can you get the honey from the comb until you squeeze it! You may be refreshed by a few words while you listen to the sermon, but it is the meditation afterwards which extracts the honey, and gets the best and most luscious savor therefrom. Meditation, my friends, is a part of the life-blood of every true Christian, and we ought to abound therein.

Let me tell you that *there ought to be special times for meditation*. I think every man should set apart a portion of time every day for this gracious exercise. But, then, again I am met with an apology; you assure me that you have so much to do you cannot afford it. I generally treat with lightness the excuses of those who cannot afford time for obvious duties. If you have got no time you should make it. Let us see now, What time do you get up in the morning? Could you not manage

to get up a quarter of an hour earlier? Well, yes! How long do you take for your dinner? So long. Then you read some trashy publication, possibly. Well, why could you not spend that time in tranquil communion with your own soul? The Christian will ever be in a lean state if he has no time for sacred musings before his God. Those men who know most of God are such as meditate most upon him. Those who realize most experimentally the doctrines of grace, are those who meditate and soar beyond the reach of all sublunary things. I think we shall never have much advancement in our churches until the members thereof begin to accept habitually the counsel, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers;" or that other, "Commune with your own heart in your chamber, and be still." Till the din and noise of business somewhat abate, and we give ourselves to calmer thought, and in the solemn silence of the mind find at once our heaven and our God, we must still expect to have regiments of dwarfs, and only here and there a giant. Giant minds can not be nourished by casual hearing; gigantic souls must have meditation to support them. Would ye be strong? Would ye be mighty? Would ye be valiant for the Lord, and useful in his cause? Take care that ye follow the occupation of the Psalmist, David, and meditate. This is a happy occupation.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider A VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT: "My meditation of *him* shall be sweet."

Christian! thou needest no greater inducement to excite thee than the subject here proposed: "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Whom does that word "him" mean? I suppose it may refer to all the three persons of the glorious Trinity? My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet! And, verily, if you set down to meditate upon God the Father, and reflect on his sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love towards his elect people—if you think of God the Father as the great author and originator of the plan of salvation—if you think of him as the mighty being who has said that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he hath given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus—if you look to him as the giver of his only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, his best gift, will, with him also, freely give us all things—if you consider him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations, in the ingathering of every chosen ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation for ever, even were your attention limited to the manner of the Father's love.

Or, if you choose to do so, you may *meditate upon God the Holy Spirit*. Consider his marvellous operations on your own heart—how he quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins—how he brought you nigh to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold—how he called you with such a mighty efficacy that you could not resist his voice—how he drew you with the cords of love. If you think how often he has helped you in the hour of peril—how frequently he has comforted you with the promise in times of distress and trouble; and, if you think that, like holy oil, he will always supply your lamp, and until life's last hour he will always replenish you with his influences, proving himself still your teacher and your guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Saviour face to face, in the blessed presence of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost—in such revelation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation.

But to-night, I prefer rather to confine this word "him" to *the person of our adorable Saviour*. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Ah! if it be possible that the meditation upon one person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no Comfort find;

The holy, just and sacred three
 Are terrors to my mind.
 "But if Immanuel's face appear,
 My hope, my joy begins;
 His name forbids my slavish fear,
 His grace forgives my sins."

Thou precious Jesus! what can be a sweeter theme for me, than to think of thine exalted being—to conceive of thee as the Son of God, who with the golden compasses struck out a circle from space, and fashioned this round world? To think of thee as the God who holds this mighty orb upon thy shoulders, and art the King of Glory, before whom angels bow with modest homage; and yet to consider thee as likewise "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh"—

"In ties of blood with sinners one;"

to conceive of thee as the Son of Mary, born of a Virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race; to picture thee in all thy suffering life, in all the anguish of thy death; to trace thee in all thy passion; to view thee in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement; and then to follow thee to the pavement, and thence up the steep side of Calvary, bearing the cross, braving the shame, when thy soul was made an offering for my sins, when thou didst die the reconciling death 'midst horrors still to all but God unknown. Verily, here is a meditation for my soul, which must be "sweet" for ever. I might begin, like the Psalmist David, and say, "My heart is inditing of a good matter; it bubbleth up, while I speak of things which I have made touching the king; my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer."

Christ! "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Consider Christ in any way you please, and your meditation of him will be sweet. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen, which you may take up and hold one way, and you see one light, and another way, and you see another light, and whichever way you turn them you will always see some precious sparkling of light, and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah! take Jesus for your theme; sit down and consider him; think of his relation to your own soul, and you will never get to the end of that one subject.

Think of his eternal relationship with you; recollect that the saints of Jesus were from condemnation free, in union with the Lamb, before the world was made. Think of your everlasting union with the person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space, and how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean, even before you fell; and after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to him since you have been called by his grace. Think how he has become your brother; how his heart has beaten in sympathy with yours; how he has kissed you with the kisses of his love, and his love has been to you sweeter than wine. Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history, where Jesus has whispered, "I am yours," and you have said, "My beloved is mine." Think of some choice moments, when an angel has stooped from heaven, and taken you up on his wings, and carried you aloft, to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with him. Or think, if it please you, of some pensive moments, when you have had what Paul sets so much store by—fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus—yet not the sweat of blood—when you have knelt down, and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your

relationship in Christ, which is to be developed in heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when ye shall—

"greet the blood-besprinkled band,
on the eternal shore,"
and for ever range the—
"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Array'd in living green."

Picture to your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as "more than a conqueror," and put a pearly crown upon your head, more glittering than stars. And think of that transporting hour, when you will take that crown from off your own brow, and climbing the steps of Jesus' throne, you shall put it on his head, and crown him once more Lord of your soul, as well as "Lord of all." Ah! if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer, Surely, you have not tried to meditate; for "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Suppose you have done thinking of him as he is related to you; consider him next as he is related to the wide world. Recollect that Jesus Christ says he came into the world to save the world, and undoubtedly he will one day save the world, for he who redeemed it by price and by power will restore it and renew it from the effects of the fall. Oh! think of Jesus in this relationship as the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. He will come again to our earth one day; and when he comes he will find this world defaced still with the old curse upon it—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, and pestilence, and war here still; but when he comes, he shall bid men "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" war shall be obliterated from among the sciences; he shall speak the word, and there shall be a company that will publish it. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." Jesus Christ shall come! Christians! be ye waiting for the second coming of your Lord Jesus Christ! and whilst ye wait, meditate upon that coming. Think, O my soul, of that august day, when thou shalt see him with all his pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment, and to avenge himself upon his enemies. Think of all his triumphs when Satan shall be bound, and death shall be crushed, and hell shall be conquered, and when he shall be saluted as the universal Monarch, "Lord over all, blessed for ever. Amen." "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Ah! Christian! you are not afraid to be alone a little while now, for want of subjects of meditation! Some persons say they cannot bear to be an hour in solitude; they have got nothing to do, nothing to think about. No Christian will ever talk so, surely; for if I can but give him one word to think of—Christ—let him spell that over for ever; let me give him the word Jesus, and only let him try to think it over, and he shall find that an hour is nought, and that eternity is not half enough to utter our glorious Saviour's praise. Yea, beloved, I believe when we get to heaven we shall want no subject for meditation there, except Jesus Christ. I know there are some divines and learned philosophers who have been telling us that when we go to heaven we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another; that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus, and all the host of celestial bodies. We shall behold all the wonders of creation; we shall explore the depths of science, as they tell us, and there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to people who imagine thus of heaven, is, that I have no objection it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure; I hope you will have, and I know my Father will let you have, whatsoever will make you happy. But, while you are viewing stars, I will sit down and look

at Jesus; and if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say, Ah! yes—

"But in His looks a wonder stands,
The noblest glory of God's hands;
God in the person of His Son
Hath all His mightiest works outdone."

But you will say, You will become tired, surely, of looking at him. No, I should reply; I have been looking at but one of his hands, and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in; and when I have lived ten thousand years more I will take his other hand, and sit down and look at each gaping wound, and then I may descend to his side and his feet:—

"Millions of years my wond'ring eyes
Shall o'er his beauties rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of His love."

You may go flitting about as far as you like; I will sit there, and look at the God in human flesh, for I believe that I shall learn more of God and more of his works in the person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of traveling on wings of light, though you should have the most elevated imaginations and the most gigantic intellects to help you in your search. Brethren, our meditation of Christ will be sweet. There will be little else we shall want of heaven besides Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ; everything in heaven will be Christ-like: yea Christ is the heaven of his people. To be in Christ and to be with Christ is the essence of heaven:—

"Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence remove
Or but conceal His Face."

Here is the object of our meditation. Our meditation of him shall be sweet."

III. Let me proceed to point out a blessed result—"Our meditation of him shall be *sweet*."

This depends upon the character very much. Ah! I know some persons come into chapel, who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the benediction, and dismiss the assembly; they are very glad when all is over, and they would rather hear the parting doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, It is precious dry. If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind remembering that; but a meditation which should be entirely on Christ, would be dry enough to them, and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah! that is because of the taste you have in your mouth. There is something wrong about your palate. You know, when we have been taking some kind of medicine, and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavor, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So it is with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world's poor dainties; you have some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips, that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus. In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it with your hearts. But here the Psalmist says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

What a mercy, dear friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For I am sure, *as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter*. There is little here that

seems sweet at first, but what has some bitter flavor afterward; and there are too many things that are actually bitter, and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world and how many will be the cases that you will see marked bitter! There are perhaps more of aloes put in our Cup than of any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy then it is, that there is one thing that is sweet! "My meditation of *him* shall be sweet; so sweet, beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness. Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed, and he who was her strength, the stay of her life and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave—have I not seen her hold up her hands, and say, "Ah! though he is gone, still my Maker is my husband; 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;' blessed be his name!" What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man, whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up, and become quicksands, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands, and repeated Habbakuk's words, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c., &c., yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. "Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh! how many, when they have come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived that death was swallowed up in victory, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste, through affliction and trouble, if you have been saying with Jeremiah, "Thou has filled my mouth with gravel stones and made me drunken with worm-wood"—if so, take a little of his choice cordial; I assure you it is sweet; *Lacrymae Christi*, as it is called. If thou wilt take these tears of Jesus and put them in thy mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor. Or again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ, as a piece of scented stuff that was perfumed in heaven. It matters not what thou hast in thy house; this shall make it redolent of Paradise—shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden's garden, wafting the odor of flowers. Ah! there is nothing that can so console your spirits, and relieve all your distresses and troubles, as the feeling that now you can meditate on the person of Jesus Christ. "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

But, my dear hearers, shall I send you away without asking you whether you have ever had such a meditation upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? I do not like to preach a sermon, without pressing it home to the conscience of my hearers. I never like to bring you out a sword and show it you, and say, "There is a sword, and it is sharp;" I always like to make you feel that it is sharp, by cutting you with it. Would to God the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts now! When I see so many gathered together even on a week-day, I am astonished. But wherefore have ye come, my brethren? What went ye out for to see? a reed shaken with the wind? What have ye come out for to see? a prophet? Nay, but I say that you have come to see something more than a prophet. You have come to see and hear somewhat of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. How many of you meditate on Christ? Christian men and women, do you not live below your privileges, many of you? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with your Jesus? Methinks, if you had a free pass to heavens palace, you would use it very often; if you might go there and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your Jesus, the king of heaven, and he gives you that which can open the gates of heaven and let you in to hold company with him, and yet you live without meditating

upon his work, meditating upon his person, meditating upon his offices, and meditating upon his glory.

Christian men and women! I say to you, is it not time we should begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the Gospel is preached in most; but it is preached as it might be by bumble-bees in pitchers—always the same monotonous sound, and no good is done. I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run up-hill; but when you begin to meditate and pray over the word, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them, and they will set to and meditate themselves, and give you the Gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts, food for people's souls.

And for the rest of you—you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ—what do you think shall become of you when your bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet "that last, that bitter cup which mortal man can taste" is but a dire presentiment. When you have to drink that gall in hell for ever—when the cup of torments which Jesus did *not* drain for you will hate to be drained by yourself—what will you do then? The Christian can go to heaven, because Christ has drunk destruction dry for him; but the ungodly and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. What will you do then? The first drops are bad enough, when you sip here the drops of remorse on account of sin; but that future cup in hell—that terrific mixture which God deals out to the lost in the pit—what will you do when you have to drink that? when your meditation will be, that you rejected Jesus, that you despised his Gospel, that you scoffed at his word? What will you do in that dread extremity? Many of you business men! will your ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in hell? Lawyer will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Laboring man! will it be a sweet meditation to thee, to think that thy wages were spent in drunkenness, or thy Sabbath profaned, and thy duties neglected? And thou, professor! will it be a sweet meditation to sit down and think of thine hypocrisy? And ah! ye carnally-minded men, who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, "whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame," will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last?

Be assured of this: your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is not your meditation now. May there be great searchings of heart this night! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnowing's hand; they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate—hearing sermons and forgetting them. Take heed to the voice of warning, lest God should say, "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." O wicked men! wicked men! one word to you, all of you who know not God, and ye shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation to-night. It shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, "What is your employment?" He said, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home," said he, "and make me a chain of such a length" He went home; it occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain, only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said, "Go and make it twice as long." He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, "Go and make it longer still." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, "Take it, bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him

into a furnace of fire." There were his wages for making the chain. Here is a meditation for you to-night, ye servants of the devil! Your master the devil is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been fifty years welding the links of the chain; and he says, "Go and make it longer still. Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on; next Saturday night you will be drunk, and put another link on; next Monday you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say, "More links on still!" And then, at last, it will be, "Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire." "For the wages of sin is death." There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet; but if God makes it profitable, it will do good. You must have strong medicines sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply it to your hearts! Amen.

Priest and Victim

A Sermon

(No. 2693)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, September 23rd, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On a Lord's-day Evening, August 28th, 1881.

"He offered up himself."—Hebrews 7:27.

I DO NOT KNOW when I have ever felt a more decided conflict of emotions in my own heart than I do just now. Happy is the man who has such a message as that in my text to deliver to his fellow-men; but burdened is the man who feels that the message is far too great for his lips, or, indeed, for any human tongue to convey. To be allowed to announce to men that our Lord Jesus Christ "offered up himself" on their behalf is, indeed, an errand which angels might envy, but the theme is too great for any human being to compass. I comfort myself with the reflection that it does not require any excellence of speech to tell it, the excellence lies in the truth itself; and if men's minds are in a right condition, if they are conscious of their lost state, and they really desire to know what Christ has done to save them from it, they will want no garnishing or tawdry fripperies of human eloquence; all they will want will be to hear, as plainly and as earnestly as it can be spoken, the message of reconciliation which God has sent through Jesus Christ his Son. Yet I cannot help feeling that the meaning of my text is so weighty that it may break the backs of the words that attempt to bring it to us. The axles of my human medium of conveyance are ready to snap when freighted with such a load of infinite love and wisdom as comes to us in my short, full text: "He offered up himself."

But, to begin, I would remind you, dear friends, that the idea of a sacrifice for sin is, in some sense or other, found in almost all human religions. I believe that some of the most ignorant tribes of Africa, and also Unitarians, have been found without the doctrine of an atoning sacrifice in their religion; but I do not think there are any other persons so benighted as these to be found anywhere. Go where you may, you will discover that, as soon as ever people begin to say "God," the next thing they say is "sacrifice"; and though their idea of God is often distorted, and their idea of sacrifice is distorted also, yet both ideas are there. Man, however degraded, cannot altogether forget that there is a God; and then, shrinking back from the awful majesty of the divine holiness, he at least hopes that there is a sacrifice by which his sins may be put away. He feels that there must be one if he is ever to be brought into connection with God; and so, in some form or other, the notion of sacrifice crops up wherever there is any religion at all. It may be in the ghastly form of human sacrifice, which is a hideous misinterpretation which has crept in under the darkness and gloom of heathenism or false teaching; or it may appear in the continued sacrifice of bullocks, or lambs, or other victims; but, somehow or other, the idea is there. Man seems to know, in his inmost nature, that he must bring a sacrifice if he would appear before God; and this is, by no means, an error on his part. However erroneous may be the form it takes, in its essence there is truth in it.

Brothers and sisters, did you never know this truth in your own souls? Has not the conviction come to you, under a sense of sin, as an absolute certainty, that sin must be punished? I will not say that you have thought so when you have imagined yourself to be all right; or, at least, to be pretty nearly clear of anything wrong. No; but when conscience has been awakened, and has begun to speak; in the quiet night watches, in times of sickness, or when you have seemed to be on the brink of eternity. I ask you, has there not come the thought that sin would surely be visited with punishment? That—

"Dread of something after death,"

of which the world's poet speaks, is an indication of belief in the truth which is most sure, that the Judge of all the earth will not suffer his laws to be trampled on with impunity, but that he will certainly punish iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Then there has also come to your mind, I feel sure;—at least, I remember well when it came to mine,—the thought that God could not pardon me without punishing my sin,—or that, if he did, his moral government of the whole universe would be weakened. If he permitted the guilty to enjoy the same rewards as the righteous received, where would be his justice? An amnesty to the guilty would, practically, be an abolition of the law; it would be tantamount to saying, "It does not matter how you live, all will come right at last." There are some who teach that doctrine, nowadays; and, to state it in plain English, this is the doctrine that they teach, —that we may rebel against God, we may blaspheme God, we may despise God,—we may cheat, we may lie, we may murder, and so on; but it shall be just as well with us one day as it will be with the best man that lives. Does not the least atom of common morality that remains in man compel him to shrink back from teaching so intolerable as that? It cannot be right, we need not argue about the matter; it is impossible that it should be so, for human society would go to pieces under such an arrangement as that, and the Judge of all the earth would have to abdicate his throne ere this could be. Many years ago, I put into words for myself, when I was under a sense of sin, a feeling which I believe others must have had under similar circumstances; and I said, "If God does not punish me for my sin, he ought to do so." I felt that, if he did not condemn me for my sin, my conscience would condemn him; and that, if he suffered me to go unpunished when I was guilty, in some way or other he would cease to be a just God, and would no longer be worthy of the respect of my own conscience.

Now, that is a truth, a great truth, a terrible truth; and hence it is that the mind of the convinced sinner is driven to the hope of an atonement, If God is to pardon sin, there must be something done by which his law can be honoured, his justice can be vindicated, and his truthfulness can be established; in fact, there must be an atonement. That is what it all comes to; or else pardon is impossible, and you and I must be lost for ever. I would to God that we all not only believed this truth,—as I suspect that the most of us do; —but that we felt it to be the case in our own personal experience, that we realized our need of an atoning sacrifice, in order that God might be just, and yet be the Justifier of the ungodly,—that the honour of his law might shine out in unsullied purity like the terrible crystal, and yet that "a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald," might be seen by the sons of men, reminding them of the covenant made between the Father and the Son concerning all who believe in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

This brings me to the blessed announcement of the text, that the atonement which men have blindly felt after has been made, that the sacrifice which the conscience longs for has been presented. Here is the best possible news in four words: "He offered up himself." Spirit of God, help us to think about this sublime truth, and to speak of it aright!

I. Here is, first, THE PRIEST: "HE offered up himself." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, and "offered up himself" as a sacrifice for sin. The great High Priest, who officiated on the occasion of that wondrous and unique sacrifice, was Jesus Christ, himself.

"He," who was *of infinite dignity*,—he who, in his first estate as very God of very God, was worshipped and obeyed by all the angels of heaven,—he who was with the Father when he spanned the heavens, and laid the foundations of the universe,—he it was, this Son of God, who "offered up himself." No inferior priest was there. There were wicked men, who were the instruments employed in accomplishing his death; but, after all, the great hand that presented the Lamb of God as the one sacrifice for sin was the hand of the Christ of God: "He offered up himself." Our High Priest is of such dignity that none can be compared with him. He is the Son of the Highest, the equal of the Father. I want you to think of this truth, because it may help you to see how great must have been the merit of the sacrifice when it was God himself who "offered up himself." He was no mere delegated or elected priest, but Christ Jesus himself, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"—Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, he it was who stood at the altar presenting "himself" to God as the one and only sacrifice for sin. O sinful men, come ye hither, for here is a sacrifice which may well satisfy the demands of the divine law, since Christ himself puts on the priestly garments, and offers it unto God!

"He offered up himself;" that is to say, *he voluntarily agreed to be the Victim for this wondrous sacrifice*. Did you not notice this truth in the chapter we read just now? "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God." Christ was not compelled to come to earth except by the sweet compulsion of his own love; but with that as his master-motive,—

"Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste he fled."

Voluntarily he took upon himself our nature, and was born at Bethlehem, and voluntarily did he tarry here for three and thirty years. He might have gone back when "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." But he had come in order that he might be a sacrifice for sin, so he remained until the hour appointed for his death; and, even then, he was not forced to die: "He offered up himself." Pilate's servants and Herod's soldiers could not have slain him unless he had been willing to die. He had but to breathe the wish, and the legions of heaven would have burned up the legions of Herod as chaff is consumed in the furnace. Neither the Romans nor the Jews could have nailed him to the tree, nor could all their priests, nor all the ribald mob have put him to death without his own consent. When he did but speak to them in the Garden of Gethsemane, they went backward, and fell to the ground. He that made the earth to quake and open when he died could have shaken them off the earth, or buried them in it, while he lived, if he had so pleased. But he voluntarily delivered himself up to death. To the very last, there was no compulsion upon him to die, except that compulsion of love of which I have spoken. You and I must die; the infirmities of nature will compel us to give up the ghost; but he was strong and vigorous even at the moment of his death. That glorious shout, "*Consummatum est*,"—"It is finished,"—came from One who was still in the vigour of his strength, and just entering on his eternal victory. When he bowed his head, it was because he would do it, and willingly yielded up his soul, committing his spirit to the Father,—not under constraint, but "he offered up himself." Oh, this makes the sacrifice of Christ so blessed and glorious! They dragged the bullocks and they drove the sheep to the altar; they bound the calves with cords, even with cords to the altar's horn; but not so was it with the Christ of God. None did compel him to die; he laid down his life voluntarily, for he had power to lay it down, and

to take it again. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame."
"He offered up himself."

From this great truth, we may learn two or three practical lessons. The first is, the blasphemy of supposing that any so-called "priest" can offer up Christ. There are men who say that, in the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, "there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead." Stand back, beloved; withdraw from the sons of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, lest the earth should again open, and swallow them up, and they should perish alive in their iniquity. "He offered up himself;" and yet these shavelings say that they offer him again. God have mercy upon them, and open their blind eyes, that they may no longer thus perpetrate an infamous blasphemy against his holy name!

But there is a lesson for us also to learn; and that is, the folly of our attempting to offer any sacrifice whatever to God in and of ourselves; for, brethren, there never was such a sacrifice as Christ on earth. It was the best sacrifice that ever could be, yet nobody offered that but Christ himself. What are your sacrifices and mine? They are very poor things, so shall we dare to offer them to God? Nay, let us ask Christ to offer all our sacrifices for us. If the best sacrifice needed Christ to present it to his Father, then our imperfect sacrifices can only be offered by Jesus Christ our great High Priest; and though we, who trust him, and love his name, are all priests, for he "hath made us kings and priests unto God," yet we are only priests in him, and our sacrifices are only presented in and through him. It must be so; for, if the chief sacrifice is offered by him, all the minor ones must also be presented by him if they are to be accepted by God.

And, dear brethren, here is one other lesson, namely, the security of those who trust in the sacrifice of Christ; for if I accept the sacrifice of Christ for me; and trust in it, if I am not saved by it,—suppose that to be possible,—then it follows that the great High Priest, when "he offered up himself," did not perform an effectual work. That would be a terrible imputation upon his honour. God forbid that we should entertain it for a single moment! Much, it is said, in the offering of the mass in the Romish Church, depends upon the intention of the priest. I should think so; but we know what the intention of our High Priest was. We dare not rely upon the intention of any human priest, but we know that our Lord Jesus Christ "offered up himself,"—not in fiction or hypocrisy, but in reality, and with his whole heart and soul; and we are certain that he offered an acceptable and an effectual sacrifice to God, and that we who trust in it must be saved. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the effect of that dread sacrifice must stand, for he who offered it is the Son of God. Fall back, my soul, on this firm rock, and there rest securely whatever doubts may come to assail thee.

II. Now, in the second place, I shall ask you carefully to look at THE SACRIFICE: "He offered up *himself*." That is to say, Jesus Christ did not offer lamb or ram, bird or bullock; but "himself."

That is a great word, and it means that his whole nature as man was offered up in death as an atonement for us,—*his whole nature as man, perfect and sinless, and indissolubly united with his Divine nature*. I do not say that God died, nor would I put it quite so; but I will say that he who died was God, though man, and that "he offered up himself,"—the whole of himself,—in sacrifice to God on our behalf. His precious body suffered pains which are indescribable, but which I pray you never to undervalue or forget. I have seen criticisms concerning what is called "the sensuousness" of certain of our hymns that speak of his wounds, and so on. Never mind the criticism,—be willing to be called sensuous, Holy Scripture might be condemned on the same ground. You will never understand the agony of Christ's soul if you despise the agony of his body; for, while the sufferings

of his soul were the soul of his sufferings, yet the sufferings of his body were the body of his sufferings, and he who does not think much of the body of the sufferings is not likely to know much about the soul of them.

His body was given for you and for me; and, then, his spiritual nature—his mind, his intellect, his heart, his imagination,—every pure unspotted faculty of that blessed soul of his,—he gave up all for us. The alabaster box, his body, was broken; and the precious nard, his soul, was poured out like a divine perfume upon the head of our poor humanity. It was all given for us: "He offered up himself." Not his garments only, though he was stripped naked; —not his glory only, though he emptied himself; —not his life only, though he laid down his life for us;—but "he offered up himself." Oh, it is a great word, but it describes a great sacrifice; and it needed all that to make an atonement for our sins, and all that he gave.

"He offered up himself;" that is, *he presented himself to God as a sacrifice, and he did actually die*. O brothers and sisters, I cannot describe that wondrous death! You and I have never died. We have been sick, but to actual death we have never yet come. Some of us never shall know death as Christ knew it; for, remember, death was death to him; but for his saints the bitterness of death is past. Christ had to endure death in all its bitterness, but he has taken away the wormwood and the gall of death for us who believe in him. Many of those who were martyred for his name's sake, when they burned at the stake could sing as they died, and counted the flames as though they were but beds of roses, for he was with them, and God was with them to sustain them; but, for him, there was no such succour, no Divine support. "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" was the cry into which more grief was packed away than can even be found in any sufferer in hell; for, recollect, the griefs of Christ were not the griefs sufficing for one lost man, but for unnumbered myriads who would otherwise have been banished from the presence of God for ever. "He offered up himself." Oh! see him die, if you can bear the sight; his blessed soul exhaled, his body left behind to be buried in the tomb. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

I always think, with regard to that offering up of himself, that *it was a very mysterious transaction*, in to which you and I must not pry with any sinful curiosity. Yet, as I meditated upon this subject, it appeared to me that the cross, which seemed so small a thing out yonder on that little rising ground of Golgotha,—that one cross, standing in the centre of the three, appeared to me to be the centre of the entire universe, and so it is. If the inhabitants in all the stars did not see Christ die, if from all worlds they could not behold the dreadful sight, yet they must have heard of it in many a star by this time. Swift spirits have told, in those bright orbs where myriads of unfallen creatures dwell, the story that, on this little dusky planet, sin struggled against incarnate love, and love, to conquer it, did die, and in the dying won the victory. I cannot tell you how many races of intelligent beings there are beside the hierarchy of angels, but it is not at all improbable that there are as many worlds as there are grains of sand upon the seashore, and perhaps every one of these teems with inhabitants more than our earth does; and they have heard, and they keep on hearing, and the news keeps spreading everywhere, that the God, who made them all, took human form, and died to put away human sin.

And, supposing this is the case, what do you think all these intelligent beings say? It must be that the impression made upon them is that sin is a horrible thing, since it stabs at God himself. All intelligences must also feel that God is just, since he will sooner himself die than let sin go unpunished. It further rings throughout the spheres that God is love,—that he will sooner bleed to death than let his creatures perish; and that here he once proved, in his death, that he was infinite

both in his vengeance and his mercy. All the universe throughout eternity shall hear this wondrous story; it is so marvellous that it will never grow stale. They are telling it, to-night, to wondering assemblies, compared with which this vast congregation is but as a drop in a bucket. Standing in some central star, some mighty intelligence is proclaiming this story, perhaps to as many worlds as there are men and women in this building. Certainly, it is worthy of such an audience, for never was there such news as that the infinite, immortal, eternal, invisible, almighty, loving God did come, and take upon himself the sin of men, and at last suffered and died in the room and stead of guilty sinners.

You say, perhaps, that I am dreaming while talking to you thus. But dear friends, we sometimes learn more truth in dreams than when we are awake. At any rate, this I know. I would sooner be mistaken in enlarging too much upon the wondrous fact and efficacy of the cross than I would ever become one of those who shrivel up the atonement till there is little or nothing of it left. I believe that there was such a necessity for Christ to die as you and I have never yet imagined; that he did not die merely because his death was necessary upon this planet, but that it was necessary through every province of the infinite dominions of God, and that it was necessary to the very nature of God himself, which is saying still more. There was a supreme necessity that Christ should die; I am sure of it, for else he would not have died. The Father would never have given up his Son to the death of the cross unless it had been imperative that this sacrifice should be offered, or else that men should suffer for ever. Oh, wonder of wonders! Tell it everywhere, and never cease to tell it. "He offered up himself."

III. Now, lest I should weary you, I will, in closing, only say a little upon the third point, which is, **CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THIS TRUTH, WHICH ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US.**

The first is this. "He offered up himself;" *but he did not offer up himself for himself.* That is an offering which cannot be imagined. So far as Christ was himself alone concerned, there was no necessity that he should die. He was infinitely glorious and blessed. "He offered up himself," but not for himself; then, for whom did he die? For men. We are told that he took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham, he took up sinful men. O poor sinner, I want you to think of this! Let your soul see Jesus on the cross, —bleeding, writhing, suffering, tortured, dying, dead; and then recollect that there was not one pang, or groan, or sigh for himself; it was all for others,—for his enemies. I wish we could all say, one by one, "It was for me. He loved me, and gave himself for me. He endured the cross for me, his blood was shed for me, those agonies and cries and griefs were all for me. For me the death-pang and the expiring groan; all for me, for me." If thou believest in Jesus, it is even so. There must have been something great done for thee there. Thy great sin must have been buried there. The great hell, which thou oughtest to have endured, must have been extinguished there So far as thou art concerned. The great heaven, which thou couldst never else have entered, must have been opened there, if he died there for thee. Untold blessings are insured to thee in that matchless death. Dwell on that thought, beloved. "He offered up himself;" but not for himself. It must have been, then, for the guilty. O my soul, it must have been, it was, for thee if thou believest in him!

Next, notice that *this great deed of love was really done:* "He offered up himself." He did really do it. I know that, when I am preaching, some of you seem to think that I am only talking about fanciful or imaginary matters. If I were to begin to speak of President Garfield and his sickness, or about the wet weather and the harvest, you would say, "These are facts." O sirs, but this also is a

fact, and the greatest of all facts: "He offered up himself." It happened long ago, but it is true that he did this. That same God that painted every flower,—that spread the skies,—the God that made us,—came here in human form, and after living here a life of blessing and beneficence, he died as a sacrifice for human guilt. This is not something that is yet to be done. It is all over; Jesus himself said, "It is finished." If I had to tell you that God would come here, and become man, and die for us, you might say, "It may not be; it is too great a condescension. Do you know how great God is, and can it be imagined that he should come down to earth, and be veiled in human flesh, and in that flesh should suffer and die? It cannot be." But I have to tell you that it has been done, it is a fact accomplished. He did it: "He offered up himself." It may sometimes have been a question among believers who lived before Christ died,—"Will he really die?" But it is no question to you and me, for he has died, his great deed of love is done.

And he so completely did this that *it will never be done again*. If you will not accept this Christ, there will never be another; and if you will not be saved by his redemption, you will never be redeemed at all. And there is this comfort about it,—that he only died once because there is no need that he should ever die again. His one death has slain death for all who trust him. His one bearing of sin has put their sin away for ever. God now can justly forgive the believing sinner; and he may well blot out the debt when it has been paid by his Son. Well may he remit the sentence against us now that his Son has stood in our place, and borne the penalty due to our sin. God is therefore just when he justifies those for whom Christ died; where would his justice be if he did not so? Did Christ pay my debts, and am I arrested for them? Did he die for me, and shall I perish? Where then is the atonement? Beloved, if thou believest in Jesus, be glad that he died once, and be gladder still that he cannot die again, and that there is no need that he should. The atonement is completed; thou art saved; and thou shalt never come into condemnation. How I wish that I could preach on such a theme as this as it deserves! But I do not know how it is to be done; it does not seem to me as if any human words could ever fittingly set forth such a wondrous mystery. Nay, though they were written across the face of the sky,—unless God himself wrote them with a finger of lightning,—I know of no way in which this truth could be fitly set out: "He offered up himself"

But, my dear hearers, I wish you would all lay hold of this blessed truth! When I laid hold of it, it was the crisis in my whole history; and to this hour it is the joy of my soul. I could not give up this blessed belief,—that "he offered up himself" in the room and place and stead of all his people, of all who believe in him, and that, therefore, they are safe for ever.

I must sum up, in a few words, much more that I might have said. And, first, this truth quiets the conscience. "He offered up himself." Conscience never murmurs after the blood of Jesus has been applied to it. I say to myself, "Jesus died for me; Jesus suffered in my stead; Jesus took my guilt; Jesus bore my punishment;" and my conscience says, "That is enough; that is all I want."

This truth also satisfies my understanding. Let those who will sneer at the simple gospel, and the doctrine of substitution; but I have no understanding that is too large to be satisfied with these things. It seems to me that, if God appointed Christ to be an atonement for sin, and if he is satisfied with his sacrifice, I may well be content. Surely, if my great Creditor and Judge is appeased by what his Son has offered on my behalf, it is not for me to begin to cavil at it. I know how some criticize the great central truth of the atonement. I care not how they criticize it so long as God has accepted it; and since he has also accepted me in Christ Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, my soul feels perfectly content, and understands why she is contented.

And, oh! how this truth also wins the affections of men! Can you help loving the Christ who offered up himself for you? And loving him, do you not desire to honour and glorify him? Do you not feel that you hate the sin that made him die? Do you not wish to be like him, and in everything to give him pleasure by a life of holiness, and self-denial, and self-sacrifice? I know you do; it must be so. Because Jesus sacrificed himself for you, you feel that you must love him with all your heart.

Does not this truth also arouse your admiration? Say, brothers and sisters, if there is anything that can move you like this glorious truth of which I have been speaking? Does it not arouse your highest admiration when you remember that the Lord Jesus Christ took your sin upon himself, and suffered in your stead? I know that there is no hand that can sweep the strings of my heart with such power as can the hand that was pierced for me. This theme enkindles my enthusiasm, and stirs my passions to a flame, and makes me wish for the tongues of men and of angels that I might be able to tell out this story of "love so amazing, so divine." I would ask no other heaven, if I might have my choice, than, having to meditate upon the passion of my Lord, and to tell it out to others, and then to fall at his dear feet, and worship him world without end, for he was slain, and has redeemed me by his precious blood. You take Christ out of the gospel, and out of your preaching, and see whether you will arouse any enthusiasm among your people. There is a cold, steely religion, sharp and deadly, out of which the atonement has gone; but was it ever a power in this land, or any other, or will it ever be? Only preach the Christless gospel, and you shall have spiders in abundance in your places of worship, and very few men and women. They run away, if they are wise, from the place where Christ is not preached, and his atoning blood is not constantly set forth. Point that place out to me on the map of London, and I will show you the spot where there is a beggarly array of empty benches, and few hearers; for they fly, and rightly so, as hungry men flee from the place where there is no bread, and as the thirsty in the wilderness turn away from the dried-up well. They get still more thirsty as long as they stay by the empty mockery, so they hasten away from it. But preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, preach the atoning sacrifice, and see how the people flock together. Let them believe this truth, let them love it, and their whole spirit is stirred within them, and everyone becomes a soldier of the cross, a warrior for Jesus Christ. I am sure it is so; and what I feel within my own spirit I know that you all feel too, for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

And, finally, this truth that Christ offered up himself, leads us who accept it to be ready for self-sacrifice. It makes the believing man say, "As he offered himself for me, I must give myself for him." It teaches the doctrine of the self-sacrifice of men for God, and of men for men. This is the nursery of brave spirits, and the school in which true heroes are trained. None have been bolder for the truth, and for the right, and for the advancement of the ages, and for the glory of God, than those who have enshrined the blood-red cross within their hearts, and who have been prepared for love of it even to die. O Christ of God, thou who hast offered thyself for us, we offer ourselves to thee; accept us now! Amen.

Christian Conversation

A Sermon

(No. 2695)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, October 7th, 1900,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On a Lord's-day Evening in the autumn of 1858.

"They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."—Psalm 145:11.

YOU HAVE only to look at the preceding verse, and you will discover, in a single moment, who are the people here spoken of who shall speak of the glory of God's kingdom, and talk of his power. They are the saints: "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.*" A saint will often be discovered by his conversation. He is a saint long before he knows it; he is a saint as being set apart unto salvation by God the Father in the covenant decree of election from all eternity; and he is a saint as being sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called. But he is more especially a saint as being sanctified by the quickening influence of the Holy Ghost, which renders him truly sanctified by making him holy, and bringing him into conformity with the image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yet it is not at all times easy to discern a saint except by Scriptural marks and evidences. There is nothing particular about the countenance or dress of a saint to distinguish him from his fellows. The saints have faces like other men; sometimes, they are sadly marred and furrowed by cares and troubles which worldlings do not know. They wear the same kind of garments as other men wear; they may be rich or they may be poor; but, still, there are some marks whereby we can discern them, and one of the special ways of discovering a saint is by his conversation. As I often tell you, you may know the quality of the water in a well by that which is brought up in the bucket; so may we tell a Christian by his conversation.

It is, however, much to be regretted that true children of the Lord often talk too little of him. What is the conversation of half the professors of the present day? Honesty compels us to say that, in many cases, it is a mass of froth and falsehood, and, in many more cases it is altogether objectionable; if it is not light and frivolous, it is utterly apart from the gospel, and does not minister grace unto the bearers. I consider that one of the great lacks of the Church, nowadays, is not so much Christian preaching as Christian talking,—not so much Christian prayer in the prayer-meeting, as Christian conversation in the parlour. How little do we hear concerning Christ! You might go in and out of the houses of half the professors of religion, and you would never hear of their Master at all. You might talk with them from the first of January to the last of December; and if they happened to mention their Master's name, it would be, perhaps, merely as a compliment to him, or possibly by accident. Beloved, such things ought not to be. You and I, I am sure, are guilty in this matter; we all have need to reproach ourselves that we do not sufficiently remember the words of Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

Possibly some will ask, "Well, sir, how can we talk about religion? Upon what topic shall we converse? How are we to introduce it? It would not be polite, for instance, in the company with which we associate, to begin to say anything about the doctrines of grace, or about religious matters at all." Then, beloved, do not be polite; that is all I have to say in reply to such a remark as that. If it would be accounted contrary to etiquette to begin talking of the Saviour, cast etiquette to the winds, and speak about Christ somehow or other. The Christian is the aristocrat of the world; it is his place to make rules for society to obey,—not to stoop down, and conform to the regulations of society when they are contrary to the commands of his Master. He is the great Maker of laws; the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and he makes his people also to be kings. Kings make rules for ordinary men to obey; so must Christians do. They are not to submit to others; they must make others, by the worth of their principles, and the dignity of their character, submit to them. It is speaking too lightly of a Christian's dignity when we say that he dare not do the right, because it would not be fashionable. We care nothing for that, for "the fashion of this world passeth away," "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Another says, "What could I speak of? There are so few topics that would be suitable. I must not speak upon doctrinal subjects, for it would offend one of the party. They might hold different views; one might be a Wesleyan, one might be a Baptist, one might be an Independent, one a Calvinist, one an Arminian;—how could I talk so as to please all? If I spoke of election, most of them would attack me at once; if I began to speak of redemption, we should soon differ on that subject, and I would not like to engender controversy." Beloved, engender controversy rather than have wrong conversation; better dispute over truth than agree about lies. Better, I say, is it to dispute concerning good doctrine, far more profitable is it to talk of the Word of God, even in a controversial manner, than to turn utterly away from it, and neglect it.

But, let me tell you, there is one point on which all Christians agree, and that is concerning the person, the work, and the blessed offices of our Saviour. Go where you will, professors, if they are genuine Christians, will always agree with you if you begin to talk about your Saviour; so you need not be afraid that you will provoke controversy; but supposing the mention of your Saviour's name does provoke dispute, then let it be provoked. And if your Master's truth offends the gentlemen to whom you speak of it let them be offended. His name we must confess; of his glory we will continually talk, for it is written in our text, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."

Now, then, first, here is *a subject for conversation*: "they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power." Secondly, we will try to find out *some causes why Christians must speak concerning this blessed subject* and then, thirdly, I will very briefly refer to *the effect of our talking more of Christ's kingdom and power*.

I. First, here is A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION: "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." Here are two subjects; for God, when he puts grace into the heart, does not lack a subject upon which we shall converse.

First, we are to converse concerning *the glory of Christ's kingdom*. The glory of Christ's kingdom should ever be a subject of discourse to a Christian; he should always be speaking, not merely of Christ's priesthood or his prophesying, but also of his kingdom, which has lasted from all eternity; and especially of that glorious kingdom of grace in which we now live, and of that brighter kingdom of millennial glory, which soon shall come upon this world, to conquer all other kingdoms, and break them in pieces.

The psalmist furnishes us with some divisions of this subject, all of which illustrate the glory of Christ's kingdom. In the 12th verse he says, "To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts." The glory of a kingdom depends very much on the achievements of that kingdom; so, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, we are to *make known his mighty acts*. We think that the glory of Old England—at least, our historians would say so,—rests upon the great battles she has fought, and the victories she has won. We turn over the records of the past, and we see her, in one place, vanquishing thousands of Frenchmen at Agincourt; at another period, we see the fleets of the Spanish Armada scattered by the breath of God. We turn to different battles, and we trace victory after victory, dotted along the page of history, and we say that this is the glory of our kingdom. Now, Christian, when you speak of the glory of your Master's kingdom, you must tell something of his great victories;—how he routed Pharaoh, and cut the Egyptian Rahab, and wounded the dragon of the Nile; how he slew all the firstborn in one night; how, at his command, the Red Sea was divided; how the children of Israel crossed over in safety, and the chivalry of Egypt was drowned in the flood. Talk ye also of how God overcame Amalek, and smote Moab; how he utterly cut off those nations that warred against Israel, and caused them to pass away for ever. Tell how Babylon and Nineveh were made to rue the day when God smote them with his iron hand. Tell ye to the world how God hath crushed great nations and overcome proud monarchs; how Sennacherib's hosts were left dead within their camp, and how those that have risen up in rebellion against God have found his arm too mighty for their strength and prowess. Tell of the terrible acts of our Saviour's kingdom; record his victories in this world; nor cease there. Tell how our Saviour routed the devil in the wilderness when he came to tempt him. Tell how he—

"All his foes to ruin hurled,
Sin, Satan, earth, death, hell, the world.

Tell how he hath bruised the head of Satan. Tell how death has lost his prey. Tell how hell's deepest dungeons have been visited, and the power of the prince of darkness utterly cut off. Tell ye how antichrist himself shall sink like a millstone in the flood. Tell how false systems of superstition shall flee away, like birds of night when the sun rises too brightly for their dim sight to bear. Tell ye all this, tell it in Askalon and in Gath; tell it the wide world over, that the Lord of hosts is the God of battles; he is the conqueror of men and of devils; he is Master in his own dominions. Tell ye the glory of his kingdom, and rehearse "his mighty acts." Christian, exhaust that theme if thou canst.

Then, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, the next thing we talk of is *its glorious majesty*. The psalmist further says, in the 12th verse, that the saints shall not only "make known God's mighty acts, but also the glorious majesty of his kingdom." Part of the glory of England consists, not in her achievements, but in the state and majesty which surround her. In ancient times especially, monarchs were noted for the great pomp with which they were surrounded. Thousands of houses must be razed to the ground to find a site for one dwelling for a king. His palace must be gorgeous with riches; its halls must be paved with marble, and its walls set with jewels; fountains must sparkle there; there must be beds of eider on which monarchs may recline; music, such as other ears do not hear, wines from the uttermost regions of the earth, and all manner of delights, are reserved for kings; precious stones and gems adorn their crowns; and everything that is rich and rare must be brought to deck the monarch, and increase the majesty of his kingdom.

Well, Christian, when speaking of Christ's kingdom, you are to talk of its majesty. Tell of your Saviour's glorious majesty; speak of the many crowns that he wears upon his head. Tell of the

crown of grace which he wears continually; tell of the crown of victory which perpetually proclaims the triumphs he has won over the foe; tell of the crown of love wherewith his Father crowned him in the day of his espousals to his Church,—the crown which he has won by ten thousand hearts which he has broken, and untold myriads of spirits which he has bound up. Tell to all mankind that the glory of your Saviour's majesty far exceeds the glories of the ancient kings of Assyria and India. Tell that, before his throne above, there stand, in glorious state, not princes, but angels; not servants in gorgeous liveries, but cherubs, with wings of fire, waiting to obey his mighty behests. Tell that his palace is floored with gold, and that he has no need of lamps, or even of the sun, to enlighten it, for he himself is the light thereof. Tell ye to the whole world what is the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

But once more, Christians, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, you must talk of *its duration*, for much of the honour of the kingdom depends upon the time it has lasted. In verse 13, the psalmist says, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." If one should say to you, concerning an earthly monarch, "Our king sits upon a throne which his ancestors have occupied for many generations;" tell him that a thousand years are to your King but as one day. If another tells you that his king has crowns which were worn by kings a thousand years ago, smile in his face, and tell him that a thousand years are as nothing in Christ's sight. When they speak of the antiquity of churches, tell them that you belong to a very ancient Church. If they talk to you of the venerable character of the religion which they profess, tell them that you believe in a very venerable religion, for yours is a religion which was from everlasting. Christ's kingdom was set up long before this world was brought forth; when as yet neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, had been created, Christ's kingdom was firmly established. I wish Christians would more often talk about the glory of their Master's kingdom with regard to the time it has lasted. If you would begin to talk of the past history of God's Church, you would never have to exclaim, "I have said all that can be said about it, and I have nothing more to say." You would need eternity to keep on going back, back, back, until you came to God alone; and then you might say,—

"In his mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."

Then you may speak concerning the future duration of your Master's kingdom. I suppose, if you were to talk much about the second coming of Christ, you would be laughed at, you would be thought diseased in your brain; for there are so few nowadays who receive that great truth, that, if we speak of it with much enthusiasm, people turn away, and say, "Ah! we do not know much about that subject, but Mr. So-and-so has turned his brain through thinking so much about it." Men are, therefore, half-afraid to speak of such a subject; but, beloved, we are not afraid to talk of it, for Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and we may talk of the glory of the future as well as of the past. Some say that Christ's Church is in danger. There are many churches that are in danger; and the sooner they tumble down, the better; but the Church of Christ has a future that shall never end; it has a future that shall never become dim; it has a future which shall eternally progress in glory. Her glory now is the glory of the morning twilight; it soon shall be the glory of the blazing noon. Her riches now are but the riches of the newly-opened mine; soon she shall have riches much more abundant and far more valuable than any she has at present. She is now young; by-and-by, she will come, not to her dotage, but to her maturity. She is like a fruit that is ripening, a star that is rising, a sun that is shining more and more unto the perfect day; and soon she will blaze forth in all her glory, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." O Christian,

here is a topic worthy of thy conversation! Talk of the glory of thy Master's kingdom. Often speak of it while others amuse themselves with stories of sieges and battles; while they are speaking of this or that or the other event in history, tell them the history of the monarchy of the King of kings; speak to them concerning the fifth great monarchy in which Jesus Christ shall reign for ever and ever.

But I must not forget briefly to hint at the other subject of the saints' conversation: "*and shall talk of thy power.*" It is not simply of Christ's kingdom of which we are to speak, but also of his power. Here, again, the psalmist gives us something which will help us to a division of our subject. In the 14th and 15th verses, mention is made of three kinds of power of which we ought to speak: "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season."

First, the Christian should speak of *Christ's upholding power*. What a strange expression this is, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall"! Yet remember John Bunyan's quaint old saying,—

"He that is down needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

So David says, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall." What a singular expression! How can he hold up those that fall? Yet those that fall, in this sense, are the only persons that stand. It is a remarkable paradox; but it is true. The man who stands on his feet, and says, "I am mighty,—I am strong enough to stand alone;"—down he will go; but he who falls into Christ's arms, he who says,—

"But, oh! for this no power have I,
My strength is at thy feet to lie;"—

that man shall not fall. We may well talk, then, of Christ's upholding power. Tell it to Christians; tell how he kept you when your feet were going swift to hell; how, when fierce temptations did beset you, your Master drove them all away; how, when the enemy was watching, he compassed you with his mighty strength; how, when the arrows fell thickly around you, his mighty arm did hold the shield before you, and so preserved you from them all. Tell how he saved you from death, and delivered your feet from falling by making you, first of all, fall down prostrate before him.

Next, talk of *his exalting power*: "He raiseth up all those that be bowed down." Oh, how sweet it is, beloved, sometimes to talk of God's exalting power after we have been hewed down! I love to come into this pulpit, and talk to you as I would in my own room. I make no pretensions to preaching at all, but simply tell you what I happen to feel just now. Oh, how sweet it is to feel the praisings of God's grace when you have been bowed down! Cannot some of us tell that, when we have been bowed down beneath a load of affliction, so that we could not even move, the everlasting arms have been around us, and have lifted us up? When Satan has put his foot on our back, and we have said, "We shall never be raised up any more," the Lord has come to our rescue. If we were only to talk on that subject in our conversation with one another, no Christian need have spiritless conversation in his parlour. But, nowadays, you are so afraid to speak of your own experience, and the mercy of God to you, that you will talk any stuff and nonsense rather than that. But, I beseech you, if you would do good in the world, rehearse God's deeds of raising up those that be bowed down.

Moreover, talk of God's *providing power*: "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season." We ought often to speak of how God provides for his creatures in

providence. Why should we not tell how God has taken us out of poverty, and made us rich; or, if he has not done that for us, how he has supplied our wants day by day in an almost miraculous manner! Some persons object to such a book as Huntington's "Bank of Faith," and I have heard some respectable people call it "The Bank of Nonsense." Ah! if they had ever been brought into Huntington's condition, they would see that it was indeed a bank of faith, and not a bank of nonsense; the nonsense was in those who read it, in their unbelieving hearts, not in the book itself. And he who has been brought into many straits and trials, and has been divinely delivered out of them, would find that he could write a "Bank of Faith" as good as Huntington's if he liked to do so; for he has had as many deliverances, and he could rehearse the mighty acts of God, who has opened his hands, and supplied the wants of his needy child. Many of you have been out of a situation, and you have cried to God to furnish you with one, and you have had it. Have you not sometimes been brought so low, through painful affliction, that you could not rest? And could you not afterwards say, "I was brought low, and he helped me"? Yes; "I was brought low, and he helped me out of my distress"? Yes; I see some of you nodding your heads, as much as to say, "We are the men who have passed through that experience; we have been brought into great straits, but the Lord has delivered us out of them all." Then do not be ashamed to tell the story. Let the world hear that God provides for his people. Go, speak of your Father. Do as the child does, who, when he has a little cake given to him, will take it out, and say, "Father gave me this." Do so with all your mercies; go and tell all the world that you have a good Father, a gracious Father, a heavenly Provider; and though he gives you a hand-basket portion, and you only live from hand to mouth, yet tell how graciously he gives it, and that you would not change your blest estate for all the world calls good or great.

II. I must be brief in speaking upon THE CAUSES WHICH WILL MAKE CHRISTIANS TALK OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND HIS POWER.

One cause is, that *it is the kingdom of their own King*. We do not expect French people to talk much about the victories of the English; and I suppose there is no Russian who would pay very many compliments to the prowess of our arms; but they will all talk about their own monarchs. Well, that is the reason why a Christian should speak of the glory of his Master's kingdom, and tell of his power, because it is the kingdom of his own King. Jesus Christ may be or may not be another man's King; but, certainly he is mine; he is the Monarch to whom I yield absolute submission. I am no longer an alien and a stranger, but I am one of his subjects; and I will talk concerning him, because he is my King.

Secondly, the Christian must talk of the King's victories, *because all those victories were won for him*; he recollects that his Master never fought a battle for himself,—never slew an enemy for himself. He slew them all for his people. And if for me,—a poor abject worm,—my Saviour did this, shall I not talk of the glory of his kingdom, when he won all that glory for me? Will I not speak of his power, when all that power was exercised for me? It was all for me. When he died, he died for me; when he suffered, he suffered for me; and when he led captivity captive, he did it for me. Therefore, I must and will speak of his dear name. I cannot help testifying to the glory of his grace in whatever company I may be.

Again, the Christian must talk of it, *because he himself has had a good share in fighting some of the battles*. You know how old soldiers will "shoulder their crutch, and tell how fields were won." The soldier, home from the Crimea, when he reads the accounts of the war, says, "Ah! I know that trench; I worked in it myself. I know the Redan; I was one of the men who attacked it."

He is interested because he had a share in the battle. "*Quorum pars magna fui,*" said the old soldier, in the days of Virgil; so we, if we have had a part in the battle, like to talk concerning it. And, beloved, it is this which makes our battles dear to us; we help to fight them. Though there was one battle which our great Captain fought alone, and "of the people there was none with him," yet, in other victories, he has permitted his people to help to crush the dragon's head. Recollect that you have been a soldier in the army of the Lord; and that, in the last day, when he gives away the medals in heaven, you will have one; when he gives away the crowns, you will have one. We can talk about the battles, for we were in them; we can speak of the victories, for we helped to win them. It is to our own praise as well as to our Master's when we talk of his wondrous acts.

But the best reason why the Christian should talk of his Master is this, *if he has Christ in his heart, the truth must come out*; he cannot help it. The best reason in all the world is the woman's reason, who said she should do it because she would do it. So it often happens that the Christian cannot give us much reason why he must talk about his Saviour, except that he cannot help it, and he will not try to help it. It is in him, and it must come out. If God has put a fire inside a man's heart, do you think it can be kept down? If we have grace in our souls, will it never come out in conversation! God does not put his candles in lanterns through which they cannot be seen, but he sets them on candlesticks; he does not build his cities in valleys, but he puts them on hills, so that they cannot be hid. So he will not allow his grace to be concealed. A Christian man cannot help being discovered. None of you ever knew a secret believer,—a secret Christian. "Oh!" you say, "I am sure I have known such a man." But, look you, he could not have been a secret believer if you knew him, he could not be wholly secret; the fact that you knew him proves that he could not have been a secret Christian. If a man says that nobody knows a thing, and yet he knows it, he contradicts himself. You cannot, then, know a secret believer, and you never will. There may be, indeed, some who are secret for a time, but they always have to come out, like Joseph of Arimathaea, when he went and begged the body of Jesus. Ah! there are some of you sitting in your pews who fancy I shall never discover you; but I shall see you in the vestry by-and-by. Some of you keep on coming Sunday after Sunday, and you say, "Well, I must go by-and-by, and make a profession of faith." Yes, you will not be able to sit there long; if you have the grace of God within you, you will be obliged to come out, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptized in his name. Why not do so without further delay? If you love your Lord's name, come out at once, and own it.

III. Lastly, WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR TALKING MORE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND POWER?

The first effect would be *that the world would believe us more*. The world says, "What a parcel of hypocrites Christian people are!" And they are about right concerning a good many of you. The world says, "Why, just look at them! They profess a deal of religion; but if you hear them talk, they do not speak differently from other people. They sing loudly enough, it is true, when they go to church or chapel; but when do you hear them sing at home? They go to the prayer-meeting; but have they a prayer-meeting at their own family altar? Believe them to be Christians? No! Their lives give the lie to their doctrines, and we do not believe them." If we oftener talked of Christ, I am sure the world would think us to be better Christians, and they would, no doubt, say so.

Again, if our conversations were more concerning Christ, *we, as Christian men, should grow faster, and be more happy*. What is the reason of the bickerings and jealousies between Christians? It is this, because they do not know one another. Mr. Jay used to tell a story about a man going out, one foggy morning, and seeing something coming in the fog; he thought it was a monster. But,

by-and-by, as he came nearer, he exclaimed, "Oh, dear me! that's my brother John!" So it often happens, when we see people at a distance, and hold no spiritual conversation with them, we think they are monsters. But when we begin to talk together, and get near to one another, we say, "Why, it is brother John, after all!" There are more true brethren about us than we dream of. Then, I say, let your conversation, in all companies, wherever you may be, be so seasoned with salt that a man may know you to be a Christian. In this way, you would remove bickerings better than by all the sermons that could be preached, and be promoting a true Evangelical Alliance far more excellent and efficient than all the alliances which man can form.

Again, if we oftener talked of Christ like this, *how useful we might be in the salvation of souls!* O beloved, how few souls have some of you won to Christ! It says, in the Canticles, "There is not one barren among them;" but are not some of you barren,—without spiritual children? It was pronounced as a curse upon one of old that he should die childless. Oh! methinks that, though the Christian is always blessed, it is half a curse to die spiritually childless. There are some of you who are childless to-night. You never were the means of the conversion of a soul in all your lives. You hardly remember having tried to win anyone for the Saviour. You are good religious people so far as your outward conduct is concerned. You go to the house of God, but you never concern yourselves about winning souls for Jesus. O my God, let me die when I can no longer be the means of saving souls! If I can be kept out of heaven a thousand years, if thou wilt give me souls as my wages, let me still speak for thee; but if there be no more sinners to be converted,—no more to be brought in by my ministry,—then let me depart, and be "with Christ, which is far better."

Oh, think of the crowns that are in heaven! "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." So many souls, so many gems! Have you ever thought what it would be to wear in heaven a starless crown? All the saints will have crowns, but those who win souls will have a star in their crown for every soul. Some of you, my friends, will wear a crown without a star; would you like that? You will be happy, you will be blessed, you will be satisfied, I know, when you will be there; but can you bear the thought of dying childless,—of having none in heaven who shall be begotten unto Christ by you,—never having travailed in birth for souls,—never having brought any to Christ? How can you bear to think of it? Then, if you would win souls, beloved, talk about Jesus. There is nothing like talking of him, to lead others to him. I read of the conversion of a servant, the other day. She was asked how she came to know the Lord, "Well," she said, "my master, at dinner, happened to make some simple observation to his sister across the table." The remark certainly was not addressed to the servant; and her master had no notion that she was listening; yet his word was blessed to her. It is well to talk behind the door that which you do not mind hearing afterwards in the street; it is good to speak that in the closet which you are not ashamed to listen to from the housetop, for you will have to listen to it from the housetop by-and-by, when God shall come and call you to account for every idle word you have spoken.

Souls are often converted through godly conversation. Simple words frequently do more good than long sermons. Disjointed, unconnected sentences are often of more use than the most finely polished periods or rounded sentences. If you would be useful, let the praises of Christ be ever on your tongue; let him live on your lips. Speak of him always; when thou walkest by the way, when thou sittest in thy house, when thou risest up, and even when thou liest down, it may be that thou hast someone to whom it is possible that thou mayest yet whisper the gospel of the grace of God. Many a sister has been brought to know the Saviour by a sister's pleadings that were only heard in

the silence of the night. God give you, beloved, to fulfil our text! "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." They *shall* do it, mark you; God will make you do it if you are his people. Go and do it willingly. Begin, from this time forth, and keep on doing it for ever. Say, concerning other conversation, "Begone far hence! avaunt! Thus shall be my constant and only theme." Be like the harp of old Anacreon, which would never sound any other note but that of love. The harpist wished to sing of Cadmus, and of mighty men of wisdom, but his harp would resound of love alone. Be, then, like Anacreon's harp,—sing of Christ alone! Christ alone! Christ alone! Jesus, Jesus only! Make him the theme of your conversation, for "they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." God give you grace so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Indexes

Index of Scripture References

Job

3:23 34:33

Psalms

104:34 145:11

Jeremiah

33:3

Luke

18:35-39 18:35-43 19:1 19:9

John

3:1-18 9:35-38

1 Corinthians

15:8

Hebrews

7:27

1 John

3:16

Index of Scripture Commentary

Job

3:23 34:33

Psalms

104:34 145:11

Jeremiah

33:3

Luke

19:9

John

9:35-38

1 Corinthians

15:8

Hebrews

7:27

1 John

3:16