



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 61: 1915

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 61: 1915* by Charles Spurgeon

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The Desire of All Nations

A Sermon

(No. 3442)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, 25th, August 1870.

"And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts."—Haggai 2:7.

THE second temple was never intended to be as magnificent as the first. The first was to be the embodiment of the full glory of the dispensation of symbols and types, and was soon to pass away. This comparative feebleness had been proved by the idolatry and apostasy of the people Israel, and when they returned to Jerusalem they were to have a structure that would be sufficient for the purposes of their worship, but they were not again to be indulged with the splendours of the former house which God had erected by the hand of Solomon. Had it been God's Providence that a temple equally magnificent as the first should be erected, it might have been very readily accomplished. Cyrus appears to have been obedient to the divine will, and to have been a great favourer of the Jews, but he expressly by edict diminished the length of the walls and gave express command that the walls should never be erected so high as before. We have also evidence that a like decree was made by Darius, an equally great friend of the Jews, who could with the lifting of his finger have outdone the glory of Solomon's temple, but in God's Providence it was not arranged that so it should be, and though Herod, not a Jew, and only a Jew by religious pretence to suit his own particular purpose, lavished a good deal of treasure upon the second temple, for the pleasure of the nation he ruled, and to gain some favour from them, yet he rather profaned than adorned the temple, since he did not follow the prescribed architecture by which it ought to have been built, and he had not the divine approval upon his labours. No prophet ever commanded, and no prophet ever sanctioned, the labours of such a horrible wretch as that Herod. The reason seems to me to be this. In the second temple, during the time it should stand, the dispensation of Christ was softly melted into the light of spiritual truth. The outward worship was to cease there. It seems right that it should cease in a temple that had not the external glory of the first. God intended there to light up the first beams of the spiritual splendour of the second temple, namely, his true temple, the Church, and he would put a sign of decay on the outward and visible in the temple of the first. Yet he declares by his servant, Haggai, that the glory of the second temple should be greater than the first. It certainly was not so as in respect of gold, or silver, or size, or excellency of architecture; and yet it truly was so, for the glory of the presence of Christ was greater than all the glory of the old temple's wealth; and the glory of having the gospel preached in it, the glory of having the gospel miracles wrought in its porches by the apostles and by the Master, was far greater than any hecatombs of bullocks and he-goats—the glory of being, as it were, the cradle of the Christian Church, the nest out of which should fly the messengers of peace, who, like doves, should bear the olive branch throughout the world. I take it that the decadence of the old system of symbols was a most fitting preparation for

the incoming of the system of grace and truth in the person of Jesus Christ; and the second temple hath this glory which excelleth, that while the first was the glory of the moon in all its splendour, the second is the moon going down: the sun is rising beyond her, gilding the horizon with the first beams of the morning.

I intend to speak to you at this time about *the true spiritual temple*; the true second temple, the spiritual temple, which, I think, is here spoken of—although the second temple literally is also intended—*the true spiritual temple built up, according to the text, of the desire of all nations*.

I find this passage a very difficult one in the original; and it bears several meanings in itself. The first meaning that I give you, though it runs contrary to the great majority of Christian expositors, is the most accurate explanation of the original. We shall bring in the other explanations by-and-by. Reading it thus, "I will shake all nations," and the desire—the desirable persons, the best part, or as the Septuagint reads it, the elect of all nations—shall come. They shall come—the true temple of God, and they shall be the living stones that shall compose it; or, as others read it, "The desirable *things* of all nations shall come," which is, no doubt, the meaning, because the eighth verse gives the key: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." The desirable things of all nations are to be brought in as voluntary offerings to this true second temple, this spiritual living temple.

Let us begin, then, and take that sense first, and in this case we are told, in the text concerning this second temple, what these living stones are:—

I. THE HISTORICAL DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME.

The choice men, the pick, the best of all men shall come and constitute the true temple of God. Not the kings and princes, not the great and noble after the flesh—these are but the choice of men after the manner of man's choice; but not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen and called; but still, those whom God chooses must be the choice ones of mankind. They will not claim to be so by nature; on the contrary, they will repudiate any idea of any natural betterness in themselves. But God sees them as what they are to be, as what he intends them to be, as what he makes them to be, and in this respect they are the desire, they are the choice of all nations. To God, his people are his royal treasure, his secret jewels, the treasury of kings—they are very precious in his sight. Their very death is precious. He keeps record of their bones, and will raise their dust at the last day. If the nation did but know it, the saints in a nation are the aristocracy of that nation. Those who fear God are the very soul, and marrow, and backbone of a nation. For their sakes God has preserved many a nation. For their sakes he gives unnumbered blessings. "Ye are the salt of the earth": the earth were putrid without them. "Ye are the light of the world": the world would be dark without them. They are the desire, I say, though often the world treats them with contempt, and would cast them out. It has ever been thus with the blind world—to treat its best friends worst, and its worst enemies often receive the most royal entertainment. Now what a joy it is to us to think that God has been pleased to make unto himself a people according to his own sovereign will and good pleasure, and that he has made these to be the desirable ones out of all nations—that with these choice and elect ones he will build up his Church.

But the text not only tell us of the stones, but of the remarkable mode of architecture. "The desire of all nations shall come"—*they shall be brought together*. Human means shall be used to bring each one to its place, to excavate each one from its quarry; but while it is God who speaketh, he speaks like God, for he uses shalls and wills most freely, and according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, or ever the earth was, so shall the fulfilment be. We who preach

the gospel may preach with devout assurance of success. The desire of all nations *shall* come. Out of this congregation the truly desirable ones shall come to Christ. Out of the soil in which the sower sowed—the honest and good ground—is brought forth the harvest. Out of the nations are some choice spirits who come; some whom the Lord looks upon with great delight, and these *shall* come. We do not labour in vain, neither do we spend our strength for nought. We fall back upon the doctrine of divine working and divine choice for consolation—certainly not for an excuse for indolence, but for consolation when we have done our best, that God is glorified in the end—"the desire of all nations shall come."

And if you will notice in the whole text, it appears that *they do not come without much shaking*. In one sense, no man comes to God with compulsion; and in another sense, no man comes without compulsion. You see two boxes opened. There are two ways of opening them. You see one box wrenched: there has been used evidently rough means. Who opened it? A thief. God never opens men's hearts in that way. You see another box open—no sign of damage, no sign of any particular labour. Who opened it? The person who had the key—probably the owner. Hearts belong to God, and he has the keys and opens them—sweetly opens them. And yet, though no force is used, that puts aside the positive, free agency of man which God interferes not with; yet there is a spiritual force which may well be described as a shaking. It is only when the tree of the nation has a thorough shaking, that at last the prime, ripe fruit will drop down into the great Master's lap. He shakes by Providence, by the movement of the human conscience. He shakes by the impulses of his Holy Spirit; he shakes the spirit, and as the result the desirable persons out of all the nations are brought to himself. Stones that he would have, come at last out of the quarry, and he builds them up into a temple.

And now observe that these persons, according to another rendering of the text, *when they come to build up the Church, they always bring their desire with them*—they bring with them the most desirable thing. The desirable things of all nations shall give the silver, and the gold, and so on. He that comes to Christ brings with him all he has, and he has not come to Christ who has left his true substance behind him. What, now, is the desire of all the nations when hearts are renewed? Well, silver and gold will always be desirable, and men who give their hearts to Christ will bring that they have of that to Christ. But the most desirable things of manhood are not metals—dirt, mere dross, hard materialisms—no, the desirable things of manhood are things of the soul, the heart, the spirit; and into the temple, the great second temple, there shall come, not masses of gold and silver merely, that can adorn with outward splendour, but also love, and faith, and holy virtue, more priceless than gems, far richer in value than rarest mines. Oh! what a sight the Church of God is when holy angels look upon it. We hear of some of the first Spanish invaders going into the temple of Peru, and seeing floors, roofs, and walls made of slabs of gold, and standing astonished. But oh! in the Church there are slabs of faith on the floor of that great temple, and walls of love, of Christian self-sacrifice, and roofs of holy joy and Christian consolation. It is a temple that makes spiritual eyes flash with gladness. What care they for the splendour of kings and princes? But they care much for the true, desirable things of nations—holy emotions, holy desires, ascriptions of gratitude, and devout acts of service of the Lord God. Oh! how glorious is the second temple then, when the desirable men come to it, and bring with them all the desirable things to make it glorious in the sight of God.

And then *this temple, thus built and thus adorned, will continue*. The text implies that "I will shake all nations." The apostle says that this signifies the things that can be shaken; that the things

that cannot be shaken will remain, and that the desire of all nations must be put down as a thing that cannot be shaken. The Church, then, shall never be shaken, and the precious things that the Church gives to her God shall not be shaken. Time will change many things. Great princes will be considered mere beggars by-and-by in the esteem of men who know how to judge by character. Great men will shrivel into very small things—when they come to be tried, even by posterity. And the judgement-day—ah! how will that try the great ones of this earth? But the Christian Church—the very gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Time shall not be able so much as to chip one of her polished stones. Her treasures of faith, and what not, the rich things that God hath given her—these things shall never be stolen: they can never be shaken. And then the crown of all is, "I will fill this house with my glory," saith the Lord. This is the reason, the great charm of it all. God himself dwells, as he dwells nowhere else, in his glory. The Church, which we think two, and call militant and triumphant, is but one, after all, and God dwelleth in it. Oh! if we had but eyes to see it, the glory of God on earth is not much less than the glory of God in heaven, for the glory of a king in peace is one thing, but the glory of a conqueror in war is another thing, though I know which I prefer; yet if I transfer the figure, I have no preference between the glory of the God of peace in the midst of his obedient servants in his ivory palaces, and the glory of the Lord of Hosts in the thick of this heavenly war, as he conflicts with human evil, and brings forth glory to his saints out of all the mischief that Satan seeks to do to his throne and to his sceptre. God is known in the Jerusalem below, as well as in the Jerusalem above. "The Lord is in the midst of her." Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved; and though the kings gather together for her destruction, yet his presence is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Yes, glorious things may well be spoken of Zion when we have such stones as precious men, such gifts as precious graces, such abiding character as God gives, and such a presence as the presence of God Himself. But now in the next place, if we take the other rendering of the text:—

II. THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL SECOND TEMPLE IS ACTUALLY THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

"I will shake all nations," and he who is the desire of all nations shall come—a rendering which is not incorrect, and is established by a great mass of theologians, though, according to some of the ablest critics, a rendering scarcely to be sustained by the original. He who is the desire of all nations shall come, and that shall be the glory of the second spiritual temple. Jesus Christ, then, is the desire of all nations, if so we read the text, and this is doubtless true. *All nations have a dark and dim desire for him.* I say a dark desire, for without that adjective I could scarcely speak the truth. Most interesting chapters have been written by students of the history of mankind upon the preparedness of men's hearts for the coming of Christ at his incarnation. It is very certain that almost all nations have a tradition of the coming one. The Jews, of course, expected the Messiah. There were persons instructed according to the culture of various nations, which, though they do not expect the Messiah quite so clearly as the Jews, had almost as shrewd a guess as to what he might be and do as the mere ritualistic and Pharisaic Jews had. There was a notion all over the world at that time of Christ's coming, that some great one was to descend from heaven, and to come into this world for this world's good. He was in that respect darkly and dimly the desire of all nations. But in all nations there have been some persons more instructed to whom Christ has really been the object of desire with much more of intelligence. Job was a Gentile and a fearer of God. We have no reason to believe that Job was a solitary specimen of enlightened persons: we have reason rather to hope that

in all countries all over the world God has had a chosen people, who have known and feared him, who have not had all the light which has been given to us, but who better used what light they had, and were guided by his secret Spirit to much more of light, perhaps, than we think it right, with our little knowledge, to credit them with. These, then, as representatives of all the nations, were desiring the coming of the great Deliverer, the incarnate God; and in this sense, representatively, the whole of the world was desiring Christ in that higher sense, and he was the desire of all nations. But, my brethren, does this mean, or does it not mean, that Christ is exactly what all the nations need? If they did but know, if they could but understand him, he is just what they would desire and should desire. Were their reason taught rightly, and were their minds instructed by the Spirit to desire the best in all the world, Christ is just what they want. *All the world desire a way to God.* Hence men set up priests and anoint them with oil, and smear them with I know not what, only that they may be mediators between them and God. They must have something to come between their guilt and God's glorious holiness. Oh; if they knew it, what they want is Christ. You want no priest, but the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession." You want no mediator with God, but the one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who is also equal with God. Oh! world, why wilt thou gad about to seek this priest and that other deceiver, when he whom thou wantest is appointed by the Most High? He whom Jacob saw in his dream as the ladder which reached from earth to heaven is the only means—the Son of Man and yet the Son of God. *The world wants a peacemaker;* oh! how badly it wants it now! I seem as I walk my garden, as I go to my pulpit, as I go to my bed, to hear the distant cries and moans of wounded and dying men. We are so familiarised each day with horrible details of slaughter, that if we give our minds to the thought, I am sure we must feel a nausea, a perpetual sickness creeping over us. The reek and steam of those murderous fields, the smell of the warm blood of men flowing out on the soil, must come to us and vex our spirits. Earth wants a peacemaker, and it is he, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, and the friend of Gentiles, the Prince of Peace, who will make war to cease unto the ends of the earth. *Man wants a purifier.* Very many nations feel, somehow or other, that political affairs do not go as one could wish. There are great excellences in personal government, but great disadvantages. There are great excellences in republican government, but great disadvantages. There are supreme excellences, as we think, in our own form of government, but a great many things to be amended, for all that; and this world is altogether out of joint; it is a crazy old concern, and does not seem as if it could be amended with all the tinkering of our reformers in the lapse of years. The fact is, it wants the Maker, who made it, to come in and put it to rights. It needs the Hercules that is to turn the stream right through the Aegean stable; it wants the Christ of God to turn the stream of his atoning sacrifice right through the whole earth, to sweep away the whole filth of ages, and it never will be done unless he does it. He is the one, the true Reformer, the true rectifier of all wrong, and in this respect the desire of all nations. Oh! i If the world could gather up all her right desire; if she could condense in one cry all her wild wishes; if all true lovers of mankind could condense their theories and extract the true wine of wisdom from them; it would just come to this, we want an Incarnate God, and you have got the Incarnate God! Oh! nations, but ye know it not! Ye, in the dark, are groping after him, and know not that he is there.

Brethren, I may add, Christ is certainly the desire of all nations in this respect, *that we desire him for all nations.* Oh! that the world were encompassed in his gospel! Would God the sacred fire would run along the ground, that the little handful of corn on the top of the mountains would soon

make its fruit to shake like Lebanon. Oh! when will it come, when will it come that all the nations shall know him? Let us pray for it: let us labour for it.

And one other meaning I may give to this: he is the desirable one of all nations, bringing back the former translation of this text. *He is the choice one of all nations*. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. He, whom we love, is such an one that he can never be matched by another, his rival could not be found amongst the sons of men. There is none like him; there is none like him amongst the angels of light; there is none that can stand in comparison with him. The desire, the one that ought to be desired, the most desirable of all the nations, is Jesus Christ, and it is the glory of the Christian Church, which is the second temple that Christ is in her, her head, her Lord. It is never her glory that she condescends to make an iniquitous union with the State. It is her glory that Christ is her sole King; it is her glory that he is her sole Prophet, and that he is her sole Priest, and that he then gives to all his people to be kings and priests with him, himself the centre and source of all their glory and their power.

I cannot stay longer, though the theme tempts me, but must just give you the last word, which is this, *the visible glory of the true second temple will be Christ's second coming*. He, himself, is her glory, whether at his first coming, or at his second coming. The Church will be no more glorious at the second coming than now. "What!" say you, "no more glorious!" No; but more apparently glorious. Christ is as glorious on the cross as he is on the throne; it is the appearance only that shall alter. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," but they evermore are brightness itself, in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, brethren, we are to expect, as long as this world lasts, that all things will shake that are to be moved. They will go on shaking. We call the world sometimes "terra firma"; it is not this world, surely, that deserves such a name as that; there is nothing stable beneath the stars; all things else will shake, and as the shaking goes on, Jesus Christ will, to those who know him, become more and more their desire. I suppose, if the world went on, in some things mending and improving, and were to go up to a point, we should not want Christ to come in a hurry; we would rather that things should be perpetuated; but the shaking will make Christ more and more the desire of the nations. "The whole creation groaneth," is groaning up to now, but it will groan more and more "in pain together travailing"—the apostle saith—"even until now." The travailing pains grow worse and worse, and worse, and it will be so with this world; it will travail till at last it must come to the consummation of her desire. The Church will say, "Come, Lord Jesus." She will say it with gathering earnestness; she will continue still to say it, though there are intervals in which she will forget her Lord, but still her heart's desire will be that he will come; and at last *he will surely come and bring to this world not only himself, the desire of all nations, but all that can be desired*, for those days of his, when he appeareth, shall be to his people as the days of heaven upon earth, the days of their honour, the days of their rest—the day in which the kingdoms shall belong unto Christ. Oh! brethren, it is not for me to go into details on a subject which would require many discourses, and which could not be brought out in the few last words of a discourse. But here is the great hope of that splendid building, the Church, which is desired. Her glory essentially lies in the Incarnate God, who has come into her midst. Her glory manifestly will lie in the second coming of that Incarnate God, when he shall be revealed from heaven to those that look and are waiting for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God—looking for him with gladsome expectation. And this is the joy of the Church. He has gone, but he has left word, "I will come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also." Remember the words that were spoken of the angels to the Church, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand

ye here, gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is gone up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven." In *propria persona*—in very deed and truth, he shall come:—

"These eyes shall see him in that day,
The God that died for me:
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to thee?"

Then shall come the adoption, the raising of the body, the reception of a glory to that body re-united to the soul, such as we have not dreamed of, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him. Though he hath revealed them unto us by His Holy Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, yet have our ears heard but little thereof, and we have not received the full discovery of the things that shall be hereafter. The Lord bless you! May you all be parts of his Church, have a share in his glory, and a share in the manifestation of that glory at the last.

Dear hearer, I would send thee away with this one query in thine ear—Is Christ thy desire? Couldst thou say, with David, "He is all my salvation and all my desire"? Could you gather up your feet in the bed, with dying Jacob, and say, "I have waited for thy will, O God"? By your desire shall you be known. The desire of the righteous shall be granted. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.

But the desire of many is a grovelling desire: it is a sinful desire: it is a disgraceful desire—a desire which, if it be attained, the attainment of it will afford very brief pleasure. Oh! sinner let thy desires go after Christ. Remember, if thou wouldest have him, thou hast not to earn him—fight for him—win him—but he is to be had for the asking. "Lay hold," says the apostle, "on eternal life." As if it were ours, if we did but grip it. God give us grace to lay hold on eternal life, for Jesus from the cross is saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth," and from his throne of glory he still is saying, "Come unto me," exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin, and he will give them both to those who seek him. Seek him, then, this night. God grant it for his Son's sake. Amen.

Strong Faith in a Faithful God

A Sermon

(No. 3445)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me."—Psalm 57:2.

DAVID was in the cave of Adullam. He had fled from Saul, his remorseless foe; and had found shelter in the clefts of the rock. In the beginning of this psalm he rings the alarm-bell, and very loud is the sound of it. "Be merciful unto me," and then the clapper hits the other side of the bell. "Be merciful unto me." He utters his misery again and again. "My soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." Thus he solaces himself by faith in his God. Faith is ever an active grace. Its activity, however, is first of all manifested in prayer. This precedes any action. "I will cry," says he, "unto God most high." You know how graciously he was preserved in the cave, even when Saul was close at his heels. Amongst the winding intricacies of those caverns he was enabled to conceal himself, though his enemy, with armed men, was close at hand. The Targum has a note upon this, which may or may not be true. It states that a spider spun its web over the door of that part of the cave where David was concealed. The legend is not unlike one told of another king at a later time. It may have been true of David, and it is quite as likely to be true of the other. If so, David would, in such a passage as this, have directed his thoughts to the little acts God had performed for him which had become great in their results. If God makes a spider spin a web to save his servant's life, David traces his deliverance not to the spider, but to the wonder-working Jehovah, and he saith, "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." It is delightful to see these exquisite prayers come from holy men in times of extreme distress. As the sick oyster makes the pearl, and not the healthy one, so doth it seem as if the child of God brought forth gems of prayer in affliction more pure, brilliant, and sparkling than any that he produces in times of joy and exultation.

Our text is capable of three meanings. To these three meanings we shall call your attention briefly. "Unto God who performeth all things for me,." First, there is *infinite providence*. As it stands, the words, "all things," you perceive, have been added by the translators; not that they were mistaken in so doing, for the unlimited expression, "God that performeth for me," allows them to supply the ellipsis without any violation of the sense. Secondly, there is *inviolable faithfulness*, as we know that David here referred to God's working out the fulfilment of the promises he had made. We sang just now of the sweet promise of his grace as the performing God. I think Dr. Watts borrowed that expression from this verse. Thirdly, there is a *certainty of ultimate completeness*. The original has for its root the word "finishing," and now working it out, it means a God that performeth or, as it were, perfects and accomplishes all things concerning me. Whatever there is in his promise or covenant that I may need, he will perfect for me. To begin with:—

I. THE MARVELLOUS PROVIDENCE.

The text, as it stands, speaks of a service—"I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me." "All things," that is to say, in everything that I have to do, I am but an instrument in his hand; it is God that doeth it for me. The Christian has no right to have anything to do for which he cannot ask God's help. Nay, he should have no business which he could not leave with his God. It is his to work and to exercise prudence, but it is his to call in the aid of God to his work, and to leave the care of it with the God who careth for him. Any work in which he cannot ask divine cooperation, the care of which he cannot cast upon God, is unfit for him to be engaged in. Depend upon it, if I cannot say of the whole of my life, "God performeth all things for me," there is sin somewhere, evil lurks in the disposition thereof. If I am living in such a state that I cannot ask God to carry out for me the enterprises I have embarked in, and entirely rely on his providence for the issues, then what I cannot ask him to do for me, neither have I any right to do for myself. Let us think, therefore, of the whole of our ordinary life, and apply the text to it. Should we not each morning cry unto God to give us help through the day? Though we are not going out to preach; though we are not going up to the assembly for worship; though it is only our ordinary business, that ordinary business ought to be a consecrated thing. Opportunities for God's service should be sought in our common avocations; we may glorify God very much therein. On the other hand, our souls may suffer serious damage, we may do much mischief to the cause of Christ in the ordinary walk of any one day. It is for us, then, to begin the day with prayer—to continue all through the day in the same spirit, and to close the day by commending whatsoever we have done to that same Lord. Any success attending that day, if it be real success, is of God who gives it to us. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," is a statement applicable to the whole of Christian life. It is vain to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. If there be any true blessing, such blessing, as Jabez craved, when he said, "Oh! that thou wouldst bless me indeed," it must come from the God of heaven; it can come from nowhere else. Cry then, Christian, concerning your common life to God, say continually I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for you.

Peradventure at this hour you are troubled about some petty little thing, or you have been through the day exercised about some trivial matter. Do you not think we often suffer more from our little troubles than from our great ones? A thorn in the foot will irritate our temper, while the dislocation of a joint would reveal our fortitude. Often the man who would bear the loss of a fortune with the equanimity of Job will wince and fume under a paltry annoyance that might rather excite a smile than a groan. We are apt to be disquieted in vain. Does not this very much arise from our forgetting that God performeth all things for us? Do we not ignore the fact that our success in little things, our rightness in the minutinae of life, our comfort in these inconsiderable trifles depends upon his blessing? Know ye not that God can make the gnat and the fly to be a greater trouble to Egypt than the murrain, the thunder, or the storm? Little trials, if unblessed—if unattended with the divine favour, may scourge you fearfully and betray you into much sin. Commend them to God then. And little blessings as you think them, if taken away from you, would soon involve very serious consequences. Thank God then for the little. Put the little into his hand; it is nothing to Jehovah to work in the little, for the great is little to him. There is not much difference, after all, in our littles and our greats to the infinite mind of our glorious God. Cast all on him who numbers the hairs of your head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his decree. Unto God cry about the little things, for he performeth all things for us. Do I speak to some who are contemplating a great change in life? Take not that step, my brother, without much careful waiting upon God; but

if thou be persuaded that the change is one that hath the Master's approbation, fear not, for he performeth all things for thee. At this moment, thou hast many perplexities; thou mayest chafe thyself with anxiety, and make thyself foolish with shilly-shallying if thou dost sport with fancy, conjuring up bright dreams, and yielding to dark forebodings. There is many a knot we seek to untie, which were better cut with the sword of faith. We should end our difficulties by leaving them with him who knows the end from the beginning. Up to this moment you have been rightly led: you have the same guide. To this hour, he who sent the cloudy pillar has led you rightly through the devious track-ways of the wilderness; follow still, with a sure confidence that all is well. If ye keep close to him, he performeth all things for you. Take your guidance from his Word, and, waiting upon him in prayer, you need not fear. Just now, mayhap, in addition to some exciting dilemma, you are surrounded with real trouble and distress. Will it not be well to cry unto God most high, who now, in the time of your strait and difficulty, will show himself again to you a God all-sufficient to his people in their times of need. He is always near. I do not know that he has said, "When thou walkest through the green pastures, I will be with thee, and when thy way lies hard by the river of the water of life, where lilies bloom, I will strengthen thee." I believe he will do so, but I do not remember such a promise; but "When thou goest through the rivers, I will be with thee," is a well-known word of his. If ever he is present, it shall be in trial: if he can be absent, it will certainly not be when his servants most want his aid. Rest ye in him then. But you say, "I can do so little in this time of difficulty." Do what thou canst, but leave the rest to him. If thou seest no way of escape, doth it follow that there is none? If thou seest no help, is it, therefore, to be inferred that help cannot come? Thy Lord and Saviour found no friend among the whole family of man, "Yet," said he, "could I not presently pray to my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels?" Were it needful for thy help, the squadrons of heaven would leave the glory-land to come to thy rescue—the least and poorest of the children of God as thou mayest be. He will perform for thee: be thou obedient, trustful, patient. 'Tis thine to obey, 'tis his to command, 'tis thine to perceive, 'tis his to perform. He will perform all things for you. Very likely amongst this audience, some are foolish enough to perplex themselves as to their future life, and forestall the time when they shall grow old and their vigour shall be abated. It is always unwise to anticipate our troubles. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Of all self-torture, that of importing future trouble into present account is, perhaps, the most insane. Do you tell me you cannot help looking into the future. Well, then, look and peer into the distance as far as your weak vision can reach, but do not breathe upon the telescope with your anxious breath and fancy you see clouds. On the contrary, just wipe your eyes with the soft kerchief of some gracious word of promise, and hold your breath while you gaze through that transparent medium. Use the eye-salve of faith. Then, whatever you discern of the future, you will also descry this. He rules and he overrules: he will make all things work together for good; he will surely bring you through. Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. He it is who will perform all things for you. Oh! strange infatuation! You see your weakness, you see the temptations that will assail you, and the troubles that threaten you, and you are afraid. Look away from them all. This is no business of yours. Leave it in his hands, who will manage well, who will be sure to do the kindest and the best thing for you; be of good confidence and rest in peace. So shall it be even at life's close. He performeth all things for me. I have the boundary of life in the perspective, the almost certainty that I must die. Unless the Lord comes before my term expires, I must close these eyes, gather up these feet in the bed, breathe a last gasp, and yield my soul to him who gave it. Well, fear not; he

helped me to live: he will help me to die. He has made me perform up to this moment my allotted task; yea, he has performed it for me, giving me his grace and working his providence with me. Shall I fear that he will desert me at the last? He performeth not some things, but all things, and he cannot omit this most important thing, which often makes me tremble. No; that must be included, for all things are mine—death as well as life. I leave my dying hour, then, with him, and never boding ill of it, I cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me. I want, dear brethren, just to leave this impression in your mind, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands for lack of work, yet God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. This we recognize distinctly; if anything be done aright, successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give him the glory. I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of his grace through you by himself, to his own honour and praise, world without end. The second run of thought which the text suggests is that of:—

II. INVIOLEABLE FAITHFULNESS.

"Unto God that performeth all things for me." The God who made the promises has not left them as pictures, but has made them to fulfil them. It is God who is the actual worker of all that he declared in the covenant of grace should be wrought in and for his people.

Let us think of this as it pertains to our Redeemer's merits. "Unto God that performeth all things for me." Meritoriously our Saviour-God has performed all things for us. Our sin has been all put away; he bore it all—every particle of it. The righteousness that wraps us is complete; he has woven it all from the top throughout. All that God's infinite, unflinching justice can ask of us has been performed for us by our Surety and our Covenant Head. I need not say I have to fight; my warfare is accomplished. I need not think I have to wash away my sins; as a believer, my sin is pardoned. All things are performed for me. Don't forget amidst your service for Christ what service Christ has rendered to you; do all things for Christ, but let the stimulating motive be that Christ has done all things for you. There is not even a little thing that is for you to do to complete the work of Christ. The temple he has builded wants not that you should find a single stone to make it perfect. The ransom he has paid does not wait until you add the last mite. It is all done. O soul, if Christ has completely redeemed thee and saved thee, rest thou on him, and cry to him, and if sin rebels within thee at this present moment, fly—though thy spirit be shut up as in the Cave Adullam—fly to him by faith—to him who hath done all things for thee as thy Representative and Substitute. After the same manner, all things in us that have ever been wrought there have been performed by God for us. The Holy Spirit has wrought every fraction of good that is within our souls. No one flower that God loves grows in the garden of our souls in the natural soil, self-sown. The first trembling desire after God came from his Spirit. The blade, though very tender would never have sprung up if Jesus had not sown the seed. Though the first rays of dawn were scarcely light, but only rendered the darkness visible, yet from the Sun of Righteousness they came; no light sprang from the natural darkness of our spirit. It could not be that life could be begotten of death, or that light could be the child of darkness. He began the work: he led us when we went tremblingly to the foot of the cross; he helped us when we followed him with staggering steps. The eyes with which we looked to Jesus and believed were opened by him. Christ was revealed to us not by our own discovery, nor by our own tuition, but the Spirit of God revealed the Son of God in our spirit. We looked and we were lightened. The vision and the enlightening were alike from him; he performed all for us. As I look back upon my own spiritual career, when I was seeking the Saviour, I am wonderfully struck with

the way in which God performed everything for me; for if he had not, I do remember well when I should have rendered it impossible for me to have been here to tell of the wonders of his grace. Hard pressed by Satan and by sin, my soul chose strangling rather than life. Had I known more of my own guiltiness, my heart would utterly have broken, and my life have failed. But wisdom and prudence were mingled with the teachings of God's law. He did not suffer the schoolmaster to be too severe, but stayed the soul beneath the dire remorse which conviction caused. I had never believed on him if he had not taught me to believe. To give up hope in self was desperate work, and then to find hope in Christ seemed more desperate still. It appeared to me easy enough to believe in Jesus while one was really believing in one's self, but when "despair" was written upon self, then one was too apt to transfer the despair even to the cross itself, and it appeared impossible to believe. But the Spirit wrought faith in me, and I believed. That is not my testimony only, but the testimony of all my brethren and sisters—in that hour of sore trouble it was God that performed all things for us. Since then and up to this moment, my brethren, if there has been any virtue; if there has been in you anything lovely and of good repute, to whom do you or can you attribute it? Must you not say, "Of him all my fruit was found"? You could not have done without him. If you have made any progress, if you have made any advance, or even if you think you have, believe me, your growth, advance, progress, have all been a mistake unless they have come entirely from him. There is no wealth for us but that which is digged in this mine. There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One himself. "Thou who performest all things for me," must be our cry up to this hour.

What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What he was yesterday he is today. What we find him today we shall find him for ever. Are you struggling against sin? Don't struggle in your own strength: it is God who performeth all things for you. Victories over sin are only sham victories unless we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of divine grace. I am afraid of backsliding, but I think I am more afraid still of growing in sanctification apparently in my own strength. It is a dreadful thing for the grey hairs to appear here and there; but it is worse still for the hair to appear to be of raven hue when the man is weak. Only the indication is changed, but not the state itself. May we have really what we think we have—no surface work, but deep, inner, spiritual life, wrought in us from God—yea, every good spiritual thing from him, who performeth all things for us; and, I say, whatever struggles may come, whatever vehement temptations assail, or whatever thunder-clouds may burst over your heads, you shall not be deserted, much less destroyed. In spiritual things it is God who performeth all things for you. Rest in him then. It is no work of yours to save your own soul; Christ is the Saviour. If he cannot save you, you certainly cannot save yourself. Why rest you your hopes where hopes never ought to be rested? Or let me change the question. Why do you fear where you never ought to have hoped? Instead of fearing that you cannot hold on, despair of holding on yourself, and never look in that direction again. But if the preservation be of God, where is the cause for perturbation with you? In him let your entire reliance be fixed. Cast the burden of your care on him who performeth all things for you. Lastly, the text in its moral, literal acceptation refers to:—

III. THE FINISHING STROKE OF A GRAND DESIGN.

It really means, "I will cry unto God most high—unto God who perfecteth all things concerning me." David's career was charged with a great work; it was portentous with a high destiny. He had been anointed when a lad by Samuel. The Lord had said, "I have provided me a king among the sons of Jesse." And Samuel had taken "the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren."

He was thus clearly ordained to be king over Israel. His way to the throne was by Adullam. Strange route! To be king over Israel and Judah, he must first become a rebel, a wandering vagabond, known as a chieftain of banditti, hunted about by Saul, the reigning monarch. He must seek refuge in the courts of his country's enemies, the Philistines—being without an earthly refuge, or place to lay his head. Strange way to a throne! Yet the son of David had to go that way, and all the sons of God. The younger brethren of the Crown Prince will have to find their way to their crown by much the same route. But is not this a brave thing? Though Adullam does not look like the way to Zion, where he shall be crowned, David is so confident that what God has said will come to pass, so sure that Samuel's anointing was no farce, but that he must be king, that he praises and blesses God that while he is making of him a houseless wanderer, he is perfecting that which concerns him, and leading him by a sure path to the throne. Now, can I believe that he who promises that I shall be with him where he is, that I may behold his glory—he who gives the certainty to every believer that he shall enter into everlasting happiness—can I believe tonight that he is perfecting that for me—that the way by which he is taking me tonight, so dark, so gloomy, so full of dangers, is, nevertheless, the shortest way to heaven? that he is tonight using the quickest method to perfect that which concerns my soul? O faith! here is something for thee to do; and if thou canst perform it, thou shalt bring glory to God. The pith of it is this: that if God hath the keeping of us, he will perfect the keeping in the day of Christ. In the hand of Jesus all his people are, and in that hand they shall be for ever and ever. "None shall pluck them out of my hand," saith he. Their preservation shall be perfected. So, too, their sanctification. Every child of God is set apart by Christ, and in Christ, and the work of the Spirit has commenced which shall subdue sin, and extirpate the very roots of corruption; and this work shall be perfected; nay, is being perfected at this very moment. The dragon is being trodden down under foot. The seed of the woman within us is beginning to bruise the serpent's head, and shall clearly bruise it and crush it, even to the death within our soul. He is perfecting us in all things for himself. He has promised to bring us to glory. We have the earnest of that great glory in us now. The new life is there; all the elements of heaven are within us. Now he will perfect all these. He will not suffer one good thing that he has planted within us to die. It is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. He will perfect all things for us. There is nothing that makes the saints complete but what God will give to us. There shall be lacking us no one trait of loveliness that is needful for the courtiers of the skies; no one virtue that is necessary in us. What a marvellous thing is a Christian! How mean; how noble! How abject; how august! How near to hell; how close to heaven! How fallen, yet lifted up! Able to do nothing; yet doing all things! Doing nothing; yet accomplishing all things; because herein it is that, in the man, and with the man, there is God, and he performeth all things for us. God, give us grace to look away entirely, evermore, from ourselves, and to depend entirely upon him.

Now is there a soul here that desires salvation? My text gives you the clue of comfort. Try—the thing is simple—try. Look to him: he performeth all things for you. Everything that is wanted to save your soul, your heavenly Father will give you. Jesus, the Saviour, has wrought out all the sinner's wants. You have but to come and take what is already accomplished, and rest in it. "I cannot save myself," say you. You need not: there is One who performeth all things for you. "I am bruised and mangled by the fall," saith one, "as though every bone were broken." "I am incapable of a good thought; there is nothing good in me, or that can come from me." Soul! it is not what thou canst do, but what God can do—what Christ has done—that must be the ground of thy hope. Give thyself

up unto God, most high—unto God, who performeth all things for thee, and thou shalt be blessed indeed. God send you away with his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Psalm 34:1-20.

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

"Others may do what they please, and murmur, and complain, and be filled with dread and apprehension of the future; but I will bless the Lord at all times. I can always see something for which I ought to bless him. I can always see some good which will come out of blessing him. Therefore will I bless him at all times. And this," says the Psalmist, "I will not only do in my heart, but I will do it with my tongue. His praise shall continually be in my mouth," that others may hear it, that others may begin to praise him, too, for murmuring is contagious, and so, thank God, is praise; and one man may learn from another—take the catchword and the keyword out of another man's mouth, and then begin to praise God with him. "His praise shall continually be in my mouth." What a blessed mouthful! If some people had God's praises in their mouths, they would not so often have fault-finding with their fellow-men.

"If half the breath thus vainly spent" in finding fault with our fellow-Christians were spent in prayer and praise, how much happier, how much richer, we should be spiritually! "His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

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

Boasting is generally annoying. Even those that boast themselves cannot endure that other people should boast. But there is one kind of boasting that even the humble can bear to hear—nay they are glad to hear it. "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." That must be boasting in God—a holy glorying and extolling the Most High with words sought out with care that might magnify his blessed name. You will never exaggerate when you speak good things of God. It is not possible to do so. Try, dear brethren, and even boast in the Lord. There are many poor, trembling, doubting, humble souls that can hardly tell whether they are the Lord's people or not, and are half afraid whether they shall be delivered in the hour of trouble, that will become comforted when they hear you boasting. "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." "Why," says the humble soul, "God that helped that man can help me. He that brought him up through the deep waters, and landed him safely, can also take me through the river and through the sea, and give me final deliverance. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."

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

He cannot do enough of it himself. He wants others to come in and help him. First, he charges his own heart with the weighty and blessed business of praising God, and then he invites all around to unite with him in the sacred effort. "Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together."

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

That was David's testimony. That is mine. Brother, that is yours. Is it not? Sister, is not that yours too? Well, if you have such a blessed testimony, be sure to bear it. Often do you whisper it in the mourner's ear, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me." Tell it in the scoffer's ear. When he says, "There is no God," and that prayer is useless, say to him, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." It is a pity that such a sweet encouraging profitable testimony should be kept back. Be sure at all proper times to make it known. But it is not merely ourselves. There are others who can speak well of God.

5. *They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.*

And who were they? Why, all the people of God—the whole company of the saints in heaven, and the saints on earth. It can be said of them all, "They looked to him, and were lightened." As there is life in a look, so is there light in a look. Oh! you that looked to Christ and live, at first look to him again, if it is dark with you tonight, and speedily it shall be light round about you. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

6. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

Who was he? He was a poor man—any poor man—nothing very particular about him, but he was poor—a poor man. What did he do? He cried. That was the style of praying he adopted—as a child cries—the natural expression of pain. Poor man, he did not know how to pray a fine prayer, and he could not have preached you a sermon if you had given him a bishop's salary for it; but he cried. He could do that. You do not need to go to the Board School to learn how to cry. Any living child can cry. This poor man cried. What came of it? "The Lord heard him." I do not suppose anybody else did; or, if they did, they laughed at it. But it did not signify to him. The Lord heard him. And what came of that? He "saved him out of all his troubles." Oh! is there a poor man here tonight in trouble. Had he not better copy the example of this other poor man? Let him cry to the Lord about it. Let him come and bring his burdens before the great One who hears poor men's prayers. And, no doubt, that poor man lived to tell the same tale as he who wrote this verse. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles."

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

It is no wonder, then, that they are delivered, for the angels are always handy. They are waiting round about God's people. Lo, they are not at a distance to fly swiftly and come for our rescue, but God has set a camp of angels round about all his people. Are we not royally attended? What a portion is ours! Many are they that be against us, but glorious are they that be for us, both in their number and their strength. But the text does not intend so much the angels, as one blessed, glorious, covenant angel—the angel of the Lord, the messenger of God. He it is that holds his camp hard by his people, and sends his messengers for their rescue in all times of difficulty.

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

That is the language of experience. Some of us have lived by trusting God for many years, and, instead of growing weary of it, we would invite others to do the same. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good. You cannot know his goodness without tasting it. But there was never a soul yet that did taste of the goodness of the Lord but what could bear cheerful testimony that it was even so. "Oh! taste and see." Partake of it. Become practically acquainted with it. Trust God yourselves, and none of you shall ever have to complain of God. To your latest hour you will have to find fault with yourselves, but never once will you have to accuse God of changeableness, or of unfaithfulness, or even of forgetfulness. "Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good, for blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

9, 10. *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

They are very strong, those young lions. They are fierce. They are rapacious. They are cunning. And yet they do lack and suffer hunger. And there are many men in this world that are very clever, strong in body, and active in mind. They say that they can take care of themselves, and perhaps they do appear to prosper; but we know that often those who are the most prosperous apparently are the most miserable of men. They are young lions, but they do lack and suffer hunger. But when a man's soul lives upon God, he may have very little of this world, but he will be perfectly content.

He has learnt the secret of true happiness. He does not want any good things, for the things that he does not have he does not wish to have. He brings his mind down to his estate, if he cannot bring his estate to his mind. He is thankful to have a little spending money on the road, for his treasure is above. He likes to have the best things last, and so he is well content, if he has food and raiment, to urge on his way to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

11. *Come, ye children.*

Ye that are beginning life—you that want to know where true happiness is found.

11. *Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

It is that which you want to know, beyond everything else.

12, 13. *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

He that can rule his tongue can rule his whole body. Alas! that unruly member destroys peace and happiness in thousands of cases. The tongue can no man tame, but the grace of God can tame it; and that man begins life with a prospect of happiness whose tongue has been tamed by grace.

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

True happiness is found in true holiness. "Depart from evil." That is, do not go after it. But it is much more than that. Go away from it. Give it a wide berth. "Depart from evil." But be not satisfied with the negatives. It is not enough to say, "I do not do any evil," but do good. The only way to keep out the evil is to fill the soul full of good. We must be active in the cause of God, or Satan will soon lead us into sin. "Depart from evil and do good."

"Seek peace." Be of a quiet turn of mind. Be always ready to forgive. "Seek peace and pursue it." That is, when it runs away, run after it. Make up your mind that you will have it. There are some that seek quarrels. There are some that seek revenge. As for you, seek peace and pursue it.

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

God is all eye and all ear, and all his eye and all his ear are for his people. Are you distressed in heart? God sees your distress. Are you crying in secret in the bitterness of your soul? God hears your cry. You are not alone. O lonely spirit, broken spirit, be not dismayed; be not given to despair. God is with you. If he sees nothing else, he will see you. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." And if he hears no one else in the world, he will hear you. "His ears are open to their cry."

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

You know what we say sometimes. "I set my face against such a thing as that." Now God sets his face against them that do evil. You will come to an end, my friend. Your happiness, like a bubble painted with rainbow colours, may be the object of foolish desires; but in a little while it will burst and be gone, as the bubble is, and there will be nothing left of you. Even your remembrance will be wiped out from the face of the earth. What numbers of books have been written against God of which you could not get a copy now, except you went to a museum! What numbers of men have lived that have been scoffers; and they have had great names amongst the circles of unbelievers, but they are quite forgotten now! But the Christian Church treasures up names of poor, simple-hearted Christian men and women—treasures them up like jewels, and their fame is fresh after hundreds of years.

17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

That is how we live, if you want to know. God makes us righteous, and then we cry. We often praise him. We desire to have our mouth full of it. But we cry as well, and whenever we cry God hears, and our troubles are removed.

18. *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Are you here tonight, poor weeping Mary? Are you here, broken-hearted, troubled sinner? Are you here? Are you seeking the Lord? Do not seek him any longer. You have got him. Read the text, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart." He is with you now. Speak to him; cry to him; trust him. You shall find deliverance this night.

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous:*

You should hear some of them talk, and you would soon know that; for I know some of the righteous that seldom talk of anything else. "Oh! for badness of trade!" They have been losing money—oh! ever since I knew them. They had not any when they started, but they have gone on losing money every year; and I believe they always will. And they always have pains of body. The weather is so bad. And they always have ungrateful friends. And the church they belong to is not up to the mark. Indeed, there is nothing around them that is right. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

Well now, dear brethren, as that is recorded in God's Word, and as most of us have a pretty good acquaintance with that subject, I do not think that it is necessary for all of us to insist upon it every day. Could not we go on to the next part of the verse? "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," but—but—

19. *But the LORD delivereth him out of the them all.*

Not out of some of the, but out of them all, however numerous they may be.

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

He sustains no real injury. He gets flesh-wounds and bruises, but his bones are not broken. That is to say, the substantial part of his nature is well kept and preserved.

Christ Is All

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Christ is all"—Colossians 3:11.

MY text is so very short that you cannot forget it; and, I am quite certain, if you are Christians at all, you will be sure to agree with it. What a multitude of religions there is in this poor wicked world of ours! Men have taken it into their heads to invent various systems of religion and if you look round the world, you will see scores of different sects; but it is a great fact that, while there is a multitude of false religions, there is but one that is true. While there are many falsehoods, there can be but one truth; real religion is, therefore, one. There is but one gospel—the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing it is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should be born of humble parents, and live as a poor man in this world, for the purpose of our salvation! He lived a life of suffering and trial, and at length, through the malignity of his enemies, was crucified on Calvary as an outcast of society. "Now," said they, "there is an end of his religion; now it will be such a contemptible thing, that nobody will ever call himself a Christian; it will be discreditable to have anything to do with the name of the man Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." But it is a wonderful fact that this religion has not only lived, but is at this hour as strong as ever. Yes! the religion he founded still exists, and is still powerful, and constantly extending. While other religions have sunk into the darkness of the past, and the idols have been cast to the moles and to the bats, the name of Jesus is still mighty; and it shall continue to be a blessed power so long as the universe shall endure.

The religion of Jesus is the religion of God; hence, notwithstanding all the obloquy and persecution which it has had to encounter, it still exists, and still flourishes. It is this religion which I shall attempt to preach to you—the one gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ—and the text embraces it all in the most comprehensive manner, "Christ is all."

I shall use it, first as *a test to try you*, and, afterwards, *as a motive to encourage you*. I want, first, to sift you, to see how many of you are the people of God, and how many are not. I shall make my text a great sieve, and put you in it to see which is wheat and which is chaff. We must consider this passage in two or three senses in order, first, to use it as:—

I. A TEST TO TRY YOU.

Christ must be all, as your Great Master and Teacher. There are some who set up a certain man as their authority; they regard him as their master, they look up to him as their teacher, and whatever he says is right; it is the truth, and is not to be disputed. Or, perhaps, they have taken a certain book, other than the Bible, and say, "We will judge all things by this book"; and if the preacher does not teach exactly the creed written in that book, he is set down as not sound in the faith, and this they do not hesitate to say at once, because he does not come up to the standard of their little book! We meet with many people in this world who make their creed, their one little narrow creed, everything, and they measure everything and everybody by that. But, my friends, I

must have you say that "*Christ is all*," and not any man, however good or great, before I can allow that you are Christians. We have not to follow men. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. We are to follow no man, except so far as he follows Christ, who alone is our Master. Be not deceived; submit not yourselves to creeds, to books, or to men; give yourselves to the study of God's Word, derive your creed and the doctrines of your faith from it alone, and then you will be able to say:—

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

Let Christ be your only Master, and say, in the words of our text, "Christ is all." Now can you say this, or are you boasting, "The Baptists are all"—"The Wesleyans are all"—"The Church of England is all"? As the Lord lives, if you are saying that, you do not know his truth; because you are not testifying that "Christ is all," but simply uttering the Shibboleth of your little party. I should like to see the word *party* blotted out from the vocabulary of the Christian Church. I thank God that I have no sympathy whatever with that which is merely sectarian, and have grace given me to protest against it, and to exclaim:—

"Let party names no more
The Christian world o'erspread";
since:—
"Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,
Are one in Christ, their Head."

If "Christ is all" to you, you are Christians; and I, for one, am ready to give you the right hand of brotherhood. I do not mind what place of worship you attend, or by what distinctive name you may call yourselves, we are brethren; and I think, therefore, that we should love one another. If, my friends, you cannot embrace all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter to what denomination they may belong, and as belonging to the universal Church, you have not hearts large enough to go to heaven; because, if such be your contracted views, you cannot possibly say, "Christ is all."

Next, Christ must be all, as your principal object in life—your chief good. Your great aim must be to glorify Christ on the earth, in the hope and expectation of enjoying him for ever above. But as it regards some of you, Christ is not your all. You think more of your shop than you do of him. You are up early in the morning looking at your ledgers, and all day long toiling at your business. Do not mistake me: I dislike lazy people, who let the grass grow over their shoes; and God disapproves of them too. We want no lazy gospellers. The true Christian will say, "I know that I am bound to be diligent in business; but I want to work for eternity as well as for time. I need something besides earthly riches; I want an inheritance not made with hands, a mansion not built by man, a possession in the skies." Are you making this world you all? Poor souls, if you are, the world and the fashion thereof are passing away; your all will soon be gone. I fancy I see a rich man, one whose gold is his all, when he gets into the next world, looking for his gold, and wondering where it is, and being at length compelled to exclaim, in despair, "Oh! my all is gone!" But if you can say that Christ is your all, then your treasure will never be gone; for he will never leave you, nor forsake you. Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, you shall be happy and blessed, for you shall be crowned with glory, and made to sit with Christ on his throne for ever.

"Well," says some easy-going gentleman, "I do not make business my all, I assure you; not I: my maxim is, let us enjoy this life, let us fill the glass to the brim, and live in pleasure while we may." I have a word also for you Do you think that such a course of conduct will fit you for heaven, for the enjoyments of eternity? Do you imagine that, when you come to die, it will be any pleasure for you to think of your drunkenness? When you are lying on a sick bed, will your oaths bring you any peace, as they reverberate upon your conscience, just as I hear my voice, at this moment, echoing back to my ears the words I am saying? I think I see you starting up as you hear your blasphemies against God thus returning upon you, while, with a mind oppressed with anguish, and eyes starting from their sockets, you exclaim in your terror, "I hear my own oaths again! God is coming to call me to judgment; to demand of me why I dare blaspheme his name!" and the Judge will say, "You, with oaths and curses, profaned my holy name; you asked me to curse your soul, and now I will do it; you prayed in your profane moments that you might be lost, and now you shall be." How horrible that would be! You who say pleasure is all, let me warn you that you will have to drink the bitter dregs of the cup of pleasure to all eternity, no matter how sweet the draught may now be to your taste.

But there are some more moderate people, who are by no means extravagant in their pleasures, and are great sticklers for religion; they go to church or chapel every Sunday, and believe themselves to be very good sort of people, and such as will be accepted at the last day, and placed on the right hand of the throne. Again I put the question, can you say, "Christ is all"? No; you cannot say that. Many of you make the externals of religion your all, resting in the letter, but knowing or caring nothing for the spirit. This will not do; and you are not such Christians as Christ will own if you are making anything your all but himself. Religion is not to be stowed away in the dark garret of the brain. Christianity is a heart religion, and if you cannot say, from the very depths of your being, "Christ is all," you have neither part nor lot in the blessings and privileges of the gospel, and your end will be destruction, everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord. God grant it may not be so; but that in both *your* lives and *mine* we may each be enabled to say of a truth, "Christ is all"; and that we may meet again around the eternal throne!

Next, *Christ will be all, as the source of your joy*. Some people seem to think that Christians are a very melancholy sort of folk, that they have no real happiness. I know something about religion, and I will not admit that I stand second to any man in respect of being happy. So far as I know religion, I have found it to be a very happy thing.

"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great."

I used to think that a religious man must never smile; but, on the contrary, I find that religion will make a man's eye bright, and cover his face with smiles, and impart comfort and consolation to his soul, even in the deepest of his earthly tribulations. In illustration of this, I might tell you the story of a poor man who lives in one of the courts in Holborn, who experiences great joy in religion, even in the midst of the deepest poverty. A Christian visitor, going up into the poor man's room at the top of the house, said, "My friend, how long have you been in this place?"

"I have not been downstairs, nor walked across the room, these twelve months."

"Have you anything to depend upon?"

"Nothing," he replied; but recollecting himself, he added, "I have a good Father up in heaven, and I depend upon him entirely, and he never lets me want. Some kind Christian friends are sure to call, and they never go away without leaving me something; and I get enough to live on and pay

my rent, and I am very happy. I would not change places with anybody in the world, for I have Jesus Christ with me, and my heavenly Father will take me home by-and-bye, and then I shall be as rich as any of them—shall I not, sir? Sometimes I get very low, and Satan tells me that I am not a child of God, and that I had better give up all as lost; but I tell him that he is a great coward to come and meddle with a poor weak creature like me; and I show him the blood, sir; and I tell him the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and when I show Satan the precious blood, sir, he leaves off tempting me, and flees directly, for he cannot bear the sight of the Saviour's blood."

Thus we see that true religion can cheer the sick man's couch, can make the poor man feel that he is rich, and bid him be joyful in the Lord. Well did the old man say that the devil cannot bear the sight of the Saviour's blood; and if, beloved friends, you can take Christ's blood, and put it on your conscience, however sinful you may have been, you will be able to sing of Christ as all your hope, all your joy, and all your support. I ask you who love Jesus, does religion ever make you unhappy? Does love to Jesus distress you, and make you miserable? It may bring you into trouble sometimes, and cause you to endure persecution for his name's sake. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer tribulation; but all the afflictions which you may be called upon to endure for him will work for your good, and are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed hereafter.

Now, then, let me ask, could you go with me while I have been speaking? Can you now say that Christ is your only Master, your chief good, your only joy? "Oh! yes; I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." Then, welcome, brother; you are one with Jesus, and we are one with each other. But if you cannot say it, how terrible it shall be with some of you, when you shall find your gourds wither, the props whereon you now lean struck down at a blow, your false refuges swept away, and, deprived of all your feathers and finery, your soul will appear before God in its true character! May it not be so with any of you, but may you be united to Christ by living faith, which works by love, and purifies the heart! Secondly, I shall now consider the text as:—

II. A MOTIVE TO ENCOURAGE YOU.

"Christ is all." My beloved friends, in what is he all? *Christ is all in the entire work of salvation.* Let me just take you back to the period before this world was made. There was a time when this great world, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all which now exist throughout the whole of the vast universe, lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup. There was a time when the Great Creator lived alone, and yet he could foresee that he would make a world, and that men would be born to people it; and in that vast eternity a great scheme was devised, whereby he might save a fallen race. Do you know who devised it? God planned it from first to last. Neither Gabriel nor any of the holy angels had anything to do with it. I question whether they were even told how God might be just, and yet save the transgressors. God was all in the drawing up of the scheme, and Christ was all in carrying it out. There was a dark and doleful night! Jesus was in the garden, sweating great drops of blood, which fell to the ground; nobody then came to bear the load that had been laid upon him. An angel stood there to strengthen him, but not to bear the sentence. The cup was put into his hands, and Jesus said, "Father, must I drink it?" and his Father replied, "If thou dost not drink, sinners cannot be saved"; and he took the cup and drained it to its very dregs. No man helped him. And when he hung upon that accursed tree of Calvary, when his precious hands were pierced, when:—

"From his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down,"

there was nobody to help him. He was "all" in the work of salvation.

And, my friends, if *any of you shall be saved, it must be by Christ alone*. There must be no patchwork; Christ did it all, and will not be helped in the matter. Christ will not allow you, as some say, to do what you can, and leave him to make up the rest. What can you do that is not sinful? Christ has done all for us; the work of redemption is all finished. Christ planned it all, and worked out all; and we, therefore, preach a full salvation through Jesus Christ.

What could we poor mortals do towards saving ourselves? Our best works are but mean and worthless to that great end; I am sure I could not do it. My preaching—I am ashamed of that, and there are a thousand faults in my prayers. God wants nothing of us by way of "making up" Christ's work; but he cancels all the sins, and blots out all the transgressions of everyone who trusts to his Son's death.

If I have found Christ, I have found all. "I have not strong faith," say you. Never mind; Christ is all. "I do not feel my sins sufficiently"; but Christ is all. Many people think they must feel a load of repentance before they may hope Christ will receive them. I know every child of God will repent; but we are not all brought to the cross by the terrors of the law. It is not your feelings, my friends, that will save you; but Christ only, Christ standing in your stead, Christ being your Substitute. If, feeling your need of his grace to pardon you, and his righteousness to justify you before God, you can but just look to Christ, though you have nothing good about you, you will have done all that is necessary to carry you to heaven; because it is not your act that can save you, but the act of Christ alone. A little while ago, I had a conversation with an Irishman, who had been to hear me preach. He had come to ask me, he said, the way of salvation. "What troubles me," said he, "is this: God says that he will condemn the sinner, and punish him; then how can God forgive, because he must punish if he would keep his word?" I placed before him the Scriptural view of the atonement, in the substitution of Christ for the sinner; and the poor man was astonished and delighted beyond measure, never having understood the beauty and simplicity of the gospel way of salvation before. "Is it really so?" said he. "It is in the Bible," I replied. "Then the Bible must be true," said he, "for nobody but God could have thought it."

If Jesus Christ is our Surety, friends, we are safe from the demands of the law. If Christ is our Substitute, we shall not suffer the penalty due to sin; for God will never punish the same sin twice. If I have nothing but Christ, I do not want anything else, for Christ is all. If Christ is your all, you will not want anything to help you, either in living or in dying. Now for two thoughts before I close.

1. *If a man has Christ, then what does he want else?* If a man has Christ, he has everything. If I want perfection, and I have Christ, I have absolute perfection in him. If I want righteousness, I shall find in him my beauty and my glorious dress. I want pardon, and if I have Christ, I am pardoned. I want heaven, and if I have Christ, I have the Prince of heaven, and shall be there by-and-by, to live with Christ, and to dwell in his blessed embrace for ever. If you have Christ, you have all. Do not be desponding, do not give ear to the whisperings of Satan that you are not the children of God; for if you have Christ, you are his people, and other things will come by-and-by. Christ makes you complete in himself; as the apostle says, "Ye are complete in him." I think of poor Mary Magdalene; she would have nothing to bring of her own; she would remember that she had been a harlot; but when she comes to heaven's gates, she will say, "I have Christ," and the command will go forth, "Let her in, Gabriel; let her in." Here comes a poor squalid wretch, what has he been doing? He has never learned to write, he scarcely went even to a Ragged- school, but he has Christ in his heart. "Gabriel, let him in." Next comes a rich bad man, with rings on his fingers, and fine

clothes upon his person; but the command is, "Shut the gates, Gabriel; he has no business here." Then comes a fine flaming professor of the gospel; but he never knew Christ in his heart. "Shut the gate, Gabriel." If a man has Christ, he has all for eternity; and if he has not Christ, he is poor, and blind, and naked, and will be miserable for ever. Will not you, then, who are listening to me now, resolve, in the strength of the Lord, to seek him at once, and make him your Friend? No matter what may be your state or condition, you are invited to come to him.

Ye blind, ye lame, who are far from Christ, come to him, and receive your sight, and obtain strength! He is made your all; you need bring nothing in your hand to come to him. "Ah!" says one, "I am not good enough yet." Beggars do not talk thus: they consider that, the more needy they are, the more likely are they to obtain that for which they ask. The worse the dress, the better for begging. It is the same with respect to the gospel; and you are invited to come to Christ just as you are, naked and miserable, that he may clothe and comfort you.

2. My last thought is this: *How poor is that man who is destitute of Christ!* If I were to say to some one of you that you are poor, you would reply, "I am not poor; I have 250 pounds a year coming in, a decent house, and an excellent situation." And yet, if you have not Christ, you are a poor man indeed. Look at that poor worldling with a load of 10,000 pounds upon his back, a quantity of stocks and annuities in one hand, policies and railway scrip in the other; but he is wretched with all his wealth, though he can hardly carry it. There is a poor beggar-woman, who says to him, "Let me take a part of your burden"; but the miserable man refuses all assistance, and resolves to carry all his load himself. But by-and-bye he comes to a great gulf, and, instead of finding these riches help him, they hang around his neck like millstones, and weigh him down. Yet there are some who would do anything for gold. If there be one man more miserable than another in hell, it must be the man who robbed his neighbours to feather his own nest; such feathers will help the flight of the arrows which shall pierce his soul to all eternity. No matter what your wealth, if you have not Christ, you are miserably poor; but with Christ, you are rich to all eternity.

Methinks I see one of you ungodly ones in your last moments; someone stands by your bedside, and watches your face; the death-sweat comes over you, and the big drops stand on your brow; the strong man is bowed down, and the mighty one falls; and now the eye closes, and the hand falls powerless—life is fled. Ah! but the soul never dies! Up it flies to appear at God's bar. How will it appear there? Oh! the poor soul without Christ! It will be a naked soul; it will have no garment to cover it—it will be a perishing soul, no salvation for it. Mercy cannot be secured then; it will be in vain to pray then, because the lamp will be put out in eternal darkness. And the Judge will say, in tones that will pierce you to the quick, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

May God give all of you grace to repent, and to embrace the salvation which is revealed in the gospel! Every sin-sick soul may have Christ; but as for you who are Pharisees, and trusting in yourselves that you are righteous, if you know nothing about sin, you can know nothing about Christ. The way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "But what is it to believe?" you say. I have heard of a captain who had a little son, and this little boy was very fond of climbing aloft. One day he climbed to the mast-head, and the father saw that, if the boy attempted to return, he would be dashed to pieces; he, therefore, shouted to him not to look down, but to drop into the sea. The poor boy kept fast hold of the mast; but the father saw it was his only chance of safety, and he shouted once more, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, drop, or I will shoot you." The boy is gone; he drops into the sea, and is saved. Had he not dropped, he must have perished. This is just your condition: so long as you cling to works and ceremonies, you are in the utmost peril; but when

you give yourselves up entirely to the mercy of Christ, you are safe. Try it, sinner; try it, that is all. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is Christ's promise, and it shall never fail you. The invitation is to all who thirst. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, and take the water of life freely." I have heard that, in the deserts where they can only get water at long intervals, they send a man on a camel in search of it; when he sees a pool, he springs off his beast, and before he himself drinks he calls out, "Come," and there is another man at a little distance, and he shouts, "Come," and one further away still repeats the word, "Come," until the whole desert resounds with the cry, "Come," and they come rushing to the water to drink. Now I do not make the gospel invitation wider than the declaration of the Word of God, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" Whosoever you are, and whatsoever you may have been, if you feel your need of Christ, "Come," and he will receive you, and give you to drink of the water of life freely.

Colossians 3; 4:1-4. Psalm 28:1-6.

Verse 1. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Oh! how often we need to be called to this, for the flesh is grovelling, and it holds down the spirit; and very often we are seeking the things below as if we had not yet attained to the new life, and did not know anything about the resurrection power of Christ within the soul. Now, if it be that you, believers, have risen with Christ, do not live as if you had never done so, but "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

2. *Set your affection.*

Not "your *affections.*" Tie them up into one bundle. Make one of them.

2. *On things above, not on things on the earth.*

You say that you were dead with Christ, and that you have risen with Christ. Live, then, the risen life, and not the life of those who have never undergone this matchless process. Live above.

3. *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

The old life is dead. You are dead to it. You will not be consumed by it: you cannot be controlled by it. You have a newer and higher life. Let it have full scope.

4. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Christ was hidden while he was here. The world knew him not. So is your life. But there is to be a glorious manifestation. When Christ is made manifest, so shall you be. Wait for him.

5. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

Since you are dead, let all the lusts of the flesh be put to death. Kill those. They were once a part of you. Your nature lusted this way. Mortify them. Do not merely restrain them and try to keep them under. These things you are to have nothing to do with.

6, 7. *For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*

"When ye lived in them" But now you do not live in them. You are dead to them. If it should ever come to pass that you fall into any of these things, you will loathe yourself with bitterest repentance that you could find comfort, satisfaction, life in them. You are dead to them.

8-10. *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds:*

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

No lies. Such communications are filthy. But you put these things away through your union with Christ in his risen life. Therefore, abhor them. Avoid the very appearance of them, and cry for grace to be kept from them, for you have been "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

11. *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

In the new life there is no distinction of race and nationality. We are born into one family; we become members of Christ's body; and this is the one thing we have got to keep up—separation from all the world beside: no separations in the church, no disunion, nothing that would cause it, for we are one in Christ, and Christ is all. Now, as we have to put off these things, that is the negative side: that is the law's side, for the law says, "Thou shalt not"—"Thou shalt not." But now look at the positive side.

12. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering:*

This is what you have got to wear, even on the outside—to put it on; not to have a latent kindness in your heart, and a degree of humbleness deep down in your soul if you could get at it; but you are to put it on. It is to be the very dress you wear. These are the sacred vestments of your daily priesthood. Put them on.

13. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

Just as readily, just as freely, just as heartily, just as completely.

14-15 *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*

For that is the great foundation of every godly fruit. We are in such a hurry, in such dreadful haste, so selfish, so discontented, so impetuous, and the major part of our sins spring from that condition of mind. But if we were godly, restful, peaceful, how many sins we should avoid! "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

15. *To the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

It looks like a very small virtue to be thankful. Yet, dear friends, the absence of it is one of the grossest of vices. To be ungrateful is a mean thing; to be ungrateful to God is a base thing. And yet how many may accuse themselves of it! Who among us is as grateful as he should be? Be thankful.

16. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you.*

Alexander had a casket of gold studded with gems to carry Homer's works. Let your own heart be a casket for the command of Christ. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you."

16-18 *Richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*

See how our being Christians does not relax the bonds of our Christian relationship, but it calls us to the higher exercise of the responsibilities and duties connected therewith.

19. *Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Oh! there are some spirits that are very bitter. A little thing puts them out, and they would take delight in a taunt which grieves the spirit. I pity the poor woman who has such bitterness where she ought to have sweetness: yet there be some such husbands.

20-21 *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

The duties are mutual. Scripture maintains an equilibrium. It does not lay down commands for one class, and then leave the other to exercise whatever tyrannical oppression it may please. The child is to obey, but the father must not provoke.

22. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;*

How much there is of that! How quickly the hands go when the master's eye looks on! But the Christian servant remembers God's eye, and is diligent always. "Not with eye service as men-pleasers."

22. Chap. 4:2 *But in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*

See how he keeps putting that in—"Be ye thankful"—"with thanksgiving." Why, that is the oil that makes the machinery go round without its causing obstruction. May we have much of that thanksgiving.

3, 4. *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

So the preacher of the gospel asks your prayers: and it is a part of the duties arising out of the relationship between Christian men that those who are taught should pray for those who teach God's Word.

Buying the Truth

A Sermon

(No. 3449)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, June 26th, 1870.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not."—Proverbs 23:23.

JOHN Bunyan pictures the pilgrims as passing at one time through Vanity Fair, and in Vanity Fair there were to be found all kinds of merchandise, consisting of the pomps and vanities, the lusts and pleasures of this present life and of the flesh. Now all the dealers, when they saw these strange pilgrims come into the fair began to cry, as shopmen will do, "Buy, buy, buy—buy this, and buy that." There were the priests in the Italian row with their crucifixes and their beads. There were those in the German row with their philosophies and their metaphysics. There were those in the French row with their fashions and with their prettinesses. But the one answer that the pilgrims gave to all the dealers was this—they looked up and they said, "We buy the truth; we buy the truth," and they would have gone on their way if the men of the Fair had not laid them by the heels in the cage, and kept them there, one to go to heaven in a chariot of fire, and the other afterwards to pursue his journey alone. This is very much the description of the genuine Christian at all times. He is surrounded by vendors of all sorts of things, beautifully got up and looking exceedingly like the true article, and the only way in which he will be able to pass through Vanity Fair safely is to keep to this, that he buys the truth, and if he adds to that the second advice of the text, and never sells it, he will, under divine guidance, find his way rightly to the skies. "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

Is not the parable we have just read a sort of enlargement of our text? When the merchantman all over the world had travelled to find out some pearl that should have no flaw, some diamond of the purest water fit to glisten in the crown of royalty, at last in his researches, he met with a gem the like of which he had never seen before, and, knowing that here was wealth for him, in the joy of his discovery, he sold all that he had that he might buy that pearl. Even so, the text seems to tell us, that truth is the one pearl beneath the skies that is worth having, and whatever else we buy not, we must buy the truth, and whatever else we may have to sell, yet we must never sell the truth, but hold it fast as a treasure that will last us when gold has cankered, and silver has rusted, and the moth has eaten up all goodly garments, and when all the riches of men have gone like a puff of smoke, or melted in the heat of the judgment day like the dew in the beams of the morning sun. Buy the truth. Here is *the* treasure. Cost it what it may, buy you it. Here is the piece of merchandise which you must buy, but must not sell. You may give all for it, but you may take nothing in exchange for it, since there is nothing that can be likened unto it.

With this as a preface, let us now come straight up to the text, and we shall notice:—

I. THE COMMODITY THAT IS SPOKEN OF.

"*Buy the truth.*" I shall not speak tonight of those common forms of truth that relate to politics, to history, to science, or to ordinary life, yet would I say of all these—buy the truth. Never be afraid

of the truth. Never be afraid in anything of having your prejudices knocked on the head. Always be determined, come what may, even though truth should prove you to be a fool, yet to accept the truth, and though it should cost you dear, yet still to pursue it, for in the long run they who build mere speculations, fancies, and errors, though they may seem to build suitable structures for the time, shall find that they are wood, hay, and stubble, and shall be consumed; but he that keeps to what he knows, to matters of fact, and matters of truth, builds gold, silver, and precious stones, which the trying fire of the coming ages shall not be able to destroy. I would sooner discover one fact, and lay down one certain truth, than be the author of ten thousand theories, even though these theories should for a while rule all the thought of mankind.

But I speak now of *religious truth*. Buy that truth; buy that truth above all others. And here we must have three heads. First, *in the matter of doctrinal truth, buy the truth*. Holy Scripture is the standard of truth. To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no truth in them. "Thy word is truth." Here is silver tried in the furnace and purified seven times. Speak of Infallibility? It is not at Rome, but it is here in this Book. Here is an infallible witness to the truth of God, and he that is taught of the Holy Spirit to understand it gets at the truth. Now, dear brethren, do aim to get the right truth, the real truth, as to matters of doctrine. Count it not a trifle to be sound in the faith. Think no error to be harmless, for truth is very precious, and error, even when we do not see it to be so, may lead to the most solemn consequences of mischief. In this world we see too much of salvation without Christ—I mean we meet with many who believe that they are saved because they have been baptized, or confirmed, or passed through the ceremonies of the church to which they belong. They have not looked to the precious blood; they are not depending simply upon the finished work of the Redeemer, but something else than Christ has become their confidence. Now, avoid that, and buy the truth, which lies here, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We hear too much nowadays of regeneration without faith—the supposed regeneration of unconscious babes, the new birth of people through drops of water, when they are not able to understand what is performed upon them. I beseech you believe that there is no new birth where there is not a confidence in Christ, and that the regeneration which does not lead to repentance and faith, which is not, indeed, immediately attended therewith, is no regeneration whatever. Buy the truth in this matter. Stand to it that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in rational and intelligent beings, leading them to hate sin, and to lay hold of eternal life. Alas! we have in some quarters too much of faith is trusted in, which is not practical. Men say they believe, but they do not prove it by their lives. They remain in sin, and yet wrap themselves up in the belief that they are God's chosen ones. From such turn away, and remember that a faith without works is dead, and only the faith that changes the character, sanctifies the life, and leads the man to God, is the faith which will save the soul. We must see to it that in our doctrine we bow our judgment to the teachings of Scripture, and try to be conformed to all the revelation of God, and especially to all the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we not fall into one error or another. Scylla is there and Charybdis is there, and he is a happy helmsman who can steer between the two. You shall fall into this *ism* or into that, unless you keep to the truth. Never mind whether you can make the truth always consistent to your own judgment or not. If it is the truth, believe it; and though it should seem to contradict another truth, yet hold to it, if it is in the Word, waiting till clearer light shall reveal to you that all these truths stood in a wonderful harmony and consistency which, at first, you could not perceive. In doctrine, buy the truth.

But, secondly, *buy experimental truth*. I know not another word to use; I mean truth within, the truth experienced. See that this be real truth. How easy it is to be deceived with the notion that we are converted when we still need to be converted; to fancy that, because we have the approbation of our minister and of our Christian friends, we must, therefore, necessarily be the people of God. There is only one true new birth, but there are fifty counterfeits of it. In this respect, then, buy the truth. Let me have you beware of an experience which has a faith in it that was never attended with repentance. I am afraid of a dry-eyed faith. That faith seems to me to be the faith of God's elect, whose eyes are full of tears. If thou hast never felt thyself a sinner, never trembled under the law of God, never felt that thou hast deserved to be cast into hell, I am afraid thy faith is a mere presumption, and not the faith that looks to Christ. Beware of an experience that lies in talk, and not in feeling. Mr. Talkative, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim* could speak very glibly about religion; no man more so than he; he was fit to take the chair in an assembly of divines; but it was not heart-work; it was all surface-work. Plough deep, my brethren. Feel what you believe. Let it be with you real homework, soul-work, the work of God the Holy Ghost—not a temporary excitement, not head-knowledge, not theory. May the truth be burned into your souls by the operation of the Holy Ghost. In this respect, buy the truth. Alas! we see nowadays in many professors a great deal of life without struggle, and I think I have learned that all spiritual life that is not attended with struggles in a mistake, for Isaac, the child of the promise, is sure to be mocked by Ishmael. No sooner does the seed of the woman come into the world than the seed of the serpent tries to destroy it. You must, and will, find a battle going on within you if you are a believer. Sin will contest it with grace, and grace will seek to reign over sinful corruptions. Be afraid of too easy an experience. "Moab is at ease from his youth; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel; for the time cometh when the Lord will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled upon their lees." There must be strivings within, or we may well beware of such an experience. And I think I have noticed a growing feeling abroad of confidence without self-examination. I would have you hold to believe God's Word, but do not take your own state at haphazard. Do not conclude that you are a Christian because you thought you were ten years ago. Day by day bring yourself to the touchstone. He that cannot bear examination will have to bear condemnation. He that dare not search himself will find that God will search him. He that is afraid to look himself in the face has need to be afraid to look the Judge in the face when the great white throne shall be placed, and all the world summoned to judgment. Confidence is quite consistent with self-examination, and I pray you in this thing buy the truth, and seek to have a religion that will bear the test—a true faith, a living faith, a faith that moves your soul, a deep-rooted faith, a faith which is the supernatural work of the Holy Ghost, for the time cometh when, as the Lord liveth, nothing short of this will stand you in good stead.

Again, I spoke of three sorts of truth—doctrinal truth, experimental truth, and now *practical truth*. By practical truth I mean our actions being consistent, and those of a right and straightforward course. In this matter, buy the truth. You profess to be a Christian: be a Christian. You say that you are a follower of Christ: follow him, then. You know it is right to be a man of integrity and uprightness: be so. Let no dirty tricks of trade, let no meannesses, let none of those white lies which degrade commerce nowadays, ever come across your path, except to be reprobated and abhorred. Walk straight forward. Learn not to tack. Do not wish to understand policy, and craft, and cunning. Buy the truth. It will shame the world yet. He that speaks out his mind, says what he means, and means what he says, does the just thing, does the right thing, fears no man, and lifts his head boldly in the face of all creation if it dares to whisper that it will enrich him by his doing wrong—that is

the man that buys the truth practically. You know how it can be carried out in commerce readily enough, in the parlour, in the drawing-room, and in the kitchen. There is a truthful way for a shoe-black to black shoes in the street, and there is a lying way of doing it. There is a truthful way of doing the commonest actions, and there is a false method of doing the very self-same thing. In this respect, then, buy the truth, as to the straightforwardness, the clean, sharp transparency of your moral character and of your Christian conduct. Never seem to be what you are not, or if you must for a while be in that position, count that you are unfortunate, and escape from it as soon as you can. Never do what you are ashamed of; it matters not who sees. Think always that God sees, and with God for a witness you have enough of observers. Only do that which you would have done if all eyes were fixed on you, and you were observed even of your most cruel critics. Never stifle conscience. Carry out your convictions. If the skies fall, stand upright. What God's Holy Spirit tells you, that do. What you find in this Book, carry out. If you bring any mischief to other people through it, that is their business. If I keep on the right side of the road, and run over anybody—that is his fault; he should have kept out of the way. I would not run over him if I could help it, but I cannot turn aside from the right road. Stand in your place. Let malignant eyes look at you, but, like the sun, shine on, and if others envy you, yet fret not because of them, neither be you grieved to act the truth, but in this respect again fulfil the text and "buy the truth."

So have I shown you what the commodity is—doctrinally, experimentally, and practically. "Buy the truth." Now let us come and think specially to the first part of the text.

II. HOW THIS COMMODITY IS OBTAINED.

"Buy the truth." Let us correct an error here. Some might suppose that Christ, and the gospel, and salvation—all of which are included in the truth—can be bought. They can, but they cannot. They can in the sense of the text; they cannot in any other sense. You cannot purchase salvation; merit cannot win it. Christ's price is, "Without money and without price." Has not the prophet so worded it? "Yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Salvation is of free grace, and is from the very necessity of its nature, gratis. You cannot merit it; you cannot earn it. It is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth, but "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion."

What, then, does the text mean? I will try to expound the Word. It means, first, *to be saved, give up everything that must be given up, in order to your receiving the free salvation. Every sin must be given up.* No man shall go to heaven while he lives in, and favours any one, sin. A man may sin and be saved, but he cannot love sin and be saved. Give up, then, thy drunkenness, if that be thy sin. Give up, then, thine unchaste living, if that be thy sin. Conquer that angry temper, that love of greed—whatever it is that keeps thee back from Christ. Buy the truth, and give up these. Thou wilt not merit salvation then; but if this must be given up, let it not stand in thy way. Give it up, man! Since thou canst not have thy sin and have Christ too, get a divorce from thy sin and take holiness, and take the Saviour. Thou must also *give up all thy self-righteousness.* Some are trusting in their prayers, some are trusting in their tears, their repentances, their feelings, their church-goings, their chapel-goings, and I know not what men will not trust in. Give them all up. They are all lies together. There is no reliance to be placed on anything you can do. Come and trust what Christ has done, and if it be, as it certainly is, needful for you to give up your own righteousness to win Christ and be found in him, then do it, and in this sense part with all you have that you may buy Christ. Yourself, your sinful self, and your righteous self—oh! that you might be willing to part with both, that you might buy the true salvation!

And the text means this, again, *that if, in order to be saved, it should cost you a deep experience and much pain, yet never mind it.* It is better that you should bear all that and get the truth, than that you should escape without this heart-searching work, and be deceived at the last. If the price at which you shall have a true experience is that of sorrow, buy the truth at that price. Be willing to let the doctor's lancet wound you, if thereby he shall heal you. Be willing to lose the right eye or the right hand, if thereby you shall enter into life eternal.

It also means this—buy the truth; that is, *be willing at all risks to hold to the truth.* Buy it as the martyrs did when they gave their bodies to be burned for it. Buy it as many have done when they have gone to prison for it. Buy it if you should lose your situation for it. Lose your situation sooner than tell a lie. Like the three holy children, be rather willing to go into the fiery furnace, than to worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Run the risk of being poor. Do not believe, as all the world says, that you must live. There is no absolute necessity for it. Sometimes it is a grander thing to die. Let the necessity be, "We must be honest; we must do the right; we must serve God," for that is a far greater necessity than that of merely living. Count all things but dross that you may be a true man, a godly man, a holy man, a Christly man, and in this sense make sacrifice of all, and thus "buy the truth."

I think that is what the word means. I expound it to mean this—give anything and everything, sooner than part with Christ, part with the living work of grace in your heart, or part with the integrity of your conduct. And now let me:—

III. PARAPHRASE THESE WORDS.

"Buy the truth." Then I say, *buy only the truth.* Do not be throwing away your life, and your abilities, and your zeal, and your earnestness, for a lie. Some are doing it. Thousands of pounds are given to erect edifices for doing mischief. Multitudes of sermons are preached, very zealously, to propagate falsehoods, and sea and land are compassed to make proselytes, who shall be ten times more children of hell than they were before. Buy only the truth. Do not buy the glittering stuff they call truth. Never mind the label; look to see if it be truth. Bring everything that is propounded as truth to the test, to the trial. If it will not stand the fire of God's Word, then do not buy it; nay, do not have it as a gift; nay, do not keep it in the house. Run away from it. It doth eat as doth a canker; let it not come near you. Buy only the truth.

"Buy the truth" at any price, and sell it at no price. Buy it at any price. If you lose your body for it, if you lose not your soul, you have made a good bargain. If you lose your estate for it, yet if you have heaven in return, how blessed the exchange! You certainly will not need for it to lose your peace of mind, but you may lose everything else, and you shall make a good bargain. Come to no terms with Christ. Throw all into the soul-bargain. Let all go, as long as you may but have truth in the doctrine, truth in the heart, and truth in the life, and Christ, who is the Truth, to be your treasure for ever.

Buy all the truth. When you come to the Bible, do not pick and choose. Do not try to believe half of it, and leave out the other half. Buy the truth—that is, not a section of it that suits your particular idiosyncrasy, but buy the whole. Why need you break up pearls and dissolve them? Buy all that is true. One doctrine of God's Word balances another. He who is altogether and only a Calvinist probably only knows half the truth, but he who is willing to take the other side, as far as it is true, and to believe all he finds in the Word, will get the whole pearl.

Buy now the truth—buy tonight the truth. It may not be for you to buy tomorrow. You may be in that land where God hath cast for ever the lost soul away from all access to the truth, where

truth's shadow, cold and chill, shall fall upon you, and you, in outer darkness, shall weep and wail, and gnash your teeth, because you shut out truth from you, and now truth has shut you out, and all your knockings at her door shall be answered with the dolorous cry, "Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now!"

Thus I have paraphrased the text. Buy only the truth; buy all the truth; buy at any price the truth; and buy now the truth. Briefly let me give you:—

IV. THE REASONS FOR THIS PURCHASE.

You want the truth, and you will never be received by God at last unless you bring the truth in your right hand. Only the truthful can enter those gates of pearl. You want the truth *now*. You are not fit to live any more than to die without an interest in the truth as it is in Jesus. Accept Christ to be truly yours, so truly yours as to make you true. You know not how to fight the battle of life at all without the truth. Your life will be a blunder, and the close of it will be a disaster, except you buy the truth. God grant that you may buy the truth now. You need it. You need it now, and you will for ever need it. Oh! I would to God that that hymn we sang should not merely be heard by you, but felt by you:—

"Hasten, sinner, to be wise,
And stay not for the morrow's sun."

Oh! that fatal "tomorrow"! Over the cliffs of "tomorrow" millions have fallen to their ruin. Tomorrow, ay, tomorrow! Here are these put-offs, and these delays, and yet God has never given you a promise of mercy tomorrow. His word is "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." A better day shall never come than this day. Oh! that you would accept it now.

"If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all."

And till times are more propitious, if you wait, you will wait on for ever and for aye. God grant you may buy the truth now, for the text is in the present tense, for now you need it. Let me direct you to:—

V. THE MARKET WHERE YOU CAN BUY IT.

These are the words of Jesus Christ when he appeared to his servant John, "I counsel thee, buy of me," said he. There is no place where truth can be found in its power and life, except in Jesus Christ. Truth is in his blood; it will wash away what is false in you. Truth is in his Spirit; it will eradicate what is dark and vile in you. His love will make you true by conforming you to himself. Come to Christ. Bring nothing with you. Come as you are, empty-handed, penniless, and poor. The rills of milk and wells of wine are all with him. He is the banquet-giver, and the banquet too. To trust him is to live. To look to him alone for salvation is to find salvation in that look. Oh! that these simple words might point someone to the place where he shall buy the truth! And now let me repeat my text again, "Buy the truth."

Do not misread it. It does not say *hear about the truth*. That is a good thing, but hearing is not buying, as many of you tradesmen know to your cost. You may tell people where to go, but you do not want them merely to hear; you are not content with that; you want them to buy. Oh! that some of you, my hearers, would become buyers of the truth! I know some of you. I happen to look about, and find out here and there one—some of you, whom I know, and respect, and esteem, and pray for I had thought that you would have bought the truth long ago, and it often staggers me why you have not. Oh! that you were decided for God! I am afraid I am preaching some of you into a hardened state. If the gospel does not save you, it will certainly be a curse to you, and I am afraid

it is being so to some of you. Do think of this, I pray you! Why should you and I have the misery of doing each other hurt when our intention is on both sides, I am sure, to do that which is kind and good? Oh! yield you to my Master. The Light of the World is with his hand at your door knocking tonight softly. Do you not hear the knock of the hand that was pierced? Admit him! He comes not in wrath; he comes in mercy. Admit him! He has tarried long, even these many years, but no frown is yet upon his brow. Rise now and let him in. Be not ashamed. Though ashamed, be not afraid, but let him in, and blushing, with tears in your face, say to him, "My Lord, I will trust thee; worthless worm as I am, I will depend upon thee." Oh! that you would do it now, this moment! The Lord give you grace to do it! Do not hear about it only, but buy the truth.

Do not merely commend the truth by saying, "The preacher spoke well, and he spoke earnestly, and I love what he said." The preacher had almost rather that you said nothing than that, if you do not buy the truth. How it provokes the salesman when a customer says, "Yes, it is a beautiful article, and very cheap, and just what I want," and then walks out of the shop. Nay, buy the truth, and you shall commend it better afterwards, and your commendation shall be worth the hearing.

And, I pray you, do not stand content *with merely knowing about the truth*. Oh! how much some of you know. How much more you know than even some of God's people. You could correct many of my blunders. But ah! he that knows is nowhere unless he also has. To know about bread will not stay my hunger; to know that there are riches at the bank will not fill my pocket. Buy the truth, as well as know it; that is, make it your own.

And do not, I pray you, *intend to buy it*. Oh! intentions, intentions, intentions! The road to hell—not hell—that is a mistake of the proverb—the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Oh! ye laggards, pull up the paving-stones and hurl them at the devil's head. He is ruining you; he is decoying you to your destruction. Turn your intentions into actions, and no longer intend to buy, but buy the truth.

And do not tonight *wish that the truth were yours*, but buy it. You say the cost is too great. Too great? It is nothing. It is "without money and without price." Do you mean, however, to say, that it is too great a cost to give up a sin? What, will you burn in hell rather than give up a lust? Will you dwell in everlasting burnings for ever, sooner than give up those cups that intoxicate you? Must you have your silly wantonness, and lascivious mirth, or any kind of sin? Must you have it? Will you sooner have it than heaven? Then, sirs, your blood be on your own heads. You have been warned. I hope you are sober, and have not yet gone to madness, and if you be, you will see that no pleasures of an hour can ever recompense for casting yourselves under the anger of God for ever and for ever. Buy the truth. Do not merely talk about it, and wish for it, but buy, buy the truth. And then, lastly:

VI. A WARNING AS TO LOSING THE PURCHASE.

"Sell it not." My time has gone, and therefore, as I never like to exceed it, there shall be but these few words. When you have once got the truth, I know you will not sell it. You will not, I am sure, at any price; but the exhortation, nevertheless, is a most proper one. *There have been some who have sold the truth to be respectable*. They used to hear the gospel, but now they have got on in the world, and keep a carriage, and they do not like to go where there are so many poor people, so away they go where they can hear anything or nothing, so that they may be respectable. Ah! I have the uttermost contempt for this affectation of gentility and respectability that leads men to be so mean as to forsake their Christian friends. Let them go; they are best gone. Such chaff had better

not be with the wheat, and those that can be actuated by such motives are too base to be worth retaining.

Some sell the truth *for a livelihood*. I pity these far more. "I must have a situation; therefore, I must do what I am told there; I must break this law of God and that, for I must keep my family." Ah! poor soul, I pity thine unfortunate position, but I pray that thou mayest have grace even now to play the man, and never sell the truth, even for bread.

Some sell the truth *for the pleasures of the world*. They must have enjoyment, they say, and so they will mingle with the multitude that do evil, and give up their Christian profession.

Others seem to sell the truth *for nothing at all*. They merely go away from Christ because religion has grown stale with them. They are weary of it, and they go away. I shall put the question painfully to all, Will ye also go away? Will ye to be respectable, will ye to have a livelihood, will ye to have the pleasures of sin for a season, will ye out of sheer weariness—will ye go away? Nay, we can add:—

"What anguish has that question stirred,
If I will also go!
Yet, Lord, relying on thy Word,
I humbly answer, No."

Sell it not; sell it not; it cost Christ too dear. Sell it not; you made a good bargain when you bought it. Sell it not. Sell it not; it has not disappointed you; it has satisfied you, and made you blessed. Sell it not; you want it. Sell it not; you will want it. The hour of death is coming on, and the day of judgment is close upon its heels. Sell it not; you cannot buy its like again; you can never find a better. Sell it not; you are a lost man if you part with it. Remember Esau, and the morsel of meat, and how he would again have found his birthright if he could. Remember Demas; remember Judas, the son of perdition. You are lost without it. It is your life. Skin for skin, yea all that you possess, part with for it, and be resolved, come fair or come foul, come storm or come calm, come sickness or come health, come poverty or come wealth, come death itself in the grimmest form, yet none shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord, and none shall make you part from the truths you have learned and received from his Word, the truths you have felt and have had wrought into your soul by his Spirit, and the truths which in action you desire should tone and colour all your life.

God bless you, dear friends, and keep you, and when the Great Shepherd shall appear may you have the mark of truth upon you, and appear with him in glory.

The Welcome Visitor

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."—John 11:28-32.

IT seems that Martha had heard of Christ's coming, and Mary had not. Hence Martha rose up hastily and went to meet the Master, while Mary sat still in the house. From this we gather that genuine believers may, through some unexplained cause, be at the same time in very different states of mind. Martha may have heard of the Lord and seen the Lord; and Mary, an equally loving heart, not having known of his presence, may, therefore, have missed the privilege of fellowship with him. Who shall say that Martha was better than Mary? Who shall censure the one, or approve the other? Now, beloved, you may be tonight yourselves, though true believers in Jesus, in different conditions. I may have a Martha here whose happiness it is to be in rapt fellowship with Christ. You have gone to him already and told him of your grief: you may have heard his answer to your story, and you may have been able by faith to say, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"; and you may be full of peace and full of joy. On the other hand, sitting near you may be a person equally gracious as yourself who can get no farther than the cry, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" Dear Martha, condemn not Mary. Dear Mary, condemn not yourself. Martha, be ready to speak the word of comfort to Mary. Mary, be ready to receive that word of comfort, and, in obedience to it, to rise up quickly and, in imitation of your sister, go and cast yourself, as she has done already, at the Saviour's feet. I must not say, because I have not all the joy my brother has, that I am no true child of God. Children are equally children in your household, though one be little and the other be full grown, and they are equally dear to you, though one be sick and the other in good health—though one be quick at his letters and another be but a dull scholar. The love of Christ is not measured out to us according to our conditions or attainments. He loves us irrespective of all these. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He loves all his own, and they must not judge of him by what they feel, nor measure his love by a sense of their own want of love.

Hoping that the Lord will now bless the word to all of us who are his own people, I shall speak of two things—a visit from the Master—a visit to the Master.

I. HERE IS A VISIT FROM THE MASTER.

Martha came and said to Mary, "The Master is come"—or as we might read it truly, "The Master is *here* and calleth for thee." "The Master is come." "The Master is here."

Beloved friends who are just now without the present fellowship with Christ, which you could fondly desire, permit me to whisper this in your ear. "The Master is here! The Master is here!" We cannot come round and whisper it secretly as Martha did, but take the message each one of you to himself—"The Master is here."

He is here, for he is accustomed to be where his word is preached with sincerity of heart. He is accustomed to be wherever his saints are gathered together in his name. We have his own dear word for this—the best pledge we can have—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We have met in his name, we have met for his worship, we have met to preach his gospel; and the Master is here. We are sure he is here, for he always keeps his word; he never fails of his promise.

He is here, for some of us feel his presence. Had Mary said to Martha, How do you know that the Master is come? she would have answered, "Why I have spoken with him, and he has spoken to me." Well, there be some among us who can say, "He has spoken to us." Did we not hear him speaking when we were singing that hymn just now?

"My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
The comfort of my nights."

Did not we perceive him to be near some of us, when we were singing:—

"Oh! see how Jesus trusts himself
Unto our childish love,
As though, by his free ways with us,
Our earnestness to prove"?

I, for one, did, if none besides; I can bear good witness to you that are languishing for his company, "The Master is here."

And mark, he is here none the less surely because you have not, as yet, found it out, for a fact does not depend upon our cognisance of it, though our comfort may be materially affected thereby. The Master was at Bethany, though Mary had not heard an inkling of the good tidings; there she sat, her eyes red with weeping, and her whole soul in the grave with her brother Lazarus. Yet Jesus was there for all that. Make the case your own; though you may have come here troubled with all the weeks' cares— though while you have been sitting here the thought of something that will happen tomorrow has been depressing you—though some bodily weakness has been holding you down when you would lift up your spirit towards God, yet that does not alter the fact. "The Master is come"; the Master is here. Oh! there was Mary sighing, "If only Christ had been here! Oh! if only Christ would come!" And there he was! And perhaps you are saying, "Oh! that he were near me!" He is near you now. You sigh for what you have, and pine for that which is near you. You think not, like Mary Magdalene, that he standeth in this garden. You are asking, "Where have ye laid him?" While your joy and comfort seem to you dead, he, whose absence you mourn, stands present before you. Oh! that he would but open those eyes of yours, or rather than he would open your heart, by saying to you, "Mary!" Let him but speak one word right home to you personally, and you will answer with gladness, "Rabboni!" The Master is come here, though you as yet have not perceived him.

That word "*The Master*" has a sweet ring about it. He is the Master. He that is come is earth's Master. What are your cares? He can relieve them. What are your troubles? He can overcome them, and sweep them out of the way. The Master has come. "Cast thy burden on the Lord: he will sustain thee." He is hell's Master. Art thou beset with fierce temptations and foul insinuations of the arch-fiend? The Master has come. Oh! lift thy head, thou captive daughter of Zion, for thy bands are broken. The Breaker is come up before them; their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them. He who hath come is no menial servant, but the right royal Master himself. The Master is come. What though your heart now seem cold as a stone, and your spirit is cast down within you? What though death hath set up its adamant throne in thy breast? The Master has come, and his presence can thaw the ice, dissolve the rock, bring thee all the graces of the Spirit and all the blessings of heaven that thy soul can possibly require. "The Master is come"—does not that touch your soul and fire your passions? Whose Master is he but your own? And what a Master! No taskmaster, no slave's master, but such a Master that his absolute sovereignty inspires you with sweetest confidence; for he binds you with the bonds of love, and draws you with the cords of a man. Master indeed is he! Aye, Lord and sole Master of your soul's inmost core if you be what you profess to be; the Master whose sceptre is the sceptre of reed which he carried in his hand when he was made a scorn and scoffing for you; the Master whose crown is the crown of thorns which he wore for your sins when he accomplished your redemption. Your Master. Thou shalt call him no more Baali, but Ishi shall his name be called. He is only Master in that same sense in which the tender loving husband is the master of the house. Love makes him supreme, for he is Master in the art of love, and, therefore, Master of our loving hearts. How sweetly doth "my Master" sound! "My Master." Why, if nothing else might bestir us to get up and run to meet him, it should be the sound of that blessed word, "The Master is here: the Master has come."

But Martha added—and it is a very weighty addition (may the Holy Ghost make application of it to your heart)—"and calleth for thee." "But is that true?" says one; "doth he call for me?" Dear brother, dear sister, I know that if I say he does I shall not speak without his warrant, for when he comes into a congregation he calls for all his own. He speaketh, and he saith to all whom he loves, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." I know he does, because love always delights in fellowship with the object that is loved. Jesus loved you or ever the earth was. His delights were with the sons of men from old eternity. He loved you so well that he could not keep in heaven without you, and he came here to seek you and to save you. And now it gives his heart joy to be near you. He said, "Let me hear thy voice; let me see thy face: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." I tell you it is Christ's nether heaven to hear the voices of his people. It is that for which he left heaven—that he might give them voices with which to praise him. Do you think he loved you so, and will live without you? Nay, he calls for you.

What is his Word, indeed, all through, but a call to his own beloved to come to him? What are Sabbath-days but calls in which he says, "Come away! come away, my beloved, from the noise and turmoil of the city, and come into the quiet places where my sheep lie down and feed"? What are your troubles but calls to you in which, with somewhat of harshness as it seems to you, but with an inner depth of love, he says, "Away, my beloved, from all earthly delights, to find thy all in me"? What is the Communion of the Lord's Supper but another call to you, "Come unto me"? The bread which you shall eat, and the wine which you shall drink, these are for yourself, and the call which is encompassed by them as by symbols is for each one of you. The Master is here, and calleth for thee—for each one. "Oh! but" saith Mary, "my eyes are bleared with weeping." He calleth for

thee, thou red-eyed sorrower. "Ay, but my heart is heavy with a sad affliction." He calleth for thee, thou burdened sufferer. "Ay, but I have been full of levity all the week, and have forgotten him." He calleth thee that he may cleanse thee yet again. "Ah! but I have denied him." What saith he but, "Go, and tell my disciples, *and Peter*"? He calleth for thee that he may forgive thee yet again, and may say unto thee, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I care not who you are, if you are one of his, the Master is come and calleth for thee. "Why," says one, "no Christian has spoken to me for a long while." But the Master calleth for thee. "But I seem so solitary in this great metropolis, and though I know my Master, I do not know any of his people." Never mind his people: "The *Master* is come, and calleth for thee." Ay, but I think if I am one of his I must be at the very tail-end of the catalogue, and the last of all." He calleth for thee—for *thee*. Oh! may that word now come home, and may each one feel, "If he calls for me, there is such condescension in that call, such tender memories of my weakness, such consideration for my distance and my forgetfulness, that I will loiter no longer. Is the Master come? Lo, I am ready for him. Doth the Master call? Lo, my spirit answers, 'Come, Master, my heart's doors are flung wide open. Come and sit on the throne of my heart. Enter in and sup with me and I with thee, and make this a gladsome season of intimate fellowship between my soul and her Lord.'" Turning now to our second part, let us talk awhile of:—

II. A VISIT TO THE MASTER.

It follows on the first as a fit sequence. We never come to Christ till Christ comes to us. "Draw me: I will run after thee." That is the order. It is not, "We will run after thee: Lord, draw us." Neither is it thus. When a soul is saying, as we sung in the hymn just now:—

"If thou hast drawn a thousand times,

'Oh! draw me yet again,"

—then, beloved, he is drawing us. When we are praying to be drawn, we are being drawn all the while.

In answer to the Lord's visit, you will notice the conduct of Mary. She rose up quickly. She bestirred herself. Oh! let each one of our souls now say, "Has the Lord called for me? Why, then, should I loiter or linger for a single moment? I will get me up this very moment; I will say, 'My Lord, I am come to thee. Thou hast called me, and here I am.'" Oh! for grace to shake off the sorrow that makes some hearts sit still! Mary's dear brother was newly laid in the tomb, but she rose up quickly to go and meet her Master. Dear mother, forget for a few minutes that dear unburied child still in the house. Forget awhile, dear husband, that sick wife of yours towards whom your heart so naturally flies. Forget, beloved, just now, all that you have suffered, all that you expect to suffer, all that you have lost or may be losing. The Master is come, and calleth for thee. Rise up quickly. Let not these things constrain thee to inactivity of spirit, but rise up now, and by his grace come away from them. She bestirred herself; she put on her best efforts, that she might not tarry when he called. And then she went, we find, just as she was. She rose up quickly, it is said, and she went: she came unto him. No sooner said than done. She arose and she came. Well, but should not she have washed her face? Tears add but little beauty to the maiden's visage. And that hair of hers, I doubt not all dishevelled—might she not have arranged that a little, and prepared her dress, and made herself trim for the Lord? Ah! that is a temptation for the mass of us: "I cannot expect to have fellowship at the table, because I have not come prepared." Brother, you ought to have come prepared, but, at the same time, if you have not, rise up quickly and come to the Master as you are. The Master had seen Mary with tears before, for he had felt her tears upon his feet. He had seen her with dishevelled hair before, for she had wiped his feet with the hairs of her head. If you are

out of order, it is not the first time Christ has seen you so. I do not think a mother's love depends upon seeing her child in its Sunday clothes. She has seen it, I warrant you, in many a trim in which she would not wish anybody else to see it, but she has loved it none the less. Come, then, thou unprepared one. Come to him who knows just what thou art, and in what state thou art, and he will not cast thee out; only make brave to believe that, when Christ calls, his call is a warrant to come, however unfit we may be. And oh! how promptly she left all other comforters to come to Christ. There were the Jews that came to comfort her. I dare say they did their best, but she did not stop for the rabbi to finish his fine discourse, nor for the first scholar of the Sanhedrin to complete that dainty parable by which he hoped to charm her ear and assuage her sorrow. She went straight away to the Master there and then. So would I have you forget that there are other comforters: forget your joys as well as your griefs: leave all for him, and let your soul be only taken up with that Great Master of yours who calls for you, for all your faculties, for all your emotions, for all your passions, for your entire self. Come right away, by his help, from everything else that would absorb any part of your being. Rise up, and draw near to him.

But it seems, beloved, that when Mary had reached the Master's feet she had done all she could, for it is said that she fell at his feet. Ah! you remember she had *knelt* once at his feet when she washed his feet: she had *sat* once at his feet, when she heard his words; this time she *fell* at his feet. She could neither kneel to do him service, nor sit to pay him the reverence of a disciple. She fell all but in a swoon, life gone from her. She fell at his feet. Never mind, if you are at his feet, if you do but fall there. Oh! to die there—it were life itself! Once get to Jesus, and you may say, like Joab at the altar when Benaiah said, "Come away, for Solomon has sent me to slay thee." "Nay," said Joab, "but I will die here"; and at the horns of the altar there he died. And if we must die, we will die there at his feet. Fall down at his feet. Beloved, if you do not feel you have got strength for communion tonight, never mind: it does not want any.

"Oh! for this no strength have I:

My strength is at his feet to lie."

Some of us do know what it is to be scarcely able to get together two consecutive thoughts—not to be able to master a text or lay hold of a promise; still we could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; we could lie down at the feet that were pierced, and feel how sweet it is to swoon at the Saviour's feet. Only get there. Let your will and heart be good to get at him now, for the Master is here, and calls for you. Come, though in the coming you should utterly fail to get enjoyment, come and fall at his feet. Do I hear any of you saying, "An! but I have a heavy thought pressing at my heart, and if I come to him it is not much that I can say in his honour. I feel but little love, and gratitude, and joy. I could not pour out sweet spikenard from the broken box of my heart." Be it so, only pour out what you have; for what did Mary do? She said—and the Master did not chide her, though he might have done—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Oh! it was half cruel, for she seemed to say, "Why wast thou not here?" It was unbelieving in part, and yet there is a deal of faith in it—a sweet clinging to him. Martha had the same; and it shows how often those two sisters had said to one another, "Would God the Master was here." When the brother was very sick and near to death, they were saying to one another, "Oh! if we could get the Master here!" That had been the great thought with them, so they pour it out. Beloved, when you are at Jesus' feet, if you have an unbelieving thought, if you have something that half chides him, pour out your heart like water before the Lord:—

"Let us be simple with him then—

Not backward, stiff, and cold;
 As though our Bethlehem could be
 What Sinai was of old."

Tell him the weakness; tell him the suspicion; tell him all the sin that has been, and all the sin that is haunting you. Tell it all to him; and at his feet is the place to tell it. You will be eased of your burden then. Beloved, you know how Mary received consolation. It was a great day for her when she got to Christ's feet, and then the Master began to do wondrously, and very soon Lazarus was restored. So now, your first business, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, is to get to Jesus. "Oh! but Lazarus is dead." Never mind Lazarus. You get to Jesus and he will see to Lazarus. "Oh! but my business fails me." Never mind the business just now. Get to Jesus. "Oh! but there is sickness in my house." Leave the sickness for awhile now. The one thing is to get to Jesus and to his feet. "Oh! but my own heart is now as it should be." Forget thine own heart, too, and remember Jesus; he is to thee all that thou canst need. He is made, of God, unto thee, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"; and do thou come to him quickly, and thou shalt have all thou wantest. "Ah!" says one, "I cannot bear to think of God, for I do not love him." "Ah!" says another, "but I can bear to think of him, for though I did not love him, he loved me." And now you may say, "I cannot bear to think of coming to Jesus, for I do not love him as I should." Ah! but think of him, for he loves thee. His grace to thee is boundless. Now let thine own self be put aside awhile, and remember this "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners." Come, then, in the strength of that!

I must close by saying a few words to those whom hitherto I have not addressed. Perhaps there are some here to whom this message has never come—"The Master is come and calleth for thee." If it were to reach them tonight, it would be the first time they ever heard it. O dear heart, I pray it may come to you, that this may be the beginning of days with you. The Master has come. This is certain. From the highest throne in glory to the manger, to the cross, and to the grave, the Master has come. That he calls for thee, this is also certain, I think. Let me give you a text in which, I think, he calls for you. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Calls he not for you, too, in this text, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"? Calls he not for you in this verse, where he bids all that labour and are heavy-laden come unto him, that they may rest; or in that other, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow." He calleth for thee. Do not disbelieve him. It is certainly matchless grace, but he is a God and none is like unto him. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above your thoughts." But does your heart say, "Why, if I thought Jesus called for me, I would come"? Then he does call thee; that speech of thine, "I would come," proves it; 'tis he that makes thee feel willing. Dost thou long for him? Oh! he is putting his hand in at the door of thy heart, and making thy bowels yearn for him. Does a tear drop on the floor, and do you say, "It cannot be that such a one as I should ever live and be saved, and be Christ's"? Why, thy very admiration at his grace shows that some of his grace is at work upon thee. Trust thou that that arm can save: trust thou that that pierced hand can grasp thee; trust thou that that heart that was gashed with a spear can feel for thee. Trust thyself wholly to him. "Go thy way; thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." If thou hast trusted him, thou art saved. Come and cast thyself at Jesu's feet tonight. Is there no young man here to whom

this shall be Christ's voice? You say you cannot believe, and cannot repent, and cannot do anything. Then fall like dead at Jesu's feet, and look up to him—to him alone, and you shall have life. Is there no young woman here burdened in heart, to whom the Saviour's feet may become a place of refuge from all her fear? I trust there is. And if I speak to someone far advanced in years, who imagines that he, at least, must be given up by mercy, it is not so. Thou hast but a few days more to live, but the Master calleth for thee. Rise up quickly! May tonight witness thy forsaking of thy sins, and thy clinging to his cross; and one day thou shalt see his face in heaven without a veil between.

The Lord bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

A Warning to Believers

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

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"Let no man beguile you of your reward."—Colossians 2:18.

THERE is an allusion here to the prize which was offered to the runners in the Olympic games, and at the outset it is well for us to remark how very frequently the Apostle Paul conducts us by his metaphors to the racecourse. Over and over again he is telling us so to run that we may obtain, bidding us to strive, and at other times to agonize, and speaking of wrestling and contending. Ought not this to make us feel what an intense thing the Christian life is—not a thing of sleepiness or haphazard, not a thing to be left now and then to a little superficial consideration? It must be a matter which demands all our strength, so that when we are saved there is a living principle put within us which demands all our energies, and gives us energy over and above any that we ever had before. Those who dream that carelessness will find its way to heaven have made a great mistake. The way to hell is neglect, but the way to heaven is very different. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" A little matter of neglect brings you to ruin, but our Master's words are "*Strive* to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek"—merely seek—"to enter in, and shall not be able." Striving is needed more than seeking. Let us pray that God the Holy Spirit would always enable us to be in downright, awful earnest about the salvation of our souls. May we never count this a matter of secondary importance, but may we seek first, and beyond everything else, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. May we lay hold on eternal life; may we so run that we may obtain.

I would press this upon your memories because I do observe, observe it in myself as well as in my fellow-Christians, that we are often more earnest about the things of this life than we are about the things of the life to come. We are all impressed with the fact that in these days of competition, if a man would not be run over and crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of poverty, he must exert himself. No man seems now able to keep his head above water with the faint swimmer strokes which our forefathers used to give. We have to strive, and the bread that perisheth hath to be laboured for. Shall it be that this poor world shall engross our earliest thoughts and our latest cares, and shall the world to come have only now and then a consideration? No; may we love our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and may we lay our body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of Christ's service, for these are but our reasonable sacrifice to him.

Now the Apostle in the text before us gives us a warning, which comes to the same thing, however it is interpreted; but the passage is somewhat difficult of rendering, and there have been several meanings given to it. Out of these there are three meanings which have been given of the text before us which are worthy of notice. "Let no man beguile you of your reward." The Apostle, in the first place, may mean here:—

I. LET NO MAN BEGUILE ANY OF YOU

Now, my brethren, we have, many of us, commenced the Christian race, or we profess to have done so, but the number of the starters is far greater than the number of the winners. "They that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many commence, apparently, in the Christian career, but after a while, though they did run well, something hinders them that they do not obey the truth, and they go out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. Now we may expect, now that we have commenced to run, that *some will come and try to turn us out of the race course openly*—not plausibly and with sophistry, but with an open and honest wickedness. Some will tell us plainly that there is no reward to run for, that our religion is all a mistake, that the pleasures of this world are the only things worth seeking, that there are delights of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and that we should do well to enjoy them. We shall meet the Atheist with his sneer and with his ringing laugh. We shall meet with all kinds of persons who will to our faces tell us to turn back, for there is no heaven, there is no Christ, or, if there be, it is not worth our while to take so much trouble to find him. Take heed of these people. Meet them face to face with dauntless courage. Mind not their sneers. If they persecute you only, reckon this to be an honour to you, for what is persecution but the tribute which wickedness pays to righteousness, and what is it, indeed, but the recognition of the seed of the woman when the seed of the serpent would fain bite his heel?

But the Apostle does not warn you so much against those people who openly come to you in this way. He knows that you will be on the alert against them. He gives a special warning against some others who would beguile you; that is to say, *who will try to turn you out of the right road, but who will not tell you that they mean to do so*. They pretend that they are going to show you something that you knew not before, some improvement upon what you have hitherto learned. In Paul's day there were some who took off the attention of the Christian from the worship of God to the worship of angels. "Angels," said they, "these are holy beings; they keep watch over you; you should speak of them with great respect"; and then when they grew bolder, they said, "You should ask their protection"; and then after a little while they said, "You should worship them; you should make them intermediate intercessors"; and so, step by step, they went on and established an old heresy which lasted for many years in the Christian church, and which is not dead even now, and thus the worship of angels crept in.

And nowadays you will meet with men who will say, "That bread upon the Table—why, it represents the body of Jesus Christ to you when you come to the Lord's Supper; therefore, you ought to treat that bread with great respect." By and bye they will get a little bolder, and then they say, "As it represents Christ, you may worship it, pay it respect as if it were Christ." By and bye it will come to this, that you must have a napkin under your chin, lest you should drop a crumb; or it will be very wicked if a drop of the sacred wine should cling to your moustache when you drink; and there will be the directions which are given in some of the papers coming out from the High Church party—absurdities which are only worthy of the nursery—about the way in which the holy bread is to be eaten, and the holy wine is to be drunk—bringing in idolatry, sheer, clear idolatry, under the presence of improving upon the too bare simplicity of the worship of Christ. Have a care of the very first step, I pray you.

Or, perhaps, it may come to you in another shape. One will say to you, "The place in which you worship—is it not very dear to you? That seat where you have been accustomed to sit and

listen, is it not dear?"; and your natural instincts will say, "Yes. " Then it will go a little farther. "That place is holy; it ought never to be used for anything but worship " Then a little farther it will be, "Oh! that is the house of God," and you will come to believe that, contrary to the words which you know are given to you of the Holy Ghost, that God dwells not in temples made with hands; that is to say, in these buildings, and you will get by degrees to have a worship of places, and a worship of days, and a worship of bread, and a worship of wine. And then it will be said to you, "Your minister, has he not often cheered you? Well then, you should reverence him; call him 'Reverend.'" Go a little farther, and you will call him "Father"; yet a little farther, and he will be your confessor; get a little farther and he will be your infallible Pope. It is all step by step until it is done. The first step seems to be very harmless indeed. Indeed, it is a kind of voluntary humility. You look as if you were humbling yourselves, and were paying reverence to these things for God's sake, whereas the object is to get you to pay reverence to them, instead of to God, and here the Apostle's words come in, "Let no man setting up other objects of reverence besides those which spiritual men worship.

So, too, they too, by slow degrees try to *insinuate a different way of living from that which is the true life of the Christian*. You who have believed in Jesus are saved; your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. You are accustomed to go to Jesus Christ constantly to receive that washing of the feet of which he spake to Peter when he said, "He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit." You go to him with "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But there will be some who will come in and tell you that to live in that way by a simple faith in Jesus Christ is not, perhaps, the best way. Could you not get a little farther? Could you not lead the life of those recluses who mortify the flesh in such a way that at last they come to have no sins, but commence to be perfect in themselves? Could you not begin, at least in some degree, to commit your soul's care to some priest, or to some friend, and instead of making every place holy and every day a holy day, would it not be well to fast on such and such days in the week, to scrupulously observe this rule and the other rule, and walk by the general opinion of the ancient Church, or by some one of those books which profess to show how they used to do it a thousand years ago? All this may have a great show of wisdom, and antiquity, and beauty; there may be a semblance of everything that is holy about it, and names that should never be mentioned without reverence may be appended to it all, but listen to the Apostle as he saith, "Beware lest any man beguile you of your reward," for if they get you away from living upon Christ as a poor sinner from day to day by simple confidence in him, they will beguile you of your reward.

There is another party who will seek to beguile you of your reward *by bringing in speculative notions, instead of the simple truths of God's Word*. There is a certain class of persons who think that a sermon must be a good one when they cannot understand it, and who are always impressed with a man whose words are long; and if his sentences are involved they feel, poor souls, that because they do not know what he is talking about, there is no doubt that he is a very wise and learned man; and after a while when he does propound something that they can catch at, though it may be quite contrary to what they have learned at their mother's knee or from their father's Bible, yet they are ready to be led off by it. There are many men nowadays who seem to spend their time in nothing else but in spinning new theories, and inventing new systems, gutting the gospel taking the very soul and bowels out of it, and leaving there nothing but the mere skin and outward bones. The life and marrow of the gospel is being taken away by their learning, by their philosophies, by their refinements, by their bringing everything down to the test of this wonderfully enlightened

nineteenth century to which we are all, I suppose, bound to defer. But a voice comes to us, "let no man beguile *you* of your reward." Stand fast to the old truths; they will outlast all these philosophies. Stand fast to the old way of living; it will outlast all the inventions of men. Stand fast by Christ, for you want no other object of worship but himself.

The Apostle gives us this warning, "Let no man beguile you of your reward," reminding us that these persons are very likely to beguile us. They will beguile us *by their character*. Have I not often heard young people say of such and such a preacher who preaches error, "But he is so good a man." That is nothing to the point. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." If the life of the man should be blameless as the life of Christ, yet if he preach to you other than the gospel of Jesus Christ, take no heed of him; he weareth but the sheep's clothing, and is a wolf after all. Some will plead, "But such and such a man is so eloquent". Ah! brethren, may the day never come when your faith shall stand in the words of men. What is a ready orator, after all, that he should convince your hearts? Are there not ready orators caught any day for everything? Men speak, speak fluently, and speak well in the cause of evil, and there are some that can speak much more fluently and more eloquently for evil than any of our poor tongues are ever likely to do for the right. But words, words, words, flowers of rhetoric, oratory—are these the things that saved you? Are ye so foolish that having begun in the spirit by being convinced of your sins, having begun by being led simply to Christ, and putting your trust in him—are you now to be led astray by these poetic utterances and flowery periods of men? God forbid! Let nothing of this kind beguile you.

Then there will be added to these remarks that the man is not only very good and very eloquent, *but that he is very earnest—he seems very humble-minded*. Yes, and of old they wore rough garments to deceive, and in the connection of the text we find that those persons were noted for their voluntary humility and their worship of angels. Satan knows very well that if he comes in black he will be discovered, but if he puts on the garb of an angel of light, then men will think he comes from God, and so will be deceived. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If they give you not the gospel, if they exalt not Christ, if they bear not witness to salvation through the precious blood, if they do not lift up Jesus Christ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, have nothing to do with them, speak as they may. "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Though it should happen to be your relative, one whom you love, one who may have many claims on your respect otherwise—let no man, let no man, however plausible may be his speech, or eminent his character, beguile you of your reward.

Recollect, you professors, you lose the reward if *you lose the road to the reward*. He that runs may run very fast, but if he does not run in the course, he wins not the prize. You may believe false doctrine with great earnestness, but you will find it false for all that. You may give yourself up indefatigably to the pursuit of the wrong religion, but it will ruin your souls. A notion is abroad that if you are but earnest and sincere, you will be all right. Permit me to remind you that if you travel never so earnestly to the north, you will never reach the south, and if you earnestly take prussic acid you will die, and if you earnestly cut off a limb you will be wounded. You must not only be earnest, but you must be right in it. Hence is it necessary to say, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." "I bear them witness," said the Apostle, "that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, but went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Oh! may we not be beguiled, then, so as to miss the reward of heaven at the last!

But I must pass on, especially as the light fails us this evening; I hope it is prognostic of a coming shower. Here is a second rendering which may be given to the text:—

II. LET NO MAN DOMINEER OVER YOU.

This rendering, or something analogous to it, is in the French translation. One of the great expositors in his commentary upon this passage refers it to the judges at the end of the course, who sometime would give the reward to the wrong person, and the person who had really run well might thus be deprived of his reward. Now, however close a man may be to Christ, the world, instead of honouring him for it, will, on the contrary, censure and condemn him, and hence the Apostle's exhortation is, "Let no man domineer over you."

And, my brethren, I would earnestly ask you to remember this first *as to your course of action*. If you conscientiously believe that you are right in what you are doing, study very little who is pleased or who is displeased. If you are persuaded in your own soul that what you believe and what you do are acceptable to God, whether they are acceptable to man or not is of very small consequence. You are not man's servant, you do not look to man for your reward, and, therefore, you need not care what man's opinion may be in this matter. Be just and fear not. Tread in the footsteps of Christ, follow what may. Live not on the breath of men. Let not their applause make you feel great, for perhaps then their censure will make you faint. Let no man in this respect domineer over you, but let Christ be your Master, and look to his smile.

So not only with regard to your course of action, *but also with reference to your confidence*, let no man domineer over you. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, there are some who will say it is presumption. Let them say it is presumption. "Wisdom is justified of all her children," and so shall faith be. If you take the promise of God and rest upon it, there will be some who will say that you are hare-brained fanatics. Let them say it. They that trust in him shall never be confounded. The result will honour your faith. You have but to wait a little while, and, perhaps, they that now censure you will have to hold up their hands in astonishment, and say with you, "What hath God wrought?" Your confidence in Christ, especially, my dear young friend, I trust does not depend upon the smile of your relatives. If it did, then their frown might crush it. Walk with your Saviour in the lowly walk of holy confidence, and let not your faith rest in man, but in the smile of God.

Let no man domineer over you, again, by *judging your motives*. Men will always give as bad a reason as they can for a good man's actions. It seems to be innate in human nature never to give a man credit for being right if you can help it, and often tender minds have been greatly wounded when they have been misrepresented, and their actions have been imputed to sinister and selfish motives, when they have really desired to serve Christ. But do not let your heart be broken about that. You will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ: do not care about these petty judgments-seats of men. Go on with your Master's work dauntlessly and fearlessly. Let them say, as David's brethren said of him, "Because of thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart to see the battle, art thou come." Go you and get Goliath's head, and bring it back, and that shall be the best answer to these sneering ones. When they see that God is with you, and that he has given you the triumph, you shall have honour, even in the eyes of those who now ridicule you. I think sometimes the Christian should have very much the same bravado against the judgment of men as David had when Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants," and he said, "It was before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus." Let your eye be to God, and forget the eyes

of men. Live so that, whether they know what you do, or do not know, you will not care, for your conduct will bear the blaze of the great Judgment Day, and, therefore, the criticisms of earth do not affect you. Let no man domineer over you.

So may I put it in another light—*let no man sway your conscience so as to lead you*. I am always anxious, my dear hearers, that, whatever respect I may ever win from you—and I trust I may have your esteem and your affection—yet that you will never believe a doctrine simply because I utter it, but unless I can confirm it from the Word of God, away with it. If it be not according to the teaching of the Lord and Master, I beseech you follow me not. Follow me only as far as I follow Christ. And so with every other man. Let it be God's truth, God's Word, the Holy Spirit's witness to that Word in your soul, that you are seeking after, but rest, I pray you, never short of that, for if you do your faith must stand merely in the wisdom of men, and when the man who helped you to believe is gone, perhaps your faith may be gone too, when most you need its comforting power. No; let no man domineer over you, but press forward in the Christian race, looking unto Jesus, and looking unto Jesus only.

But now a third meaning belongs to the text. A happy circumstance it is, this dark night, that the preacher does not need to use his manuscript, for if he did his sermon must certainly come to an end now. But here is this point, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." It may mean this:—

III. LET NO MAN ROB YOU OF THE PRESENT REWARD WHICH YOU HAVE IN BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Let no man deprive you of the present comfort which your faith should bring to you. Let me just for a few minutes have your attention while I speak upon this. Dear brethren, you and I, if we are believers in Christ, are this day completely pardoned. There is no sin in God's book against us. We are wholly and completely justified. The righteousness of Jesus Christ covers us from head to foot, and we stand before God as if we had never sinned. Now let no man rob you of this reward. Do not be tempted by anything that is said to doubt the completeness of a believer in Christ. Hold this, and, as you hold it, enjoy it. Do not let the man, yourself, whom you have most to fear, beguile you. Even though conscience should upbraid you, and you should have many grave reasons for doubt, as you imagine, yet if you believe in Jesus, stand to it—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus; he that believeth on him is not condemned; I have believed, and I am not condemned, neither will he permit condemnation to be thundered against me, for Christ has borne my sin for me, and I am clear in him." Let no man beguile you of the reward of feeling that you are complete in Christ.

Further, you who have believed in Jesus Christ *are safe in Christ*. Because he lives, you shall live also. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? *He has* said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Now there are some who will tell you that you are not safe, and that it is dangerous for you to believe that you are. Let no man beguile you of this reward. You are saved. If you are believing on him, he will keep you, and you may sing, "Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding great joy. unto him be glory." Hold to that blessed truth that you are in Jesus—safe in Jesus Christ.

There is a third blessed truth. that not only are you pardoned and safe in Christ, but you are accepted at this moment, in the Beloved. Your acceptance with God does not rest upon anything in you. You are accepted because you are in Christ, accepted for Christ's sake. Now sometimes

you will get robbed of this reward if you listen to the voice which says, "Why, there is sin in you still; your prayers are imperfect; your actions are stained." Yes, but let no man beguile you of this conviction that, sinner as you are, you are still accepted in Christ Jesus.

The Lord grant that you may feel this within, and let no man beguile you of your reward as long as you live. May you live and die in the enjoyment of it, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

A New Creation

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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"He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."—Revelation 21:5.

MEN GENERALLY venerate antiquity. It were hard to say which has the stronger power over the human mind—antiquity or novelty. While men will frequently dote upon the old, they are most easily dazzled by the new. Anything new has at least one attraction. Restless spirits consider that the new must be better than the old. Though often disappointed, they are still ready to be caught by the same bait, and, like the Athenians of Mars Hill, spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And as for ourselves, dear friends, mournfully as we sometimes think of the flight of time, we are wont cheerfully to look out upon the new epochs as they begin to dawn upon us. If our calendar suggests some dismal memories in the past, our calculation forestalls some happier prospects in the future. And it will sometimes happen that we leave so much anxiety, adversity, and chastisement behind us, that it is a relief to hope that the tide has turned, and that a course of comfort, prosperity, and mercy lies before us. One weeps over the past and the lost. I suppose the best of men must do so at times. I am sure those of us who are not the best, feel often constrained to pour out some such a lamentation as this:—

"Much of our time has run to waste;

Our sins, how great the sum!

Lord, give us pardon for the past,

And strength for days to come."

I do not know but it is sometimes as well, when one has been plunged in sorrow, or feels ashamed of his past life—after having regretted that which is bygone and repented of it, and sorrowed over it—to feel as if he breathed another atmosphere, and had started on a fresh career. Having thrown away the old sword, he is now about to see what he can do with the new: having put off an old garment, he is desirous to walk more worthily of his vocation with fresh ones that are provided for him. Perhaps the thought of freshness, the fact of new time having dawned on our path, may be a little help to those of us who are dull and heavy, and we may be stirred up to action, or, if not to action, it may awaken earnest hope that the infusion of a new start into our lives, new vigour instead of the old lethargy, new love instead of the old lukewarmness, new zeal instead of the old deathlikeness; new, pertinacious, persevering industry for Christ, instead of the old idleness, may result. God grant that it may be so!

Looking at the text in this light, I think it speaks to everyone here present—Would you begin anew, lo, there is one who can help you to do so! From the throne where sits the once crucified but now glorified Saviour, there comes a whisper of hope to each and every soul who would be made new, and would begin life anew. "Behold I make all things new." In trying to bring out the thoughts contained in this exclamation from the throne, from the Emperor of the Universe, from the court

of the King of Kings, we shall first speak, very briefly, *of the new creation*; secondly, we *should bid you adore the great Regenerator*; and, in the third place, we shall ask you to *behold with attention the fact before you, with a view of receiving benefit from it*. Observe the text speaks of:—

I. A NEW CREATION.

"I *make*." That is a divine word. "I make *all things*." That, also, is divine. "I make all things *new*." This our Lord Jesus Christ has done upon the greatest scale. We must view his purpose. It is the purpose and intention of the Lord Jesus to make this world entirely new. You recollect how it was made at first—pure and perfect. It sang with its sister-spheres the song of joy and reverence. It was a fair world, full of everything that was lovely, beautiful, happy, holy. And if we might be permitted to dream for a moment of what it would have been if it had continued as God created it, one might fancy what a blessed world it would be at this moment. Had it possessed a teeming population like its present one, and if, one by one, those godly ones had been caught away, like Elijah, without knowing death, to be succeeded by pious descendants—oh! what a blessed world it would have been! A world where every man would have been a priest, and every house a temple, and every garment a vestment, and every meal a sacrifice, and every place holiness to the Lord, for the tabernacle of God would have been among them, and God himself would have dwelt among them! What songs would have hailed the rising of the sun—the birds of paradise carolling on every hill and in every dale their Maker's praise! What songs would have ushered in the stillness of the night! Ay, and angels, hovering over this fair world, would oft have heard the strain of joy breaking the silence of midnight, as glad and pure hearts beheld the eyes of the Creator beaming down upon them from the stars which stud the vault of heaven. But there came a serpent, and his craft spoiled it all. He whispered into the ears of a mother Eve; she fell, and we fell with her, and what a world this now is! If a man walks about in it with his eyes open, he will see it to be a horrible sphere. I do not mean that its rivers, its lakes, its valleys, its mountains are repulsive. Nay, it is a world fit for angels, naturally; but it is a horrible world morally. As I walked the other day down the streets of Paris, and saw the soldiers with their pretty dresses, and the knives and forks which they carried with them to carve men and make a meal for death, I could not help thinking—this is a pretty world, this is. Only let one man lift his finger, and a hundred thousand men are ready to meet a hundred thousand other men, all intent upon doing—what? Why, upon cutting each other's throats, upon tearing out each other's bleeding hearts, and wading up to their knees in each other's gore, till the ditches be full of blood, horses and men all mingled, and left to be food for dogs and for carrion crows. And then the victors on either side in the fray, return, and beat the drums, and sound the trumpets, and say, "Glory! glory! see what we have done." Devils could not be worse than men when their passions are let loose. Dogs would scarce tear each other as men do. Men of intellect sit down, and put their fingers to their foreheads, racking their brains to find out new ways of using gunpowder, and shot, and shell, so as to be able to blow twenty thousand souls into eternity as easily as twenty might be massacred by present appliances. And he is considered a clever man, a patriot, a benefactor of his own nation, who, by dint of genius, can discover some new way of destroying his fellow creatures. Oh! it is a horrible world, appalling to think of. When God looks at it, I wonder he does not stamp it out, just as you and I do a spark of coal that flies upon our carpet from the fire. It is a dreadful world. But Jesus Christ, who knew that we should never make this world much better, let us do what we would with it, designed from the very first to make a new world of it. Truly, truly, this seems to me to be a glorious purpose. To make a world is something wonderful, but to make a world new is something more wonderful still. When God spake and said,

"Let there be light," it was a fiat which showed him to be divine. Yet there was nothing then to resist his will; he had no opponent; he could build as he pleased, and there was none to pluck down. But when Jesus Christ comes to make a new world, there is everything opposed to him. When he saith, "Let there be light," darkness saith, "There shall not be light." When he says, "Let there be order," chaos says, "Nay, I will maintain confusion." When he says, "Let there be holiness, let there be love, let there be truth," the principalities and powers of evil withstand him, and say, "There shall not be holiness, there shall be sin; there shall not be love, there shall be hate; there shall not be truth, there shall be error; there shall not be the worship of God, there shall be the worship of stocks and stones; men shall bow down before idols which their own hands have made." And yet, for all that, Jesus Christ, coming in the form of a man, revealing himself as the Son of God, determines to make all things new; and be assured, brethren and sisters, he will do it. What though he pleases to take his time, and to use humble instrumentalities to effect his purposes, yet do it he will. The day shall come when this world shall be as fair as it was at the primeval Sabbath; when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. The ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled to the letter. God shall dwell among men, peace shall be domiciled on earth, and glory shall be ascribed to God in the highest. This great work of Christ, this grand design of making this old world into a new one, shall be carried into effect.

In order to accomplish this, it hath come to pass that *Christ has made for us a new covenant*. The old covenant was, "Do this and live." That covenant was a sentence of death upon us all. We could not do, therefore we could not live, and so we died. The new covenant has nothing in it contingent upon creature doing, but it bases all its provisions upon Christ having done the world. "I will, and you shall," this is the language of the new covenant. The covenant of law, in which we were weak through the flesh, left us mangled and broken. The covenant of grace reveals God's kindness towards us, and our part thereof has been fulfilled for us by our surety, Christ Jesus. Thus it runs, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever; a new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." The old world is still under the old covenant of works, and its children perish, for they cannot carry out the conditions of the covenant, they cannot keep God's law, they break it constantly, and they die. But the children of grace are under the new covenant of grace, and through the precious blood, which is the penalty of the old broken covenant, and through the spotless righteousness of Christ, which is the fulfilment and magnifying of the old covenant, the Christian stands secure, and rejoices that he is saved. Christ has thus made his people dwell under a new covenant, instead of under the old one.

In addition to the new covenant, Christ has been pleased *to make us new men*. His saints are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." They have a new nature. God has breathed into them a new life. The Holy Spirit, though the old nature is still there, has been pleased to put within them a new nature. There is now a contending force within them—the old carnal nature inclining to evil, and the new God-given nature panting after perfection. They are new men, "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This new nature is moved by new principles. The old nature needed to be awed with threatenings, or bribed with rewards; the new nature feels the impulse of love. Gratitude is its mainspring: "We love him because he first loved us." No mercenary motive now stirs the new creature:—

"My God, I love thee—not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love thee not

Must burn eternally."

I love thee, O my Saviour, because on the cross thou didst bear shame, and spitting, and manifold disgrace for me. New principles stir the new nature which God has given. And this new nature is conscious of new emotions. It loves what once it hated; it hates what once it loved. It finds blight where once it sought for bliss, and finds bliss where once it found nothing but bitterness. It leaps at the sound which was once dull to its ears—the name of a precious Christ. It rejoices in hopes which once seemed idle as dreams. It is filled with a divine enthusiasm which it once rejected as fanatical. It is conscious now of living in a new element, breathing a fresh air, partaking of new food, drinking out of new wells not digged by men or filled from the earth. The man is new—new in principles, and new in emotions.

And now the man is also *new in relationship*. He was an heir to wrath; he is now a child of God. He was a bond-slave; he is now a freeman. He was the Ishmael who dwelt in the wilderness; he is now the Isaac, and dwells with Sarah after the tenor of the new covenant. He rejoices in Christ Jesus, and feasts to the full. He was the citizen of earth once; he is now a citizen of heaven. He once found his all beneath the clouds; but now his all is beyond the stars. He has new relationships. Christ is his brother; God is his father; the angels are his friends; and the despised people of God are his best and nearest kinsfolk. And hence the man has new aspirations. He now pants to glorify God. What cared he about the glory of God once? He now pants to see God; once he would have paid the fare, if it had cost his life, that he might escape from the presence of the Lord. Now he hungers and thirsts after the living God; yea, if his soul had wings, and he could break the fetters of this mortality, he would mount at once to dwell where Jesus is. Dear friends, are you new men? If you are, you understand what it is; if you are not, I know I cannot explain it to you. Oh! to be born again is a great mystery; blessed is the soul that comprehends it! But he that knows it not will never learn it by the lip; he can only know it by the Spirit of God causing him also to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Thus far I have said that the object of Christ was to make a new world, and he began by making a new covenant. Then, through his Spirit, he goes on to make new men under the new covenant, and you will see that by this means *he makes a new society*. Swelling words have been spoken and great attempts taken in hand to renovate society, but you can never renovate society till you have renovated the individual members who compose society. You may build a brick house, if you please; but, build it as you like, it will be a house of brick upon whatever principles of architecture it may be constructed; not until that brick shall be transformed to marble can you hope to "dwell in marble halls." So men may launch their divers theories, and patent their social inventions, but after they have re-shaped the society of sinners, they will leave it a sinful society still. It is otherwise with Christ. By making new men he makes a new society, which society he calls his "Church". That Church he sends into the world to act upon the rest of mankind. Verily the day will come—whether it shall be at his second advent or before his second advent, I do not know—the day when from the east to the west, and from the north to the south, there shall be a new world as far as men are concerned. There shall be no injustice towards the poor; there shall be no envying of the rich; there shall be no law to make men slaves; there shall be no power to oppress, because there shall be no will to do it. Our Lord Jesus Christ shall put a new heart into earth's kings, and then he shall come himself to take their thrones and their crowns, and to be himself our Universal King, and in his day shall the righteous flourish.

Now I believe the way for us to regard that happy day in which he will make all things new; that happy day when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the sword shall be turned into the sickle, and the spear into the pruning hook—the way for us to regard that day, I think, is not standing with our mouths open expecting it, but by setting to work after the Master's own fashion, seeking to bring it about, to gather out the elect from mankind, to illustrate the gospel practically in our lives, and so to do as Jesus did among the sons of men; promoting light, and peace, and truth, and holiness, and happiness as God may help us.

I wish we had more time to enter fully into this part of the subject. We have not, and, therefore, we must leave it, but may you and I have a part in this new creation! Turning to our second point, I want you to:—

II. ADORE THIS GREAT REGENERATOR.

He says, "Behold I make all things new." Behold him! He is a man dressed in the common garments of the poor! He hath no form nor comeliness, and when you shall see him there is no beauty in him that you should desire him. He has come to make the world new. He has no soldiery, no book of laws, no new philosophy. He had come to make the world new, and to do this he has brought with him—what? Why, *himself*. He spends a life of weariness and sorrow amongst those who despise him, and if you want to know first and foremost how he makes all things new, you must see him sweating great drops of blood in the garden—that is the blood of the new world which he is pouring forth! You must see him bound, scourged, spat upon, led to the accursed tree. While God's wrath for sin is yet unspent, the world cannot be new; but when that wrath on account of sin is all poured upon the head of the great Substitute, then the world stands in a new relation to God, and it can be a new world. See the Saviour then, in groans and pangs which cannot be described, bearing the curse of God, for he made him to be sin for us, though he knew no sin. The curse fell on him, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; he hath made his soul to be an offering for sin." That dolorous pain, then, of the Master was the world's new-making. It was then and there that the world was born again. No mother's pangs, when she brought forth a man-child, were such as those of Christ when he brought forth the new creation. It was there in the travail of his soul—did you ever catch that idea, *the travail of his soul?*—it was there that the new world was born! "Behold I make all things new" is a mysterious voice from the broken heart of a dying Saviour. From the empty tomb, as he rises, I hear it come in silvery notes, "Behold I make all things new." You must trace the birth of the new creation up to the grave of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the place where the cross stood, and where his body lay.

But the actual operations of new-making the world takes place *through the truth which Christ promulgated*. After the relation of the world to God had been changed by the sufferings of Jesus, the world's thought concerning God came to be changed by the preaching of Jesus. He came and revealed God to man as man had never seen God before. It was through him we learned that "God is love." It was through him that we understood that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the preaching of the cross of Jesus that is to make the world new. It is not the philosophies of men, but the wisdom of God which effects the change. In the presence of Christ your philosophies must sink into darkness as stars in the presence of the sun.

And it is also by *the giving of the Holy Ghost*, as the result of the ascension of Christ on high, that the world is made new. Thus he gives power to the ministry. There were three thousand new

creations in one day when Peter preached the gospel under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And that blessed Spirit of God is here tonight. Oh! I would that there might be some new creations tonight, that that divine heavenly Spirit would come into some of your souls, and drop there that vital spark of heavenly flame which shall never be quenched, but shall burn brightly in heaven for ever. Wherever the gospel is preached, the Spirit is present in that gospel, and he gives faith to men, gives life to men, and so they are made new, and the new-making thus goes on.

I have not time—though thoughts crowd into my mind—to speak about the way in which Christ thus new-makes the world. It is quite certain that three parts of his history are connected with it. I have only referred to his death, his burial, and his resurrection, but I might go on to speak of his constant and prevalent intercessions, for his pleading before the throne is also a part of the mighty operation; nor can I doubt but that his Second Advent will be the bringing out of the topstone with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it!" Then shall be fulfilled—finally and exhaustively fulfilled—the saying that is written, "Behold I make all things new." The text begins with "Behold!" and I am going to close with that same note of admiration. I want you to:—

III. BEHOLD AND TO BELIEVE.

Behold, the Lord Jesus is now enthroned in heaven. He it is who makes all things new. Is not this what some of you here present deeply need? If you look within, yourselves will see much to disgust and alarm you. Peradventure, you dare not take stock of yourselves now; you dare not consider where you are, nor what you are, nor whither you are bound. "To speak candidly," you say, "I want reforming." Very likely, but you want a great deal more than mere reformation. I have heard of a being who used habitually to swear, "God mend me!" Somebody said, "Better make a new one." That is the case with full many of you. You are saying, "Well, I will turn over a new leaf." You had better shut the book up altogether, and never turn over any more leaves, for all the pages are alike bad. "Oh! well," says one, "I shall try if I cannot alter." I wish you would try God's altering of you, instead of altering yourselves. "Well, but surely, surely, I may wash and be clean; I will try to make myself as clean as possible?" Yes, yes, that is all very well; but what if you have a corpse in the house? I would have you make it clean, yet that will not make it live. However much you may wash it, it is corrupt still. You may reform yourselves as much as ever you please, all your reformation will be futile; you need more, a great deal more than that. The fact is, you must be made new. Nothing less will do; you must be made new; you must be born again. "Ah!" says one, "if I could be made new, there might be a chance for me." Well now, Christ looks down from this throne in heaven, and he says, "Behold I will make all things new." "Yes," you say, "but he will not make me new." Why not? Does he not say, "I make *all things* new"? "But my heart is as hard as a rock," say you. Well, but he says, "I will make *all things* new," so he can give you a new heart. "Oh! but I am so very stubborn. Aye, aye, but he makes all things new, and he can make you as tender and sensitive as a little child. Oftentimes a grey-headed sinner has looked back to his childhood, and remembered the time when he used to sing his little hymn at his mother's knee, and he has said, 'Ah! I have been in many strange places since then, and my heart has got seared and hard; I wish I could get back to what I was then!' Well, you can, you can. Christ can bring you there. Nay, he can bring you to something better than you ever were when those golden ringlets hung so plentifully about that pretty little head of yours, for you were not so innocent then as you now think you were. Christ can make you really pure in heart; he can make you a new creature, so that you shall be converted and become as a little child. "Oh!" say you, "how can I get it? How can I prepare myself for him?" You do not want to prepare yourself for him. God to him just as you

are; trust him to do it, and he will do it. That is faith, you know—trust, dependence. Canst thou believe that Christ can save thee? Oh! thou canst believe that; well now, wilt thou trust him to save thee? Wilt thou trust him to deliver thee from thy drunkenness, from thine angry temper, thy pride, thy love of self, thy lusts? Dost thou desire to be a new creature in Christ Jesus? If so, that very desire must have come from heaven. I could fain hope that he has already begun the good work in you, and he that begins it will carry it on. Do not be afraid, however bad thy character, or however vicious thy disposition. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." What a wonder it is that a man should ever have a new heart! You know if a lobster loses its claw in a fight it can get a new claw, and that is thought to be very marvellous. It would be very wonderful if men should be able to grow new arms and new legs, but who ever heard of a creature who grew a new heart? You may have seen a bough lopped off a tree, and you may have thought that, perhaps, the tree will sprout again, and there will be a new limb, but who ever heard of old trees getting new sap and a new core? But my Lord and Master, the crucified and exalted Saviour, has given new hearts and new cores; he has put the vital substance into man afresh, and made new creatures of them. I am glad to notice the tear in your eye, when you think on the past, but wipe it away now, and look up to the cross and say:—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb, O God, I come."

"Oh! make me a new creature!" If you have said that from your heart, you are a new creature, dear brother, and we will rejoice together in this regenerating Saviour.

Let me just say a few words to those of you who love the Lord. You may have some very bad children, or you have some relatives who are going on in sin from bad to worse. I earnestly recommend you attentively to consider my text. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." "No, no," says the old father, "I used to pray for my boy; he broke my heart; he brought his mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; but he has gone away, and I have not heard of him for years, and I am almost afraid to wish I ever may hear of him again, for he did seem so reckless, that my only comfort is in trying to forget him." "Yes," says a husband here, "I have prayed for my wife o many times, that I do feel tempted to give it up; it is not likely that I shall ever live to see her saved." Oh! but, brethren and sisters, we do not know; since the Lord saved us, there cannot be any limits as to what he can do. Look at the text, "Behold I make all things new." I will pray, "Lord, make my children new." You shall pray, "Lord, make my wife new." You godly wives, who have ungodly husbands, you shall pray, "Lord, make our husbands new." You who have dear friends who lie upon your bosom, as you anxiously think of them, pray the Lord Jesus to make them new. When our friends are made new, oh! what a great comfort they are; just as much so as they formerly were a sorrow. The greater the sinner, the greater the joy to loving believers when they see him saved. "Behold," says Christ—I do like that word— "Behold it! Stand and look at it! See how I took the man when he was up to his neck in sin, and made him preach the gospel. Can I not do the same again? Look there and see the dying thief upon the cross, black with a thousand crimes: I washed him and took him to Paradise the same day; what can I not do? Behold I make all things new." Courage, my brethren and sisters. We will not entertain any more doubt about Christ's power to save. Rather, by God's grace, may we henceforth believe more in him, and, according to our faith, so shall it be done unto us. If we can only trust him for those of our friends whose faults seem to

us few and light, our little trust will reap little reward; but if we can go with strong faith in a great God, and bring great sinners in our arms, and put them down before this mighty Regenerator of men, and say, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make them new"; and if we will never cease the pleading till we get the blessing, then we shall see ever-accumulating illustrations of the fact that Jesus makes all things new; and calling up the witnesses of his redeeming power, we shall cry in the ears of a drowsy Church and an incredulous world, "Behold, behold, behold! He makes all things new." The Lord give us eyes to see it. Amen.

A Solemn Deprival

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Without Christ."—Ephesians 2:12.

WE SHALL have two things to consider this evening—*the misery of our past estate, and the great deliverance which God has wrought for us.* As for:—

I. THE MISERY OF OUR PAST ESTATE, be it known unto you that, in common with the rest of mankind, believers were once without Christ. No tongue can tell the depth of wretchedness that lies in those two words. There is no poverty like it, no want like it, and for those who die so, there is no ruin like that it will bring. Without Christ! If this be the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell; let this be enough to startle you, that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ. Oh! what terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!

The man who is without Christ *is without any of those spiritual blessings which only Christ can bestow.* Christ is the life of the believer, but the man who is without Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. There he lies; let us stand and weep over his corpse. It is decent and clean, and well laid out, but life is absent, and, life being absent, there is no knowledge, no feeling, no power. What can we do? Shall we take the word of God and preach to this dead sinner? We are bidden to do so, and, therefore, we will attempt it; but so long as he is without Christ no result will follow, any more than when Elisha's servant laid the staff upon the child—there was no noise, nor sound, nor hearing. As long as that sinner is without Christ, we may give him ordinances, if we dare; we may pray for him, we may keep him under the sound of the ministry, but everything will be in vain. Till thou, O quickening Spirit, come to that sinner, he will still be dead in trespasses and sins. Till Jesus is revealed to him there can be no life.

So, too, Christ is the light of the world. *Light* is the gift of Christ. "In him was light, and the light was the life of men." Men sit in darkness until Jesus appears. The gloom is thick and dense; not sun, nor moon, nor star appeareth, and there can be no light to illumine the understanding, the affections, the conscience. Man has no power to get light. He may strike the damp match of reason, but it will not yield him a clear flame. The candle of superstition, with its tiny glare, will but expose the darkness in which he is wrapped. Rise, morning star! Come, Jesus, come! Thou art the sun of righteousness, and healing is beneath thy wings. Without Christ there is no light of true spiritual knowledge, no light of true spiritual enjoyment, no light in which the brightness of truth can be seen, or the warmth of fellowship proved. The soul, like the men of Naphtali, sits in darkness, and seeth no light.

Without Christ *there is no peace.* See that poor soul hunted by the dogs of hell. It flies swift as the wind, but faster far do the hunters pursue. It seeks a covert yonder in the pleasures of the world, but the baying of the hell-hounds affright it in the festive haunts. It seeks to toil up the mountain

of good works, but its legs are all too weak to bear it beyond the oppressor's rule. It doubles; it changes its tack; it goes from right to left but the hell-dogs are too swift of foot, and too strong of wind to lose their prey, and till Jesus Christ shall open his bosom for that poor hunted thing to hide itself within, it shall have no peace.

Without Christ *there is no rest*. The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, and only Jesus can say to that sea, "Peace, be still."

Without Christ *there is no safety*. The vessel must fly before the gale, for it has no anchor on board; it may dash upon the rocks, for it has no chart and no pilot. Come what may, it is given up to the mercy of wind and waves. Safety it cannot know without Christ. But let Christ come on board that soul, and it may laugh at all the storms of earth, and e'en the whirlwinds which the Prince of the Power of the air may raise need not confound it, but without Christ there is no safety for it.

Without Christ again, *there is no hope*. Sitting wrecked upon this desert rock, the lone soul looks far away, but marks nothing that can give it joy. If, perchance, it fancies that a sail is in the distance, it is soon undeceived. The poor soul is thirsty, and around it flows only a sea of brine, soon to change to an ocean of fire. It looks upward, and there is an angry God—downward, and there are yawning gulfs—on the right hand, and there are accusing sounds—on the left hand, and there are tempting fiends. It is all lost! lost! lost! without Christ, utterly lost, and until Christ comes not a single beam of hope can make glad that anxious eye.

Without Christ, beloved, remember that *all the religious acts of men are vanity*. What are they but mere air-bags, having nothing in them whatever that God can accept? There is the semblance of worship, the altar, the victim, the wood laid in order, and the votaries bow the knee, or prostrate their bodies, but Christ alone can send the fire of heaven's acceptance. Without Christ the offering, like that of Cain's, shall lie upon the stones, but it shall never rise in fragrant smoke, accepted by the God of heaven. Without Christ your church-goings are a form of slavery, your chapel-meetings a bondage. Without Christ your prayers are but empty wind, your repentances are wasted tears, your almsgivings and your good deeds are but a coating of thin veneer to hide your base iniquities. Your professions are white-washed sepulchres, fair to look upon, but inwardly full of rottenness. Without Christ your religion is dead, corrupt, a stench, a nuisance before God—a thing of abhorrence, for where there is no Christ there is no life in any devotion, nothing in it for God to see that can possibly please him. And this, mark you, is a true description, not of some, but of all who are without Christ. You moral people without Christ, you are lost as much as the immoral. You rich and respectable people, without Christ, you will be as surely damned as the prostitute that walks the streets at midnight. Without Christ, though you should heap up your charitable donations, endow your almshouses and hospitals, yea, though you should give your bodies to be burned, no merit would be imputed to you. All these things would profit you nothing. Without Christ, e'en if you might be raised on the wings of flaming zeal, or pursue your eager course with the enthusiasm of a martyr, you shall yet prove to be but the slave of your own passion, and the victim of your own folly. Unsanctified and unblest, you must, then, be shut out of heaven, and banished from the presence of God. Without Christ, you are destitute of every benefit which he, and he alone, can bestow.

Without Christ, implies, of course, that you are without the benefit of *all those gracious offices of Christ, which are so necessary to the sons of men*, you have no true *prophet*. You may pin your faith to the sleeve of man, and be deceived. You may be orthodox in your creed, but unless you have Christ in your heart, you have no hope of glory. Without Christ truth itself will prove a terror

to you. Like Balaam, your eyes may be open while your life is alienated. Without Christ that very *cross* which does save some will become to you as a *gallows* upon which your soul shall die. Without Christ you have no *priest* to atone or to intercede on your behalf. There is no fountain in which you can wash away your guilt; no passover blood which you can sprinkle on your lintel to turn aside the destroying angel; no smoking altar of incense for you; no smiling God sitting between the cherubim. Without Christ you are an alien from everything which the priesthood can procure for your welfare. Without Christ you have no shepherd to tend, no King to help you; you cannot call in the day of trouble upon one who is strong to deliver. The angels of God, who are the standing army of King Jesus, are your enemies and not your friends. Without Christ, Providence is working your ill, and not your good. Without Christ you have no *advocate* to plead your cause in heaven; you have no representative to stand up yonder and represent you, and prepare a place for you. Without Christ you are as sheep without a shepherd; without Christ you are a body without a head; without Christ you are miserable orphans without a father, and your widowed soul is without a husband. Without Christ you are without a *Saviour*; how will you do? what will become of you when you find out the value of salvation at the last pinch, the dreary point of despair? and without a *friend* in heaven, you must needs be if you are without Christ. To sum up all, you are without anything that can make life blessed, or death happy. Without Christ, though you be rich as Croesus, and famous as Alexander, and wise as Socrates, yet are you naked, and poor, and miserable, for you lack him by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, and who is himself all in all.

Surely this might be enough to arouse the conscience of the most heedless? But ah! without any of the blessings which Christ brings, and to miss all the good offices which Christ fills—this is only to linger on the side issues! The imminent peril is to be *without Christ himself*. Do you see, there, the Saviour in human form—God made flesh, dwelling among us? He loves his people, and came to earth to wipe out an iniquity which had stained them most vilely, and to work out a righteousness which should cover them most gloriously, but without Christ that living Saviour is nothing to you. Do you see him led away as a sheep to the slaughter, fastened to the cruel wood—bleeding, dying? Without Christ you are without the virtue of that great sacrifice; you are without the merit of that atoning blood. Do you see him lying in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, asleep in death? That sleep is a burial of all the sins of his people, but without Christ your sins are not atoned for; your transgressions are yet unburied; they walk the earth; they shall go before you to judgment; they shall clamour for your condemnation; they shall drag you down without hope. Without Christ, remember, you have no share in his resurrection. Bursting the bonds of death, you, too, shall rise, but not to newness of life, nor yet to glory, for shame and everlasting contempt shall be your portion if you be without Christ. See him as he mounts on high; he rides in his triumphal car through the streets of heaven; he scatters gifts for men, but without Christ there are none of those gifts for you. There are no blessings for those who are without Christ. He sits on that exalted throne, and pleads and reigns for ever, but without Christ you have no part in his intercession, and you shall have no share in his glory. He is coming. Hark! the trumpet rings. My ear prophetic seems to catch the strain! He comes, surrounded by majestic pomp, and all his saints shall reign with him, but without Christ you can have no part nor lot in all that splendour. He goes back to his Father, and surrenders his kingdom, and his people are for ever safe with him. Without Christ there shall be none to wipe away the tears from your eyes; no one to lead you to the fountain of living waters; no hand to give you a palm-branch; no smile to make your immortality blessed. Oh! my dear hearers,

I cannot tell you what unutterable abysses of wretchedness and misery are comprised here within the fulness of the meaning of these dreadful words—without Christ.

At this present hour, if you are without Christ, you lack the very essence of good, by reason of which your choicest privileges are an empty boast, instead of a substantial boon. Without Christ *all the ordinances and means of grace are nothing worth*. Even this precious Book, that might be weighed with diamonds, and he that was wise would choose the Book, and leave the precious stones—even this sacred volume is of no benefit to you. You may have Bibles in your houses, as I trust you all have, but what is the Bible but a dead letter without Christ? Ah! I would you could all say what a poor woman once said. "I have Christ here," as she put her hand on the Bible, "and I have Christ here," as she put her hand on her heart, "and I have Christ there," as she raised up her eyes towards heaven; but if you have not Christ in the heart, you will not find Christ in the Book, for he is discovered there in his sweetness, and his blessedness, and his excellence, only by those who know Him and love him in their hearts. Do not get the idea that a certain quantity of Bible-reading, and particular times spent in repeating prayers, and regular attendance at a place of worship, and the systematic contribution of a guinea or so to the support of public worship and private charities will ensure the salvation of your souls. No, you must be born again. And that you cannot be; for it is not possible that you could have been born again if you are still living without Christ. To have Christ is the indispensable condition of entering heaven. If you have him, though compassed about with a thousand infirmities, you shall yet see the brightness of the eternal glory; but if you have not Christ, alas! for all your toil, and the wearisome slavery of your religion, you can but weave a righteousness of your own, which shall disappoint your hope, and incur the displeasure of God.

And without Christ, dear friends, there comes the solemn reflection *that ere long ye shall perish*. Of that I do not like to talk, but I would like you to think of it. Without Christ you may live, young man—though, mark, you shall miss the richest joys of life. Without Christ you may live, hale, strong man, in middle age—though, mark, without him you shall miss the greatest support amidst your troubles. Without Christ you may live, old man, and lean upon your staff, content with the earth into which you are so soon to drop, though, mark you, you shall lose the sweetest consolation which your weakness could have found. But remember, man, thou art soon to die. It matters not how strong thou art; death is stronger than thou, and he will pull thee down, even as the stag-hound drags down his victim, and then "how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan," without Christ? How wilt thou do when the eyes begin to close, without Christ? How wilt thou do, sinner, when the death-rattle is in thy throat, without Christ? When they prop thee up with pillows, when they stand weeping round thine expiring form, when the pulse grows faint and few, when thou hast to lift the veil, and stand disembodied before the dreadful eyes of an angry God, how wilt thou do without Christ? And when the judgment-trump shall wake thee from thy slumber in the tomb, and body and soul shall stand together at that last and dread assize, in the midst of that tremendous crowd, sinner, how wilt thou do without Christ? When the reapers come forth to gather in the harvest of God, and the sickles are red with blood, and the vintage is cast into the wine-press of his wrath, and it is trodden until the blood runs forth up to the horse's girdles—how wilt thou do then, I conjure thee, without Christ? Oh! sinner, I pray thee let these words sound in thine ears till they ring into thy heart. I would like you to think of them tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. Without Christ! I would like to make thee think of dying, of being judged, of being condemned, without Christ! May God in his mercy enable thee to see thy state, and fly to him who is able to

save, even unto the uttermost, all them that come unto God by him. Christ is to be had for the asking. Christ is to be had for the receiving. Stretch out thy withered hand and take him; trust him, and he will be thine evermore; and thou shalt be with him where he is, in an eternity of joy. Having thus reviewed the misery of our past estate, let us endeavour, with the little time we have left, to:—

II. EXCITE THE THANKFULNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE FOR WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR THEM.

We are not without Christ now, but let me ask you, who are believers, where you would have been now without Christ? As for some of you, you might, indeed you would have been, tonight in the ale-house or gin-palace. You would have been with the boisterous crew that make merriment on the Lord's Day; you know you would, for "such were some of you." You might have been ever worse; you might have been in the harlot's house; you might have been violating the laws of man as well as the laws of God, "for even such" were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified. Where might you not have been without Christ? You might have been in hell; you might have been shut out for ever from all mercy, condemned to eternal banishment from the presence of God. I think the Indian's picture is a very fair one of where we should have been without Christ. When asked what Christ had done for him, he picked up a worm, put it on the ground, and made a ring of straw and wood round it, which he set alight. As the wood began to glow the poor worm began to twist and wriggle in agony, whereupon he stooped down, took it gently up with his finger, and said, "That is what Jesus did for me; I was surrounded, without power to help myself, by a ring of dreadful fire that must have been my ruin, but his pierced hand lifted me out of the burning." Think of that, Christians, and, as your hearts melt, come to his table, and praise him that you are not now without Christ.

Then think what his blood has done for you. Take only one thing out of a thousand. It has put away your many, many sins. You were without Christ, and your sins stood like yonder mountain, whose black and rugged cliff threaten the very skies. There fell a drop of Jesu's blood upon it, and it all vanished in a moment. The sins of all your days had gone in an instant by the application of the precious blood! Oh! bless Jehovah's name that you can now say:—

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Saviour's blood my full discharge,
Content at his dear feet I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Bethink you, too, now that you have Christ, of *the way in which he came* and made you partaker of himself. Oh! how long he stood in the cold, knocking at the door of your heart. You would not have him; you despised him; you resisted him; you kicked against him; you did, as it were, spit in his face, and put him to open shame to be rid of him. Yet he would have you, and so, overcoming all your objections, and overlooking all your unworthiness, at length he rescued you and avouched you to be his own.

Consider, beloved, *what might have been your case had he left you to your own free agency*. You might have had his blood on your head in aggravation of your guilt. Instead of that, you have got his blood applied to your heart, in token of your pardon. You know right well what a difference *that* makes. Oh! that was a dreadful cry in the streets of Jerusalem, "His blood be on us and our children," and Jerusalem's streets flowing with gore witnessed how terrible a thing it is to have Christ's blood visited on his enemies. But, beloved, you have that precious blood for the cleansing

of your conscience. It has sealed your acceptance, and you can, therefore, rejoice in the ransom he has paid, and the remission you have received with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And I would not have you forget the vast *expense which it cost to procure this priceless boon*. Christ could not have been yours had he lived in heaven. He must come down to earth, and even then he could not be fully yours till he had bled and died. Oh! the dreadful portals through which Christ had to pass before he could find his way to you! He finds you now right easily, but before he could come to you he must himself pass through the grave! Think of that, and be astonished!

And *why are you not left to be without Christ?* I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrines of free will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why *I* should be a partaker of divine grace. If I am not tonight without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have his will with me, and that will was that I should be with him where he is, and should share his glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit.

Beloved, let us mention one thing more out of the thousand things which we must leave unsaid. *Remember what you have got tonight now that you have got Christ*. No, no, no, do not be telling me what you have not got. You have not got a certain income, you say; you have not got a competence; you have not got wealth; you have not got friends; you have not got a comfortable house. No, but you have got your Saviour; you have got Christ, and what does that mean? "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also, freely give us all things?" The man who has got Christ has got everything. There are all things in one in Christ Jesus, and if you once get him you are rich to all the intents of bliss. What, have Jesus Christ, and be discontented? Have Christ and murmur? Beloved, let me chide you gently, and pray you to lay aside that evil habit. If you have Christ, then you have God the Father to be your protector, and God the Spirit to be your comforter. You have present things working together for your good, and future things to unravel your happier portion; you have angels to be your servitors both on earth and in heaven. You have all the wheels of Providence revolving for your benefit; you have the stones of the field in league with you; you have your daily trials sanctified to your benefit; and you have your earthly joys hinged from their doors and hallowed with a blessing; your gains and your losses are alike profitable to you; your additions and your diminutions shall alike swell the tide of your soul's satisfaction; you have more than any other creatures can boast as their portion; you have more than all the world beside could yield to regale your pure taste, and ravish your happy spirits. And now, will you not be glad? I would have you come to this feasting-table this evening, saying within yourselves, "Since I am not without Christ, but Jesus Christ is mine, I do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice."

And oh! dear Christian friends, if you have lost your evidences, go to Christ to find them all. Do not go striking your matches to light your candles, but go direct to the sun and get your light from his full orb. You who are doubting, desponding, and cast down, do not get foraging up the mouldy bread of yesterday, but go and get the manna which falls fresh today at the foot of the cross. Now you who have been wandering and backsliding, do not stay away from Jesus because of your unworthiness, but let your very sins impel you to come the faster to your Saviour's feet. Come, ye sinners; come, ye saints; come, ye who dare not say that ye are his people; come, you whose faith

is but as a grain of mustard seed; come, you who have not any faith at all; come now to Jesus, who says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

May God grant that some who feel that they are without Christ, because they have no enjoyment, nor any sense of communion with him, may now take hold of his name, his covenant, his promises with a lively faith, nay more, may they find him to the rapture of their souls, and he shall have all the praise. Amen.

Holy Song from Happy Saints

A Sermon

(No. 3476)

Published on Thursday, September 16th, 1915.

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, March 5th, 1871.

"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved."—Isaiah 5:1.

IT was a prophet who wrote this, a prophet inspired of God. An ordinary believer might suffice to sing, but he counts it no stoop for a prophet, and no waste of his important time, to occupy himself with song. There is no engagement under heaven that is more exalting than praising God, and however great may be the work which is committed to the charge of any of us, we shall always do well if we pause awhile to spend a time in sacred praise. I would not wish to prefer one spiritual exercise before another, else I think I would endorse the saying of an old divine who said that a line of praise was better than even a leaf of prayer; that praise was the highest, noblest, best, most satisfying, and most healthful occupation in which a Christian man could be found. If these may be regarded as the words of the Church, the Church of old did well to turn all her thoughts in the direction of praising her God. Though the winning of souls be a great thing, though the edifying of believers be an important matter, though the reclamation of backsliders calls for earnest attention, yet never, never, never may we cease from praising and magnifying the name of the well-beloved. This is to be our occupation in heaven: let us begin the music here, and make a heaven of the Church, even here below. The words of the text are, "Now will I sing," and that seems to give us a starting word.

I. THE STRAINS OF THE SOUL'S SONG.

"Now will I sing." Does not that imply that there were times when he who spake these words could not sing? "Now," said he, "will I sing to my well-beloved." There were times, then, when his voice, and his heart, and his circumstances were not in such order that he could praise God. My brethren, a little while ago we could not sing to our well-beloved, for we did not love him, we did not know him, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Perhaps we joined in sacred song, but we mocked the Lord. We stood up with his people, and we uttered the same sounds as they did, but our hearts were far from him. Let us blush for those mock psalms; let us shed many a tear of repentance that we could so insincerely have come before the Lord Most High. After that, we were led to feel our state by nature, and our guilt lay heavy upon us. We could not sing to our well-beloved then. Our music was set to the deep bass and in the minor key. We could only bring forth sighs and groans. Well do I remember when my nights were spent in grief, and my days in bitterness. It as a perpetual prayer, a confession of sin, and a bemoaning of myself, which occupied all my time. I could not sing then, and if any of you are in that condition to night, I know you cannot sing just now. What a mercy you can pray. Bring forth the fruit which is seasonable, and in your case the most seasonable fruit will be a humble acknowledgement of your sin, and an earnest seeking for mercy through Christ Jesus. Attend to that, and by and by you, too, shall sing to your well-beloved

a song. Brethren in Christ Jesus, it is now some years ago since we believed in Christ, but since then there have been times when we could not sing. Alas! for us, there was a time when we watched not our steps, but went astray, when the flatterer led us from the strait road that leads to heaven, and brought us into sin; and then the chastisement of God came upon us, our heart was broken, until we cried out in anguish, as David did in the 51st Psalm. Then if we did sing, we could only bring out penitential odes, but no songs. We laid aside all parts of the book of Psalms that had to do with Hallelujah, and we could only groan forth the notes of repentance. There were no songs for us then, till at last Emmanuel smiled upon us once more, and we were reconciled again, brought back from our wanderings and restored to a sense of the divine favour. Besides that, we have had, occasionally had, to sorrow through the loss of the light of God's countenance. It is not always summer weather with the best of us. Though for the most part:

"We can read our title clear,
To mansions in the skies,"

yet we have our fasting time when the bridegroom is not with us. Then do we fast. He does not intend that this world should be so much like heaven that we should be willing to stop in it; he, therefore, sometimes passes a cloud before the sun, that we in darkness may cry out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to his seat." Even the means of grace at such times will bring us no comfort. We may go to the throne of mercy in private prayer, but we shall perceive but little light even there. If the Lord withdraw himself, there is no merry-making in the soul, but sadness, darkness, and gloom shall cover all. Then we hang our harps upon the willows, and if any require of us a song we tell them we are in a strange land, and the king hath gone—how can we sing? Our heart is heavy, and our sorrows are multiplied. Once more, we cannot very well sing the praises of our well-beloved when the Church of God is under a cloud. I trust we are such true patriots, such real citizens of the new Jerusalem that, when Christ's kingdom does not advance, our hearts are full of anguish. My brethren, if you happen to be members of a church divided against itself, where the ministry appears to be without power, where there are no additions, no conversions, no spiritual life—then, indeed, you will feel that whatever the state of your own heart, you must sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church of God. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning." This is the view of every true citizen of Zion, and however our own hearts may flourish, and our souls be like a well-watered garden, yet if we see the place of worship neglected, the Lord's house dishonoured, the Church diminished and brought low, the gospel held in contempt, infidelity rampant, superstition stalking through the land, the old doctrines denied, and the cross of Christ made to be on none effect—then, again, we feel we cannot sing; our hearts are not in tune, our fingers forget the accustomed string, and not then can we sing to our well-beloved a song.

With these exceptions, however, I turn to a very different strain, and say that *the whole life of the Christian ought to be describable by the text*, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." From the first moment in which sin is pardoned, to the last moment in which we are here on earth, it should be evermore our delight to sing to our well-beloved a song. "How can we do that?" say you. Well, we can do it in three or four ways. There is such a thing as *thanks-feeling—feeling thankful*, and this ought to be the general, universal spirit of the Christian. Suppose, my dear brother, you are not rich, be thankful that you have to eat and to drink, and wherewithal you may be clothed. Suppose, even, that you had not a hope of heaven, I might say to a man, "Be thankful that you are not in hell." But to you, Christian, I would add, "Be thankful that you never will be there, and that,

if just now your present joys do not overflow, yet "there remaineth a rest for the people of God": let that console you. Is there ever a day in the year, or ever a moment in the day, in which the Christian ought not to be grateful? Our answer is not slow to give—there is never such a day, there is never such a moment. Always receiving blessings untold, and incalculably precious, let us always be magnifying the hand that gives them. Always, beloved; as we have been, before the foundations of the world with our names engraved on the Saviour's hands, always redeemed by the precious blood, always preserved by the power of God which dwells in the Mediator, always secure of the heritage which is given to us in covenant by oath, by the blood of Christ—let us always be grateful, and, if not always singing with our lips, let us always be singing with our hearts.

Then, brethren, we ought to be always *thanks-living*. I think that is a better thing than thanksgiving—thanks-living. How is this to be done? By a general cheerfulness of manner, by an obedience to the command of him by whose mercy we live, by a perpetual, constant, delighting ourselves in the Lord, and submission of our desires to his mind. Oh! I wish that our whole life might be a psalm; that every day might be a stanza of a mighty poem; that so from the day of our spiritual birth until we enter heaven we might be pouring forth sacred minstrelsy in every thought, and word, and action of our lives. Let us give him thankfulness and thanks-living.

But then let us add *thanks-speaking* with the tongue. We don't sing enough, my brethren. How often do I stir you up about the matter of prayer, but perhaps I might be just as earnest about the matter of praise. Do we sing as much as the birds do? Yet what have birds to sing about, compared with us? Think you, do we sing as much as the angels do? yet were they never redeemed by the blood of Christ. Birds of the air, shall ye excel me? Angels of heaven, shall ye exceed me? Ye have done so, but I do intend to emulate you henceforth, and day by day, and night by night, pour forth my soul in sacred song.

We may sometimes thank God not only by feeling thankfulness and living thankfulness, and speaking our thanks, but by that *silent blessing of him* which consists in patient suffering and accepting the evil as well as the good from Jehovah's hand. That is often better thanksgiving than the noblest psalm that the tongue could utter. To bow down before him and say, "Not my will, but thine be done," is to render him a homage equal to the Hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. To feel not only resigned, but acquiescent, willing to be anything or nothing, according as the Lord would have it—this is in truth to sing to our well-beloved a song.

Now having put this before you, that there are some times when we cannot sing, but that, as a rule, our life should be praise, let me come to the text again by saying that sometimes on choice occasions appointed by providence and grace our soul will be compelled to say, "*Now, now* if never before, *now* beyond all other occasions, I will sing to my well-beloved a song." I only hope that some—that all Christians here—will feel that tonight is one of those occasions. And as you sit here in presence of this table, upon which will soon appear the emblems of your Saviour's passion, I trust you will be saying, "*Now tonight* I feel I *must* sing to my well-beloved a song, for if ever I loved him, I love him tonight." Let us ponder now:—

II. SOME OF THE OCCASIONS IN WHICH WE MUST SING TO HIS NAME.

The first is *when our soul first perceives the infinite love of Jesus to us*, when we receive the pardon of sin, when we enter into the marriage relationship with Christ as our bridegroom and our Lord. The song becomes the wedding feast. How should it be a marriage without joyfulness? Oh! do you remember, even years ago, do you not remember now that day when first you looked to him and were lightened, and when your soul clasped his hands, and you and he were one? Other

days I have forgotten, but that day never can I forget. Other days have mingled with their fellows, and, like coins which have been in circulation, the image and superscription have departed from them. That day when first I saw the Saviour is as fresh and distinct in all its outlines as though it were but yesterday coined in the mint of time. How can I forget it—that first moment when Jesus told me I was his, and my beloved was mine? Were any of you saved last week? Did any of you find Jesus Christ at any of the meetings last week? Have you found him this morning? Did a blessing come to you this afternoon? Then hallow the occasion, pour out your soul before the Most High. Now, if never before, let your well-beloved have your choicest music. "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will wake right early. I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is taken away and thou comfortest me." Other occasions, however, come after our first day, for with Christ it is not all joy the first few weeks. No, blessed be his name! Sometimes, however, we have our high days and holidays, when the King entertains us at a feast. It is often so with my soul *at this table*. Coming to the Communion supper every Lord's day, I don't find it grow stale and flat with me. On the contrary, I think every time I come I love better than I did before to commemorate my Lord's sufferings in the breaking of bread; and usually when we do come round the table, we, who know what it means, feel, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." 'Twas well that after supper they sang a hymn. We want some such expression for the sacred joy that rises in our soul at this feast. But not only when the emblems are before us, but when you hear a sermon that feeds your soul; when you read a chapter, and the promises are very precious; when you are in private prayer, and are able to get very near to Jesus, I know your hearts then say, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song. He has visited me, and I will praise him; he has made my soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, and where shall my strength and rapture be spent but at his dear feet, adoring and magnifying his ever blessed name?" Oh! I wish we often had broken through order and decorum, even, to give to our Lord a song. He well deserves it. Let not cold ingratitude freeze our praises on our lips.

We ought to praise our Lord Jesus Christ, and sing to our well-beloved a song, particularly when we have had *a remarkable deliverance*. "Thou shalt compass me about," says David, "with songs of deliverance." Were you raised from a bed of sickness? Have you passed through a great pecuniary difficulty? Through God's help has your character been cleared from slander? Have you been helped in some enterprise, and prospered in the world? Have you seen a child restored from sickness, or a beloved wife once more given back to you from the gates of the grave? Have you just experienced the light of Christ's countenance in your own soul? Has a snare been broken? Has a temptation been removed? Are you in a joyous frame of mind? "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Oh! give your well-beloved a song now the sun shines and the flowers bloom. When the year begins to turn and fair weather comes, the birds seem to feel it, and they renew their music. Do so, oh! believer. When the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone, fill the earth with your songs of gratitude. But remember, O believer, that you should sing your well-beloved a song chiefly when it is not so with you, *when sorrows befall*. He giveth songs *in the night*. Perhaps there is no music so sweet as that which comes from the lip and heart of a tried believer. It is real then. When Job blessed God on the dunghill, even the devil himself could not insinuate that Job was a hypocrite. When Job prospered, then the devil said, "Doth Job serve God for naught?" but when he lost his all, and yet said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," then the good man shone like a star when the clouds are gone. Oh! let us be sure to praise God when things go ill with us. Make certain that you sing then. A holy man, walking one night with a companion, listened to the nightingale, and he

said, "Brother, that bird in the darkness is praising her Maker. Sing, I pray you, and let your Lord have a song in the night." But the other replied, "My voice is hoarse and little used to sing." "Then," said the other, "I will sing." And he sang, and the bird seemed to hear him, and to sing louder still, and he sang on, and other birds joined and the night seemed sweet with song. But by and by the good man says, "My voice fails me, but this bird's throat holds out longer than mine. Would God," said he, "I could even fly away where I could sing on for ever and for ever." Oh! it is blessed when we can praise God when the sun is gone down, when darkness lowers and trials multiply. Then let us say, "I will sing to my well-beloved a song." I will tell you exactly what I mean by that. One of you has just passed through a very terrible trouble, and you are almost broken-hearted, and you are inclined to say, "I will ask the prayers of the Church that I may be sustained." It is quite right, my dear brother, to do that, but suppose you could be a little stronger and say, 'Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song! Oh! it will be grand work: it will glorify God: it will strengthen you. Yes, the dear child is dead: I cannot bring him back again; but the Lord has done it, and he must do right. I will give him a song, even now.'" "Yes, the property has gone, and I shall be brought from wealth to poverty; but now, instead of fretfulness, I will give to my well-beloved extra music from my heart. He shall be praised by me now. Though he slay me, yet will I praise him." This is the part of a Christian. God help us ever to act it.

Beloved friends, we may well sing to our beloved a song when it shall be *near the time of our departure*. It draweth nigh, and as it draweth nigh we must not dread it, but rather thank God for it. The swan is said to sing her dying song—a myth, I doubt not; but the Christian is God's swan, and he sings sweetest at the last. Like the old Simeon, he becomes a poet at the last, and pours out his soul before God, and I would we each desired, if we are spared to old age, to let our last days be perfumed with thanksgiving, and to bless and magnify the Lord, while yet we linger where mortal ears may hear the strain. Break, O fetters, and divide, ye clouds; be rolled up, O veil that hides the place of mystery from the world. Let our spirits pass into eternity singing. What a song to our well-beloved will we pour out from amidst ten thousand times ten thousand choristers. We will take our part—every note for him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in his own blood; each note undefiled with sin; each note undistracted and undivided by worldly thoughts; each note full of perfection and acceptable to him to whom it shall be presented. O long-expected day, begin! Our hearts are ready to cry out, "Open, ye two-leaved gates, and let my spirit pass through, that I may give to my well-beloved a song."

Now I just linger here a minute to put it all round to every Christian here. Brother, haven't you a song for the well-beloved? Sister, haven't you a song for the well-beloved? Aged friend, will you not give him a note? Young brother full of vigour, haven't you a verse full of praise for him? Oh! if we might all come to the Communion table in the spirit of praise! Perhaps some can dance before the ark like David. Others, perhaps, are, like Ready-to-halt, on their crutches, but even he laid them down, according to John Bunyan, once upon a time when he heard the sweet music of praise. Let us bless the name of the Lord. The day has passed and been full of mercy, and eventide has come, and as the sun goeth down let us magnify him whose mercy lasteth to us through the night and will come again upon us in the morning, and will be with us till nights and days shall no more change the scene. Lift up your hearts, my brethren; let every one of you lift up your hands unto the name of the Most High, and magnify him that liveth for ever. "Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness—for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Now I have just a few observations to make about:—

III. THE QUALITY OF THE SONG.

I will suppose that every Christian here singing has found that he has got one of the Lord's songs to sing about. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." Dear brother, the Lord's music has one thing about it—that *it is always new*. How very frequently we find in the New Testament that saints and angels sing "a *new* song." Very different from the songs we used to sing; very different from the songs the world still delights in—ours is heart-music, soul-music. Ours is real joy—no fiction—no mere crackling of thorns under a pot. Solid joys and last pleasures make up the new song of the Christian. New mercies make the song always new. There is a freshness in it of which we never weary. Some of you have heard the gospel now for fifty years: has it got flat to you? The name of Jesus Christ was known to you as the most precious of all sounds fifty or sixty years ago: has it become stale now? Those of us who have known and loved him twenty years can only say, "The more we know him the more sweet he is, and the more we enjoy his gospel the more resolved we are to keep to the old-fashioned gospel as long as ever we live." We could, indeed, sing a new song, though we have sung the self-same praises these twenty years. All the saints' praises have this about them—that *they are all harmonious*. I do not say that their voices are. Here and there, there is a brother who sings very earnestly through his nose, and very often puts out the rest that are round about him; but it does not matter about the sound of the voice to the ear of man: it is the sound of the heart to the ear of God. If you were in a forest, and there were fifty sorts of birds, and they were all singing at once, you would not notice any discord. The little songsters seem to pitch their songs in keys very different from each other, but yet, somehow or other, all are in harmony. Now the saints, when they pray—it is very strange—they all pray in harmony. So when they praise God. I have frequently attended prayer-meetings where there were brethren of all sorts of Christian denominations, and I would have defied the angel Gabriel to have told what they were when they were on their knees. So is it with praise. I may say, "The saints in praise appear as one:—

"In word, and deed, and mind,
While with the Father and the Son,
Sweet fellowship they find."

Though our words be broken and our notes fall short of melody, yet if our hearts are right, our words are acceptable, and our music is harmony in the ears of the Most High. Beloved, be it noticed about *the saints' music that it always seems very poor to them*. They feel that they must break out. There are some of David's Psalms in which in the Hebrew the words are very much disconnected and broken, as though the poet had strained himself beyond the power of language; and how constantly do you find him calling upon others to help him praise God—not only to other saints, but as if he felt there were not enough of saints, he calls on all creatures that have breath to praise God. How frequently do you find holy men invoking the dwellers above the skies, and earth, and air, and sea, to help them lift high the praise of God, and, as if they were not content with all animated beings, you will hear them bidding the trees of the wood break out and clap their hands, while they invite the sea to roar and the fullness thereof to magnify the Most High. Devout minds feel as though the whole creation were like a great organ with ten thousand times ten thousand pipes, and we little men, who have God within us, come and put our little hands to the keys and make the whole universe echo with thunders of praise to the Most High, for man is the world's priest, and the man that is blood-washed makes the whole earth his tabernacle and his temple, and in that temple doth every one speak of God's glory. He lights up the stars like lamps to burn before the throne of the Most High, and bids all creatures here below become servants in the temple of

the infinite majesty. Oh! brethren, may God give us to feel in this state of mind tonight, and though we should think our praises are like to break down, and feel how mean they are, compared with the majesty of Jehovah and his boundless love, yet shall we have praised him acceptably.

I would be very earnest in the next minute or two to stir up my brethren here to sing to their well-beloved a song, because I am quite sure the exercise will be *most fitting and most beneficial*. I will speak only for myself, but I will say this—if I did not praise and bless Christ my Lord, I should deserve to have my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth, and I will add—if I did not bless and magnify his name, I should deserve that every stone I tread on in the streets should rise up to curse my ingratitude, for I am a drowned debtor to the mercy of God—over head and ears—to infinite love and boundless compassion am I a debtor. Are you not the same? Then I charge you by the love of Christ, awake, awake your hearts now to magnify his glorious name. It will do you much good, my brethren. There is, perhaps, no exercise that, on the whole, strengthens us to much as praising God. Sometimes, even when prayer fails, praise will do it. It seems to gird up the loins; it pours a holy anointing oil upon the head and upon the spirit; it gives us a joy of the Lord which is always our strength. Sometimes, if you begin to sing in a dull frame, you can sing yourself up the ladder. Singing will often make the heart rise. The song, though at first it be a drag, will by and by come to be wings to lift the spirit with it. Oh! sing more, my brethren, and you will sing more still, for the more you sing the more you will be able to sing the praises of God. It will glorify God; it will comfort yourself; it will also prove an attraction to those who are lingering around the churches. The melancholy of some Christians tends to repel seekers, but the holy joy of others tends to attract them. More flies will always be caught with honey than with vinegar, and more souls will be brought to Christ by your cheerfulness than by your moroseness, more by your consecrated joy than by your selfish dolour. God grant us to sing the praises of God with heart and life until we sing them in heaven, and I doubt not that, as a church, we should thus become more useful, and more would be led to cast in their lot with us, for they would perceive that God blessed us. If God should make you feel that you must praise him tonight, the purpose that I desire to fulfil will have been accomplished. Oh! I wish I could bid you all say, "I will sing to my beloved a song!" But there are some of you who don't love him, and cannot, therefore, sing to him. In Exeter Hall, some years ago, at one of our services, I gave out the hymn:—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

There was one present who was a total stranger to the gospel, but that touching expression, "Jesus, lover of my soul," touched his heart, and he said, "Is Jesus the lover of my soul? Then I will love him too," and he gave his heart to Jesus and cast in his lot with his people. I would that some here would say the same. Then shall they also sing to their beloved a song; but now their fittest duty will be prayer and penitent trust. God help them to seek and find the Saviour—even Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Go Back? Never!

A Sermon

(No. 3478)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, July 13th, 1871.

"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly...city."—Hebrews 11:15, 16.

ABRAHAM left his country at God's command, and he never went back again. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which doth run well for a while, but it is soon ended, and it doth not obey the truth. The Apostle tells us, however, that the people of God were not forced to continue, because they could not return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to return. Frequent opportunities came in their way. There was communication kept up between them and the old family house at Padan-Aram. They had news concerning the family house. More than that, there were messages exchanged; servants were sometimes sent. There was also a natural relationship kept up. Did not Rebekah come from thence? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land; but he could not stay there; he was always unrestful, until at last he stole a march upon Laban and came back to the proper life, the life that he had chosen—the life that God had commanded him to live—of a pilgrim and stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled down comfortably and tilled the ground which their fathers did before them; but they continued to follow the uncomfortable life of wanderers of the weary foot, who dwell in tents, who own no plot of land. They were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise.

Now our position is a very similar one. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus have been called out. The very meaning of a church is called out—by Christ; we have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth in this world we have no home, no true abiding home for our spirits. Our home is beyond the flood. We are looking for it among the unseen things. We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were; dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance. I shall this evening first speak to you upon:—

I. THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH WE HAVE HAD, AND STILL HAVE, TO RETURN to the old house if we were mindful of it. Indeed, in the text it seems to me as if the word "opportunities" were not in our case nearly strong enough. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world, and to our own sin. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints should persevere, but when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world a single hour. It is nothing short of Godhead's utmost stretch of might that preserves a Christian from going back to his old unregenerate condition.

We have had opportunities to have returned. My brethren, we have such *opportunities in our daily calling*. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men. You have opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excess, into their forgetfulness of God, or even into their blasphemies. Oh! have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are. Or if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brethren, there is one who is pretty sure to keep us company and to seek our mischief—the destroyer, the tempter. And how frequently will even solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring! There are snares in company, but there are snares in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlour—in conversation, perhaps, in the kitchen about the day's work—or in the field, or on the mart, on land, and on sea. Where can we go to escape from these opportunities to return? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find "a lodge in some vast wilderness" where we could be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No; each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptation than his fellows, but it is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all. And all of us might say that we find in our avocations from hour to hour many opportunities to return.

But, dear brethren, it is not merely in our business and in our calling—the mischief lies in our bones and in our flesh. *Opportunities to return in our own nature*. Ah! who that knows himself does not find strong incentives to return? Ah! how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colours, and though we loathe the sin and loathe ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say, "Had it not been for divine grace, my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." How strong is the evil in the best man, how stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail! You may be diligent in secret prayer, and perhaps the devil may have been asleep till you begin to pray, and when you are most fervent then will he also become most rampant. When you get nearest to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return as long as you are in this body will be with you to the very edge of Jordan. You will meet with temptations when you sit gasping on the banks of the last river, waiting for the summons to cross; it may be that your fiercest temptation may come even then. Oh! this flesh, this body of this death—wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? But while it continues with me I shall find opportunities to return.

And, dear brethren and sisters, these opportunities to return are prepared for us *in any condition of life and any change* through which we may pass. For instance, how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return? I sigh to think of how many that appeared very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread have become very dull and cold now that they have become rich. How often does it happen that the poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of God at all meetings, and felt proud to be there, but when he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, he could not go with God's people any longer. He must seek out the world's fashionable church and join in it to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always gather there, and he has turned aside from the faith—if not altogether, in his heart at least, in the defence of it in his life. Beware of the high places: they are very slippery. There is not all the enjoyment that you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease, but, on the contrary, luxury often puffeth up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity. If any of you are prospered in this world, oh! watch, lest ye be mindful to return to the place whence you came out.

But it is just the same with adversity. Alas! I have had to mourn over Christian men—at least I thought they were—who have grown very poor, and when they have grown poor they hardly felt they could associate with those whom they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I should be ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in providence, yet there is that feeling in the human heart, and though there may be no unkind treatment, yet often times the spirit is apt to imagine it, and I have known some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God. It is smoothing the way to return to your old places. And, indeed, I have not wondered when I have seen some professors grow cold when I have thought how they were compelled to live. Perhaps they lived in a comfortable home before, and now they have to take a room where there is no comfort, and where sounds of blasphemy meet them. Or in some cases, perhaps, they have to go to the workhouse, and be far away from all Christian intercourse or anything that could comfort them. It is only grace that can keep grace alive under such circumstances. You see, then, whether you grow rich, or whether you become poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities. It will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful indeed.

Opportunities to return—let me say just this much more about them—are *often furnished by the example of others*.

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas! what numbers do!
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
Wilt thou forsake me too?"

Departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We cannot think that religion can be true if such a man is a hypocrite. It staggers us: we cannot make it out. Opportunities to return you have now, but ah! may grace be given you so that if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord, and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition.

And oh! my brethren and sisters, if some of us wished to return, we should have this opportunity to return in a certain sense. We should find that *none of our old friends would refuse to receive us*. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world receive him with open arms. He was the favourite of the ballroom once; he was the wit that set the table on a roar; he was the man who, above all, was courted when he moved in the circle of the vain and frivolous; glad enough would they be to see him come back. What shouts of triumph would they raise, and how would they welcome him! Oh! may the day never come to you, you young people especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ and professed his name, when you shall be welcomed by the world; but may you for ever forget also your own kindred and your father's house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for he is your Lord, and worship you him. Separation from the world shall endear you to the Saviour, and bring you conscious enjoyment of his presence; but opportunities to return I have shown you now are plentiful enough.

Perhaps you will say, "Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could he not have kept us from temptation?" There is no doubt he could, but it never was the Master's intention that we should all be hothouse plants. He taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but at the same time he does lead us there, and intends to do it; and this is for the proving of our faith to see whether it be

true faith or not. Only he bids us also pray, "Deliver us from evil." Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not faith. It must be sooner or later exercised. God does not create useless things. He intends that the faith which he gives should have its test, and should glorify his name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith, and they are sent to you to prove that you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you so that you could not leave your Lord, if it had become a physical impossibility for you to forsake your Saviour, there would be no credit in your abiding faithful to him. He that does not run away because his legs are weak, does not prove himself a hero, but he that could run, but won't run, that could desert his Lord, but won't desert him, has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be—the highest, strongest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Saviour. By this you shall know whether you are Christ's or not when you have opportunity to return—if you don't return, that shall prove you are his. Two men are going along a road, and they have got a dog behind them. I do not know to whom that dog belongs, but I'll tell you directly. They are coming to a cross road. One goes to the right, and other goes to the left. Now which man does the dog follow? That is his master. Now when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which a man is following; but when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest, your pleasure seems to go the other way, if you can part with the world, and keep with Christ, then you are one of his. So that these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose by trying our faith, and helping us to see whether we are, indeed, the Lord's or no. But we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text tonight) to notice the second point.

II. WE CANNOT TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO BACK BECAUSE WE DESIRE SOMETHING BETTER than we could get by going back. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace, which urges us to:—

"Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press our way."

Notice how the text puts it, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Brethren, *we desire something better than this world*. Do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart, but ever since you have known something of better things have you ever been contented with the world? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with worldly things. God has prospered you, and you have said, "Oh! this is well!" Your children have been about you; you have had many household joys, and you have said, "I could stay here for ever." Did not you find very soon that there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever get a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Have you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"? I am sure it has been so with you. All God's saints will confess that if the Lord were to say to them, "You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion," they would be broken-hearted men. "Nay, my Lord," they would say, "don't put me off so, don't give me these husks, though thou give mountains of them. Thou art more glorious than all the mountains of praise. Give me thyself, and take these all away if it so please thee, but don't my Lord, don't think I can fill myself with these things." We desire something better.

Notice, next, that there is this about a Christian, that *even when he does not enjoy something better, he desires it*. How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, "Now they desire a better"—the word "country" has been inserted by our translators—they desire something better. I know I do. I do not always enjoy something better.

Dark is my path. I cannot see my Lord, I cannot enjoy his presence, and though it may be a little thing to desire, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew. Grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. They desire a better country. And because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which gratified us once.

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled, for a while he is uneasy in it. Abraham's slips—for he made one or two—were made when he had left the land and gone down among the Philistines. But he was not easy there; he must come back again. And Jacob, he had found a wife, nay, two, in Laban's land, but he was not content. No; no child of God can be. Whatever we may find in this world, we shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through, and say, "This looks like a little paradise," but there is no paradise this side of the skies—for a child of God at any rate. There is enough out there in the farmyard for the hogs, but there is not for the children. There is enough in the world for sinners, but there is not for saints. They have stronger, sharper, and more vehement desires, for they have a nobler life within them, and they desire a better country; and even if they get entangled for a while in this country, and in a certain measure become citizens of it, they are still uneasy; their citizenship is in heaven, and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess tonight, and rejoice in the confessions, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight. Our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have, that we value, are ours today by faith. We don't enjoy them yet, but when our heirship shall be fully manifested, and we shall come to the full ripe age, oh! then we shall come into our wealth, to the mansions and to the glory and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. So, then, you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back, though he has many opportunities, lies in this, that through divine grace he has had produced in his heart desires for something better, and even when he does not as yet enjoy that something better, the desires themselves become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to what he was. Dear brethren, cultivate these desires more and more. If they have such a separating effect upon our character in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it. He has locked it up tonight, and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep downstairs, and he goes to see. He looks to that iron safe to be quite sure that it is well secured—he cannot forget his dear gold. Let us think of heaven, of Christ, of all the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake. The more they draw us to heaven the more we shall be separated from earth. But I must close with the sweetest part of the text.

III. WE HAVE FOR THIS REASON GREAT BLESSEDNESS.

"Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Because they are strangers, and because they will not go back to their old abode, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. He might be. What poor people God's people are—poor many of them in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things! I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has we should ever have patience with them. We cannot even have, when we judge ourselves rightly, patience with ourselves; but how is it that God bears with the ill-manners of such a froward, weak, foolish, forgetful people as his people are? He might well be ashamed to be called their God if you look upon them as they are. Own them—how can he own them? Does he not himself sometimes say of them, "How can I put thee among the children?" and yet he does. Viewed as they are, they are such a rabble in many respects that it is marvellous he is not ashamed of them; and yet he never is; and to prove that he is not ashamed of them we have this fact, that he calls himself their God, "I will be your God," and he oftentimes

seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to his own heart. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and while he calls himself their God he never forbids *them* to call him their God; and in the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God—anywhere. He is not ashamed that it should be so. We have sometimes heard of a brother who has become great and rich in the world, and he has had some poor brother or some distant relative, and when he has seen him in the street he has been obliged just to speak to him and own him; but I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if some rich acquaintance happened to be with him who should say, "Why, Smith, who was that wretched seedy-looking fellow that you spoke to?" He does not like to say, "That is my relation," or "That is my brother." But we find that Jesus Christ, however low his people may sink, and however poor they may be, is not ashamed to call them brethren, nor to let them look up to him in all the depths of their degradation and call him "brother born for adversity." He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And one reason seems to me to be because *he does not judge them by what they are, but by what he has prepared for them*. Notice the text, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them—he hath prepared for them a city." They are poor now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. All you can see in the poor child of God is a hard-working, labouring man, who is mocked at and despised, but what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory second only to himself. He hath put all things under the foot of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honour in the person of Christ, and the angels themselves are ministering servants to such a one as that. You see his clothes, you see not him; you see but his earthly tabernacle, but the Spirit, twice born immortal and divine, you see not that. God does. Or if you spiritually perceive that part, you see it as it is, but God sees it as it will be when it shall be like unto Christ, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest child of God as he will be in that day when he shall be like Christ, for he shall see him as he is. It seems in the text that *God looks to what he has prepared for these poor people*—"he hath prepared for them a city." And methinks that by what he has prepared for them he esteems them and loves them; esteeming them by what he means them to be rather than by what they appear to be.

Now let us look at this preparation just a minute; "he hath prepared for them"—*them*. I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven; but we must never forget the speciality—"he hath prepared for *them* a city." That is, for such as are strangers and foreigners, for such as have faith, and therefore have left the world and gone out to follow Christ. He hath prepared for them, not for all of you, but only for such as he has prepared for the city, has he prepared the city. But note what it is. It is a city, which indicates, first, *an abiding happiness*. They dwelt in tents—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he has prepared for them *a city*. Here we are tent-dwellers, but the tent is soon to be taken down. "We know that this earthly house of our tent shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." "He hath prepared for them a city." A city is *a place of social joy*. In a lonely hamlet one has little company, but in a city much. There all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood—the true Communism; Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, in the highest possible degree. There shall be delightful intercourse. "He hath prepared for them a city." It is a city, too, *for dignity*. To be a burgess of the City of London is thought to be a great honour, and upon princes is it sometimes conferred; but we shall have the highest honour that can be given when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared.

But I must not dwell on this, delightful theme as it is, for I must close by noticing you, who are the children of God. Don't wonder, don't wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers. Don't expect the men of this world to treat you as one of themselves—if they do, be afraid. Dogs don't bark when a man goes by that they know—they bark at strangers. When people slander and persecute you no longer, be afraid. If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Don't expect to find comforts in this world that your flesh would long for. This is our inn, not our home. We tarry here a night; we are away in the morning. We may bear the discomforts of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break so soon. Remember that your greatest joy while you are a pilgrim is your God. So the text says, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Do you want a greater source of consolation than you have got? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the creature streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and you will find it ever springing up. Your God is your true joy: make your joy to be in your God.

Now what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigners? Oh! you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose, but I have heavy tidings for you. This land in which you dwell, and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is the City of Destruction, and as is its name such shall be its end. The king will send his armies against that wicked city and destroy it, and if you are citizens of it you will lose all you have—you will lose your souls, you will lose yourselves. "Whither away?" saith one. "Where can I find comfort then, and security?" You must do as Lot did when the angels pressed him and said, "Haste to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live. There is death everywhere else, but there is life in his death. Oh! fly to him! "But how?" saith one. Trust him. God gave his Son, equal with himself, to bear the burdens of human sin, and he died a substitute for sinners, a real substitute, an efficient substitute for all who trust in him. If thou wilt trust thy soul with Jesus, thou art saved. Thy sin was laid on him. It is forgiven thee. It was blotted out when he nailed the handwriting of ordinances to his cross. Trust him now and ye are saved. That is, you shall henceforth become a stranger and a pilgrim, and in the better land you shall find the rest which you never shall find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted. Let us away from it. The curse has fallen. Let us get away to the uncursed and ever blessed, where Jesus Christ dwells for ever. God add his blessing on these words for Christ's sake. Amen.

All of Grace

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Ephesians 2:8.

OF THE THINGS which I have spoken unto you these many years, this is the sum. Within the circle of these words my theology is contained, so far as it refers to the salvation of men. I rejoice also to remember that those of my family who were ministers of Christ before me preached this doctrine, and none other. My father, who is still able to bear his personal testimony for his Lord, knows no other doctrine, neither did his father before him.

I am led to remember this by the fact that a somewhat singular circumstance, recorded in my memory, connects this text with myself and my grandfather. It is now long years ago. I was announced to preach in a certain country town in the Eastern Counties. It does not often happen to me to be behind time, for I feel that punctuality is one of those little virtues which may prevent great sins. But we have no control over railway delays, and breakdowns; and so it happened that I reached the appointed place considerably behind the time. Like sensible people, they had begun their worship, and had proceeded as far as the sermon. As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching, and who should the preacher be but my dear and venerable grandfather! He saw me as I came in at the front door and made my way up the aisle, and at once he said, "Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel; can you, Charles?" As I made my way through the throng, I answered, "You can preach better than I can. Pray go on." But he would not agree to *that*. I must take the sermon, and so I did, going on with the subject there and then, just where he left off. "There," said he, "I was preaching of 'For by grace are ye saved.' I have been setting forth the source and fountain-head of salvation; and I am now showing them the channel of it, through faith. Now you take it up, and go on." I am so much at home with these glorious truths that I could not feel any difficulty in taking from my grandfather the thread of his discourse, and joining my thread to it, so as to continue without a break. Our agreement in the things of God made it easy for us to be joint-preachers of the same discourse. I went on with "through faith," and then I proceeded to the next point, "and that not of yourselves." Upon this I was explaining the weakness and inability of human nature, and the certainty that salvation could not be of ourselves, when I had my coat-tail pulled, and my well-beloved grandsire took his turn again. "When I spoke of our depraved human nature," the good old man said, "I know most about that, dear friends"; and so he took up the parable, and for the next five minutes set forth a solemn and humbling description of our lost estate, the depravity of our nature, and the spiritual death under which we were found. When he had said his say in a very gracious manner, his grandson was allowed to go on again, to the dear old man's great delight; for now and then he would say, in a gentle tone, "Good! Good!" Once he said, "Tell them that

again, Charles," and, of course, I did tell them that again. It was a happy exercise to me to take my share in bearing witness to truths of such vital importance, which are so deeply impressed upon my heart. While announcing this text I seem to hear that dear voice, which has been so long lost to earth, saying to me, "TELL THEM THAT AGAIN." I am not contradicting the testimony of forefathers who are now with God. If my grandfather could return to earth, he would find me where he left me, steadfast in the faith, and true to that form of doctrine which was once delivered to the saints.

I shall handle the text briefly, by way of making a few statements. The first statement is clearly contained in the text:—

I. There Is Present Salvation.

The apostle says, "*Ye are saved.*" Not "ye shall be," or "ye may be"; but "ye are saved." He says not, "Ye are partly saved," nor "in the way to being saved," nor "hopeful of salvation"; but "by grace are ye saved." Let us be as clear on this point as he was, and let us never rest till we know that we are saved. At this moment we are either saved or unsaved. That is clear. To which class do we belong? I hope that, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, we may be so assured of our safety as to sing, "The Lord is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Upon this I will not linger, but pass on to note the next point.

II. A Present Salvation Must Be Through Grace.

If we can say of any man, or of any set of people, "Ye are saved," we shall have to preface it with the words "by grace." There is no other present salvation except that which begins and ends with grace. As far as I know, I do not think that anyone in the wide world pretends to preach or to possess a present salvation, except those who believe salvation to be all of grace. No one in the Church of Rome claims to be now saved—completely and eternally saved. Such a profession would be heretical. Some few Catholics may hope to enter heaven when they die, but the most of them have the miserable prospect of purgatory before their eyes. We see constant requests for prayers for departed souls, and this would not be if those souls were saved, and glorified with their Saviour. Masses for the repose of the soul indicate the incompleteness of the salvation Rome has to offer. Well may it be so, since Papal salvation is by works, and even if salvation by good works were possible, no man can ever be sure that he has performed enough of them to secure his salvation.

Among those who dwell around us, we find many who are altogether strangers to the doctrine of grace, and these never dream of present salvation. Possibly they trust that they may be saved when they die; they half hope that, after years of watchful holiness, they may, perhaps, be saved at last; but, to be saved now, and to know that they are saved, is quite beyond them, and they think it presumption.

There can be no present salvation unless it be upon this footing—"By grace are ye saved." It is a very singular thing that no one has risen up to preach a present salvation by works. I suppose it would be too absurd. The works being unfinished, the salvation would be incomplete; or, the salvation being complete, the main motive of the legalist would be gone.

Salvation must be by grace. If man be lost by sin, how can he be saved except through the grace of God? If he has sinned, he is condemned; and how can he, of himself, reverse that condemnation? Suppose that he should keep the law all the rest of his life, he will then only have done what he was always bound to have done, and he will still be an unprofitable servant. What is to become of the past? How can old sins be blotted out? How can the old ruin be retrieved? According to Scripture, and according to common sense, salvation can only be through the free favour of God.

Salvation in the present tense must be by the free favour of God. Persons may contend for salvation by works, but you will not hear anyone support his own argument by saying, "I am myself saved by what I have done." That would be a superfluity of naughtiness to which few men would go. Pride could hardly compass itself about with such extravagant boasting. No, if we are saved, it must be by the free favour of God. No one professes to be an example of the opposite view.

Salvation to be complete must be by free favour. The saints, when they come to die, never conclude their lives by hoping in their good works. Those who have lived the most holy and useful lives invariably look to free grace in their final moments. I never stood by the bedside of a godly man who reposed any confidence whatever in his own prayers, or repentance, or religiousness. I have heard eminently holy men quoting in death the words, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." In fact, the nearer men come to heaven, and the more prepared they are for it, the more simply is their trust in the merit of the Lord Jesus, and the more intensely do they abhor all trust in themselves. If this be the case in our last moments, when the conflict is almost over, much more ought we to feel it to be so while we are in the thick of the fight. If a man be completely saved in this present time of warfare, how can it be except by grace. While he has to mourn over sin that dwelleth in him, while he has to confess innumerable shortcomings and transgressions, while sin is mixed with all he does, how can he believe that he is completely saved except it be by the free favour of God?

Paul speaks of this salvation as belonging to the Ephesians, "By grace are ye saved." The Ephesians had been given to curious arts and works of divination. They had thus made a covenant with the powers of darkness. Now if such as these were saved, it must be by grace alone. So is it with us also: our original condition and character render it certain that, if saved at all, we must owe it to the free favour of God. I know it is so in my own case; and I believe the same rule holds good in the rest of believers. This is clear enough, and so I advance to the next observation:—

III. Present Salvation by Grace Must Be Through Faith.

A present salvation must be through grace, and salvation by grace must be through faith. You cannot get a hold of salvation by grace by any other means than by faith. This live coal from off the altar needs the golden tongs of faith with which to carry it. I suppose that it might have been possible, if God had so willed it, that salvation might have been through works, and yet by grace; for if Adam had perfectly obeyed the law of God, still he would only have done what he was bound to do; and so, if God should have rewarded him, the reward itself must have been according to grace, since the Creator owes nothing to the creature. This would have been a very difficult system to work, while the object of it was perfect; but in our case it would not work at all. Salvation in our case means deliverance from guilt and ruin, and this could not have been laid hold of by a measure of good works, since we are not in a condition to perform any. Suppose I had to preach that you as sinners must do certain works, and then you would be saved; and suppose that you could perform them; such a salvation would not then have been seen to be altogether of grace; it would have soon appeared to be of debt. Apprehended in such a fashion, it would have come to you in some measure as the reward of work done, and its whole aspect would have been changed. Salvation by grace can only be gripped by the hand of faith: the attempt to lay hold upon it by the doing of certain acts of law would cause the grace to evaporate. "Therefore, it is of faith that it might be by grace." "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Some try to lay hold upon salvation by grace through the use of ceremonies; but it will not do. You are christened, confirmed, and caused to receive "the holy sacrament" from priestly hands, or you are baptized, join the church, sit at the Lord's table: does this bring you salvation? I ask you, "have you salvation?" "You dare not say." If you did claim salvation of a sort, yet I am sure it would not be in your minds salvation by grace.

Again, you cannot lay hold upon salvation by grace through your feelings. The hand of faith is constructed for the grasping of a present salvation by grace. But feeling is not adapted for that end. If you go about to say, "I must feel that I am saved. I must feel so much sorrow and so much joy or else I will not admit that I am saved," you will find that this method will not answer. As well might you hope to see with your ear, or taste with your eye, or hear with your nose, as to believe by feeling: it is the wrong organ. After you have believed, you can enjoy salvation by feeling its heavenly influences; but to dream of getting a grasp of it by your own feelings is as foolish as to attempt to bear away the sunlight in the palm of your hand, or the breath of heaven between the lashes of your eyes. There is an essential absurdity in the whole affair.

Moreover, the evidence yielded by feeling is singularly fickle. When your feelings are peaceful and delightful, they are soon broken in upon, and become restless and melancholy. The most fickle of elements, the most feeble of creatures, the most contemptible circumstances, may sink or raise your spirits: experienced men come to think less and less of their present emotions as they reflect upon the little reliance which can be safely placed upon them. Faith receives the statement of God concerning His way of gracious pardon, and thus it brings salvation to the man believing; but feeling, warming under passionate appeals, yielding itself deliriously to a hope which it dares not examine, whirling round and round in a sort of dervish dance of excitement which has become necessary for its own sustaining, is all on a stir, like the troubled sea which cannot rest. From its boilings and ragings, feeling is apt to drop to lukewarmness, despondency, despair and all the kindred evils. Feelings are a set of cloudy, windy phenomena which cannot be trusted in reference to the eternal verities of God. We now go a step further:—

IV. Salvation by Grace, Through Faith, Is Not of Ourselves.

The salvation, and the faith, and the whole gracious work together, are not of ourselves.

First, they are *not of our former deservings*: they are not the reward of former good endeavours. No unregenerate person has lived so well that God is bound to give him further grace, and to bestow on him eternal life; else it were no longer of grace, but of debt. Salvation is given *to us*, not earned *by us*. Our first life is always a wandering away from God, and our new life of return to God is always a work of undeserved mercy, wrought upon those who greatly need, but never deserve it.

It is not of ourselves, in the further sense, that it is *not out of our original excellence*. Salvation comes from above; it is never evolved from within. Can eternal life be evolved from the bare ribs of death? Some dare to tell us that faith in Christ, and the new birth, are only the development of good things that lay hidden in us by nature; but in this, like their father, they speak of their own. Sirs, if an heir of wrath is left to be developed, he will become more and more fit for the place prepared for the devil and his angels! You may take the unregenerate man, and educate him to the highest; but he remains, and must forever remain, dead in sin, unless a higher power shall come in and save him from himself. Grace brings into the heart an entirely foreign element. It does not improve and perpetuate; it kills and makes alive. There is no continuity between the state of nature and the state of grace: the one is darkness and the other is light; the one is death and the other is life. Grace, when it comes to us, is like a firebrand dropped into the sea, where it would certainly

be quenched were it not of such a miraculous quality that it baffles the water-floods, and sets up its reign of fire and light even in the depths.

Salvation by grace, through faith is not of ourselves *in the sense of being the result of our own power*. We are bound to view salvation as being as surely a divine act as creation, or providence, or resurrection. At every point of the process of salvation this word is appropriate—*"not of yourselves."* From the first desire after it to the full reception of it by faith, it is evermore of the Lord alone, and not of ourselves. The man believes, but that belief is only one result among many of the implantation of divine life within the man's soul by God Himself.

Even the very will thus to be saved by grace is not of ourselves, but it is the gift of God. There lies the stress of the question. A man ought to believe in Jesus: it is his duty to receive him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sins. But man will not believe in Jesus; he prefers anything to faith in his redeemer. Unless the Spirit of God convinces the judgment, and constrains the will, man has no heart to believe in Jesus unto eternal life. I ask any saved man to look back upon his own conversion, and explain how it came about. You turned to Christ, and believed in his name: these were your own acts and deeds. But what caused you thus to turn? What sacred force was that which turned you from sin to righteousness? Do you attribute this singular renewal to the existence of a something better in you than has been yet discovered in your unconverted neighbour? No, you confess that you might have been what he now is if it had not been that there was a potent something which touched the spring of your will, enlightened your understanding, and guided you to the foot of the cross. Gratefully we confess the fact; it must be so. Salvation by grace, through faith, is not of ourselves, and none of us would dream of taking any honour to ourselves from our conversion, or from any gracious effect which has flowed from the first divine cause. Last of all:—

V. "By Grace Are Ye Saved Through Faith; and That Not of Yourselves: It Is the Gift of God."

Salvation may be called *Theodora*, or God's gift: and each saved soul may be surnamed *Dorothea*, which is another form of the same expression. Multiply your phrases, and expand your expositions; but salvation truly traced to its well-head is all contained in the gift unspeakable, the free, unmeasured benison of love.

Salvation is *the gift of God, in opposition to a wage*. When a man pays another his wage, he does what is right; and no one dreams of belauding him for it. But we praise God for salvation because it is not the payment of debt, but the gift of grace. No man enters eternal life on earth, or in heaven, as his due: it is the gift of God. We say, "nothing is freer than a gift". Salvation is so purely, so absolutely a gift of God, that nothing can be more free. God gives it because he chooses to give it, according to that grand text which has made many a man bite his lip in wrath, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." You are all guilty and condemned, and the great King pardons whom he wills from among you. This is his royal prerogative. He saves in infinite sovereignty of grace.

Salvation is the gift of God: that is to say completely so, in opposition to the notion of growth. Salvation is not a natural production from within: it is brought from a foreign zone, and planted within the heart by heavenly hands. Salvation is in its entirety a gift from God. If thou wilt have it, there it is, complete. Wilt thou have it as a perfect gift? "No; I will produce it in my own workshop." Thou canst not forge a work so rare and costly, upon which even Jesus spent his life's blood. Here is a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. It will cover thee and make thee glorious. Wilt thou have it? "No; I will sit at the loom, and I will weave a raiment of my own!" Proud fool

that thou art! Thou spinnest cobwebs. Thou weavest a dream. Oh! that thou wouldst freely take what Christ upon the cross declared to be finished.

It is the gift of God: that is, *it is eternally secure in opposition to the gifts of men, which soon pass away*. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you," says our Lord Jesus. If my Lord Jesus gives you salvation at this moment, *you have it*, and you have it forever. He will never take it back again; and if he does not take it from you, who can? If he saves you *now* through faith, you are saved—so saved that you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hand. May it be so with every one of us! Amen.

Fragrant Graces

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."—Canticles 1:12.

THIS passage may be read in several ways. Literally, when Christ tabled among men, when he did eat and drink with them, being found in fashion as a man, the loving spirit broke the alabaster box of precious ointment on his head while the king was sitting at his table. Three times did the Church thus anoint her Lord, once his head and twice his feet, as if she remembered his threefold office, and the threefold anointing which he had received of God the Father to confirm and strengthen him. So she rendered him the threefold anointing of her grateful love, breaking the alabaster box, and pouring the precious ointment upon his head and upon his feet. Beloved, let us imitate the example of those who have gone before. What! though we cannot, as the weeping penitent, wash his feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head, like that gracious woman, we may reckon nothing, of fair adornments, or fond endowments, if we can but serve his cause or honour his person. Let us be willing to "pour contempt on all our pride," and "nail our glory to his cross." Have you anything tonight that is dear to you? Resign it to him. Have you any costly thing like an alabaster box hidden away? Give it to the King; he is worthy, and when you have fellowship with him at his table, let your gifts be brought forth. Offer unto the King thanksgiving, and pay your vows unto the Most High.

But the King is gone from earth. He is seated at his table in heaven, eating bread in the kingdom of God. Surrounded now not by publicans and harlots, but by cherubim and seraphim, not by mocking crowds, but by adoring hosts, the King sits at his table, and entertains the glorious company of the faithful, the Church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. He fought before he could rest. On earth he struggled with his enemies, and it was not till he had triumphed over all, that he sat down at the table on high. There sit, thou King of kings, there sit until thy last enemy shall be made thy footstool. What can we do, brethren, while Christ sits at the table above? These hands cannot reach him; these eyes cannot see him; but our prayers, like sweet perfume, set burning here on earth, can rise in smoke to the place where the King sitteth at his table, and our spikenard can diffuse a perfume even in heaven itself. Do you want to reach Christ? Your prayers can do it. Would you now adore him; would you now set forth your love? With mingled prayer and praise, like the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, your incense can come up acceptably before the Lord.

And, brethren, the day is coming when the King shall sit at this table in royal state. Lo, he cometh! Lo, he cometh. Let the Church never forget that. The first advent is her faith; the second advent is her hope. The first advent with the cross lays the foundation; the second advent with the crown brings forth the topstone. The former was ushered in with sighs; the latter shall be hailed

with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." And when the King, manifested and recognized in his sovereignty over all lands, shall sit at his table with his Church, then, in that blessed Millennium, the graces of Christians shall give forth their odours of sweet savour.

We have thus read the text in three ways, and there is a volume in each; but we turn over another page, for we want to read it in relation to the spiritual presence of Christ as he doth now reveal himself to his people. "When the King sitteth at his table"—that is, when we enjoy the presence of Christ—"my spikenard giveth forth the smell thereof." Then our graces are in active exercise, and yield a perfume agreeable to our own soul and acceptable before God.

In the train of reflection I shall now attempt to follow, my manner must be hurried; and should it seem feeble, brethren, I cannot help it. If you get fellowship with Christ, I care little for the merits of my sermon, or the perils of your criticism. One thing alone I crave, "Let him kiss us with the kisses of his mouth"; then shall my soul be well content, and so will yours be also. The first observation we make shall be this:—

EVERY BELIEVER HAS GRACE IN POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES.

The text implies that when the King is not present the spikenard yields no smell, but the spikenard is there for all that. The spouse speaks of her spikenard as though she had it, and only wanted to have the King come and sit at the table to make its presence known and felt. Ah! well, believer, there is grace in thy heart, if thou be a child of God, when thou canst not see it thyself; when thy doubts have so covered up all thy hopes, that thou sayest, "I am cast out from his presence"; yet for all that, grace may be there. When the old oak has lost its last leaf by the howling blasts of winter; when the sap is frozen up in the veins, and you cannot, though you search to the uttermost bough, find so much as the slightest sign of verdant existence, still even then the substance is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. And so with every believer, though his sap seems frozen, and his life almost dead, yet if once planted, it is there; the eternal life is there when he cannot discover it himself. Do you know—if not, I pray you may never know experimentally—that there are many things that keep a Christian's spikenard from being poured out. Alas! there is our sin. Ah! shameful, cruel sin! to rob my Master of his glory! But when we fall into sin, of course, our graces become weak and yield no fragrance to God. And too, there is our unbelief, which puts a heavy stone on all our graces, and blows out the heat which was burning the frankincense, so that no altar-smoke arises towards heaven. And often, it may be, it is our bitterness of spirit, for when our mind is cast down we hang our harps upon the willows, so that they give forth no sweet music unto God. And, above all, if Christ be absent, if through neglect or by any other means our fellowship with him is suspended, grace is there—but oh! it cannot be seen. There is no comfort springing from it. But, beloved, though we mention this to begin with, we rather choose to pass on and observe that:—

II. GRACE IS NOT GIVEN TO A CHRISTIAN TO BE THUS HIDDEN, BUT IT IS INTENDED THAT, LIKE SPIKENARD, IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN EXERCISE.

If I understand a Christian aright, he should be a man readily discerned. You do not need to write upon a box that contains spikenard, with the lid open, the word "Spikenard." You will know it is there; your nostrils would tell you. If a man should fill his pockets with dust, he might walk where he would, and though he should scatter it in the air, few would notice it; but let him go into a room with his pockets full of musk, and let him drop a particle about, he is soon discovered, because the musk speaks for itself. Now true grace, like spikenard or any other perfume, should speak for itself. You know our Saviour compares Christians to lights. There is a crowd of people standing yonder; I cannot see those who are in the shadow, but there is one man whose face I can

see well, and that is the man who holds the torch. Its flames light up his face, so that we can catch every feature readily. So, whoever is not discovered, the Christian should be obvious at once. "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee." Not only should the Christian be perceptible, but grace has been given to him that it might be in exercise. What is faith, unless it is believing? What is love, unless it is embracing? What is patience, unless it is enduring? To what purpose is knowledge, unless it is revealing truth? What are any of those sweet graces which the Master gives us, unless they yield their perfume? I fear we do not enough gaze upon that face covered with the bloody sweat, for if we did, as sure as the King was thus in our thoughts sitting at his table, we should be more like him; we should love him better; we should live more passionately for him, and should spend and be spent, that we might promote his glory. I just note this point, and then pass on, that believers' graces, like spikenard, are meant to give forth their smell. But here is the pith of our whole subject, though we have little time to linger upon it:—

III. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN'S GRACES CAN BE PUT INTO EXERCISE IS THAT HE MUST HAVE THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER.

He is called "the King." I am told that the Hebrew word is very emphatic, as if it said, "*The King*"—the King of kings, the greatest of all Kings. He must be such to us—absolute Master of our hearts, Lord of our soul's domain, the unrivalled One in our estimation, to whom we render obedience with alacrity. We must have him as King, or we shall not have his presence to revive our graces. And when the King communes with his people, it is said to be at "his table," not at ours. Specially may this apply to the table of communion. It is not the Baptists' table; it is not my table; it is *his* table, because if there is anything good on it, remember, he spread it; nay, there is nothing on the table unless he himself be there. There is no food to the child of God unless Christ's body be the flesh, and Christ's blood the wine. We must have Christ. It must be emphatically his table by his being present, by his spreading it, his presiding at it, or else we have not his presence at all. I find the Hebrew word here signifies a "round table." I do not know whether that is intended which I understand by it—perhaps it is—it suggests to me a blessed equality with all his disciples; sitting at his round table, as if there were scarce a head, but he was one of themselves, so close the communion he holds with them sitting at the table; so dear his fellowship, sitting like one of themselves, made like unto his brethren in all things at his round table.

Well, now, we say that when Christ comes into the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, or any other ordinance, straightway our graces are vigorous. How often have we resolved that we would live nearer to Christ! Yet, though awe have resolved, and re-resolved, I fear it has all ended with resolving. Peradventure we have prayed over our resolutions, and for a little season we have sought it very earnestly, but our earnestness soon expired, like every other fire that is of human kindling, and we made but little progress. Be not disheartened, my beloved in the Lord: I tell thee, whether thou art able to believe it or not, that if thy heart be this night cold as the centre of an iceberg, yet if Christ shall come to thee, thy soul shall be as coals of juniper, that have a most vehement flame. Though to thy own apprehension thou seemest to be dead as the bones in a cemetery, yet if Jesus come to thee, thou shalt forthwith be as full of life as the seraphs who are as flames of fire. Why think you he will not come to you? Do you not remember how he did melt you when first he manifested himself to your soul? You were as vile then as you are now; you were certainly as ruined then as you are now; you had no more to merit his esteem then than you have now; you were as far off from him then as you are now—I might say even further off. But lo! he came to you when you did not seek him; he came in the sovereignty of his grace and the sweetness of his mercy when

you despised him. Wherefore, then, should he not come to you now? Oh! breathe the prayer, tenderly and hopefully breathe the prayer, "Draw me," and you will soon find power to run, and when all your passions and powers are fled, the King will speedily bring you into his chamber. Dark as your present state may be, there are sure signs of breaking day. I want you, brethren, to believe and to expect that you shall hold this night with Christ the richest, sweetest fellowship that ever mortal was privileged to enjoy, and that of a sudden. I know your cares—forget them. I know your sins—bring them to his feet. I know the wandering of your heart—ask him to tether you to his cross with the same cords that bound him to the pillar of his flagellation. I know your brain is perplexed, and your thoughts flying hither and thither, distracted with many cares—put on the thorn-crown, and let that be the antidote of all your manifold disquietudes. Methinks Jesus is putting in his hand by the hole of the door. Are not your bowels moved for him? Rise up and welcome him; and as the bread is broken, and the wine is passed round, come, and eat and drink of him, and be not strange to him. "Let not conscience make you linger"; let not doubts and fears hold you back from fellowship with him who loved you or ever the earth was, but do rest your unworthy head upon his blessed bosom, and talk with him, even though the only word you may be able to say may be, "Lord, is it I?" Do seek fellowship with him, as one who ignores every thought, feeling, or fact besides. So may it please him to manifest himself to you and to me as he doth not to the world.

If you that have never had fellowship with Christ think I am talking nonsense, I do not marvel. But let me tell you, if you had ever known what fellowship with Christ means, you would pawn your eyes, and barter your right arms, and give your estates away as trifles for the priceless favour. Princes would sell their crowns, and peers would renounce their dignities, to have five minutes' fellowship with Christ. I will vouch for that. Why, I have had more joy in my Lord and Master in the space of the ticking of a clock than could be crammed into a lifetime of sensual delights, of the pleasures of taste, of the fascinations of literature. There is a depth, a matchless depth, in Jesu's love. There is a luscious sweetness in the fellowship with him. You must eat, or you will never know the flavour of it. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good! Behold how ready he still is to welcome sinners. Trust him and live. Feed on him, and grow strong. Commune with him, and be happy. May every one of you who shall sit at the table have the nearest approach to Jesus that you ever had! Like two streams that, after flowing side by side, at length unite, so may Christ and our soul melt into one, even as Isis melts into Thames, till only one life shall flow, so that the life we live in the flesh shall be no more ours, but Christ that liveth in us. Amen.

Daniel: A Pattern For Pleaders

A Sermon

(No. 3484)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, 25th September, 1870.

"O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."—Daniel 9:19.

DANIEL was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land, but, in the providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen; many have done so. Alas! we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in grace, and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they themselves have grown rich in this world's goods. But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew; he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honour to be numbered with them, and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God's providence had made him to be distinguished, yet his heart would make no distinction: he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God's three mighties in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of grace himself (and for that very reason) he stooped to those who were in a low state. Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of grace, when they begin to despise their fellows. They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves. But it is a good sign when thine own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when thou dost condescend to those that backslide, and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When thou hast, like thy Master, a tender sympathy for others, then art thou rich in divine things. Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious brethren in the way of prayer. He would have shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did; but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My object here and now will be to stir up the people of God, and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer; more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of his Church, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

First, our text gives us *a model of prayer*; and secondly, *it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer*. First, then, our text gives us:—

I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.

I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel *was not offered without consideration*. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that required no forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons, and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he is very blameworthy. But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, and only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man from God when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often do, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of consideration, and the words come, and then we try to quicken the words rather than the desires coming, and the words coming like garments to clothe them withal?

But Daniel's considerations lay in this first, *he studied the books*. He had with him an old manuscript of the prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such and such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such and such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly! Oh! that you studied your Bibles more! Oh! that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, "Fulfil this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope." Oh! it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own. You tell a man, when you ask him for such and such a thing, "You yourself said you would do so and so." You have him then. And so when you can lay hold on the covenant angel with this consecrated grip, "Thou hast *said!* thou hast *said!*" then have you every opportunity of prevailing with him. May our prayers then spring out of our scriptural studies; may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer.

He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer again, *studied the history of his people*. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the Church—if not with the Church of the past, certainly with the Church of today. We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army, and we will buy new maps about once a week to see all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ's army, and revise their maps to see how the kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world? All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the Church, and especially about our own Church. I am afraid I must say it—I am afraid there are some members of the Church that do not know what is doing—hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brethren, know well the Church's needs as far as you can ascertain them; and then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information; and with the promises of God and the fact of the Church's wants, you will pray prayers of the spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest consideration.

But next, Daniel's prayer was *mingled with much humiliation*. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of hair, black, called sackcloth; and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him, and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret, and these outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God. We always pray best when we pray out of the depths; when the soul gets low enough she gets a leverage; she can then plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good

man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers—a minister of the gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer, and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it. It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it. You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see even too much of your sin. Yet, brethren, this is rarely the case. We need to see much our deep needs, our great sins, for ah! that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of anything like self-righteousness; to be able to say from the very heart, "Not for our righteousness' sake do we plead with thee, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers too." Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit. When thou canst do this, then art thou in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God, and bring thee down a blessing. Oh! some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves. Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy's lintel, but they can never pass through the portal. You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at his footstool; then will he hear you, and not until then.

Daniel's prayer instructs us in the next point. *It was excited by zeal for God's glory.* We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is; but suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say, "What a useful minister he is," that is a bad motive, which spoils it all. If I am a member of a Christian Church, and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly; but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, "See our zeal for the Lord! See how God blesses us rather than others!" that is a wrong motive. The motive is this, "Oh! that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of his sufferings! Oh! that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise him, new hearts to love him! Oh! that sin were put an end to, that the holiness, righteousness, mercy, and power of God might be magnified!" This is the way to pray; when thy prayers seek God's glory, it is God's glory to answer thy prayers. When thou art sure that God is in the case, thou art on a good footing. If thou art praying for that which will greatly glorify him, thou mayest rest assured thy prayer will speed. But if it do not speed, and it be not for his glory, why, then thou mayest be better content to be without it than with it. So pray thou, but keep thy bowstring right; it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this be thy bowstring, "God's glory, God's glory"—this above all; first, last, and midst; the one object of my prayer.

Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice *how intense Daniel's prayer was.* "O Lord, hear: O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do, defer not for thine own sake." The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," so often—it often amounts to taking God's name in vain, and is, indeed, a vain repetition. But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition; then it cannot be repeated too often, and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how the prophet here seems to pour out his soul with "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," as if, if the first knock at mercy's door does not open it, he will knock again, and make the gate to shake, and then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed. Cold prayers ask God to deny them: only importunate prayers will be replied to. When the Church of God cannot take "No" for an answer, she shall not have "No" for an answer. When a pleading soul *must* have it; when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till he has given

the blessing to such a pleading one. Brethren, if there be only one among us that can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come. Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear brother, do you undertake it? Dear sister, in God's name, do you undertake it? and God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one. But how much better would it be if many a score of men here, ay, the entire Church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth! Oh! that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing. As soon as Zion travailed—you know that word—as soon as she *travailed* she brought forth children. Not till it comes to travail—not till then—may we expect to see much done. God send us such travailing to each one of us, and then the promise is near to fulfilling.

But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable prayer was *a prayer of understanding* as well as earnestness; for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense, and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand, but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God. It begins thus, "O Lord, hear." He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty: he asks to be heard. He begins with that, "O Lord, hear. I am not worthy to be heard: if thou shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just." He asks an audience: he gets it, and now he goes at once to his point without delay, "O Lord, forgive." He knows what he wants. Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering: he puts his hand on it. Oh! it is grand when one knows what one is praying for. Many prayers maunder and wander—the praying person evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the centre is the prayer it is good to pray. God teach us to pray so. "O Lord, forgive."

Then observe how he presses the point home. "O Lord, hearken and do." If thou hast forgiven—he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it. Do, good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem—do interpose for the redemption of thy captive people; do interpose for the re-establishment of sacred worship. It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness and celerity of action. So in prayer. "Hear, me, my Lord! Thou hast heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me—work the blessings I want." Follow up your advantage; build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, "*Because* he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him; *because* he has heard me once, therefore will I call again." Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit, and with understanding also.

And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was *a prayer of holy nearness*. You catch that thought in the expression, "O my God." Ah! we pray at a distance oftentimes: we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at his throne-foot; as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we did not know. But when God helps us to pray as we should we come right to him, even to his feet, and we say, "Hear me, O my God." He is *God*; therefore, we must be reverent. He is my God; therefore, we may be familiar; we may come close to him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God, because he knew how to come close to God. You know how your little child climbs your knee: he gives you a kiss, and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear; they

must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh! a child of God—when his heart is right—how near he gets to his God; he pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High. Brethren, this is to be noted well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humility, yet still not in the position of slavery. It is still "O my God"—he grasps the covenant: faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God, and pleads that relation. "O my God."

Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that *the prophet uses argument*. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. "Bring forth your strong reasons" is a good canon for a prevalent prayer. We should urge matters with God, and bring reasons before him—not because he wants reasons, but he desires us to know why we desire the blessing. In this text we have a reason given, first—"Defer not for thine own sake," as much as if he had said, "If thou suffer this people of thine to perish, all the world will revile thy name; thine honour will be stained. This is thine own people, and because they are thy property, suffer not thine own estate to be endamaged, but save Jerusalem for thine own sake."

Then next, he puts it on the same footing in another shape, "For thy city and thy people"; he urges that this people were not like other people. They had sinned truly, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people. He pleads the covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham's seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that! And then he puts in next, "For they are called by thy name." They were said to be Jehovah's people; they were named by the name of the God of Israel. "O God! let not a thing that bears thy name be trundled about like a common thing. Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust; come to the rescue of it. Thy stamp, thy seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to thee; therefore, come and interpose." Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God, and these are very many; and discreet minds when they are fervent will readily know how far to go in pleading, and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when he spoke thus, "O Lord, thou hast been pleased to call thy Church thy Bride; now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouse that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her; and wilt thou not, O Husband of the Church, do the like with thy spouse, and let thy Church receive a blessing now that she pleads for it?" It seemed good arguing, after Christ's own sort, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Get a promise, and spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, thou hast said it; do it." God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think he means what he says. He is a practical God himself. His word has power in it, and he does not like us to treat his promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be used as matters of real practical truth. Oh! plead them with God: fill your mouths with reasonings, and come before him. Make this your determination, that as a Church, seeing we need his Spirit, and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of mercy to send us what we want. Thus much then upon this as a model of prayer. Now I shall want a little longer time to speak upon:—

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.

Brethren, it is always an encouragement to do a thing *when you see the best of men doing it*. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress, and, indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same. I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening, who interested and amused me too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to heaven, having told his disciples to wait at Jerusalem until the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, "Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing." And John might have said, "Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret; I think I shall go and see how that is getting on; it is a long time since I saw after it." And each one might have said, "Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when it is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling." "No," saith he, "they did not say that at all, but Peter said, 'Where shall we hold a prayer meeting?' and Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a prayer meeting. True it was in a back street, and the house was not very respectable, and, 'Besides,' says she, 'it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.' 'Never mind,' says Peter, 'it will be nearer to heaven.' So they went into the upper room, and there began to pray, and did not cease the prayer meeting till the blessing came." Then the brother told us the next story of a prayer meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison, and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had sixteen policemen to look after him, and the brethren knew they could not get Peter out in any other way than one; so they said, "We will hold a prayer meeting." Always the way with the Church at that time, when anything was amiss, to say, "Where shall we have a prayer meeting?" So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a prayer meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that prayer meeting, and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out, and they left how he was to get out to God. While they were praying there came a knock at the door. "Ah!" said they, "that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in affright. What could she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter. She went back to her mistress, and said, "There is Peter at the gate." Good souls! they had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, "Why, it is his spirit—his angel." "No," said the girl, "I know Peter well enough; he has been here dozens of times, and I know it *is* Peter"; and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief. They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was. It was the prayer meeting that did it. And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God.

Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw,
 Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,
 Gives exercise to faith and love,
 Brings every blessing from above.
 Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
 Prayer makes the Christian armour bright;
 And Satan trembles when he sees
 The weakest saint upon his knees.

It is prayer that does it, and this fact should encourage us to pray.

The success of Daniel's prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him, and he looked up, and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man. That was quick work surely. So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second—so it is estimated; but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, "Before they call I will answer." There is no time occupied at all. When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delay, it is only that it may come at a better time—like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier cargo. Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home, not only with the capital, but with the compound interest too. Oh! prayer cannot fail—prayer cannot fail. Heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail. God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than he can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-wrought prayer of his own quickened, earnest, importunate people. Therefore, because he sends success, brethren, pray much.

It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that *Daniel prayed for a very hard case*. Jerusalem was in ruins; the Jews were scattered; their sins were excessive; but, nevertheless, he prayed, and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the Church; we have not to mourn that God has departed from us; our prayer is that he may not, even in any measure, withdraw his hand. I do pray God that I may long be buried ere he shall suffer this Church to lose his presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth a single farthing, if the Spirit of God be gone. He must be there. Brethren, if you are not prayerful, if you are not holy, if you are not earnest, God does not keep priests, deacons, elders, and church members living near to him. The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one be kept right himself cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may he bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so—getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long. Ah! there are some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draughtiest place—if the word was blessed to them, they would not have minded it. May God grant that you may be a living people always, for years and years to come, until Christ himself comes. But oh! you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that he would not withdraw from us for our sins, but continue to stretch out his hand in lovingkindness, even until he gathers us to our Father.

It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done—but a threefold cord—a fifty-fold cord—oh! if, out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh! what prevalence there must be! Would God it were so!

Brethren, how about your private prayers: are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that midday prayer (for surely your soul must go up to heaven, even if your knees are not bent)—are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you; there cannot be fat soul and neglected prayer. There must be much praying if there be much rejoicing in the Lord.

And then your family prayers: do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day, and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, "My son is going to be married tomorrow—going to be married to one of your members." "I am glad to hear it," I said. "I hope he is a believer." "Oh! yes, sir; he has been a member of your church for some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow." Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, "I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled; may your sorrows be divided and lightened." But then I put, "Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life." I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer. Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?

Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the Church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a prayer meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don't feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don't see now. I know I see some fresh ones, and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well. I know those who are constantly at prayer meetings can say it is good to be there. It is the best evening in the week often to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing. Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, "All our strength lies in prayer"! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to preach the gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us. Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God, and he has heard us. Daily he sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer. Oh! you that come here as members of the Church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you. This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure. I think it would have sounded impossible. But it was done—you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how he has helped us to this day. Oh! don't stop your prayers. You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying prophet, was told, "Take your arrows and shoot," and he went to the window, and he shot but once, and the prophet was angry and said, "Thou shouldest have shot many times, and then thou wouldest have utterly destroyed thy enemies." And so we pray, as it were, but little. We ask but little, and God gives it. Oh! that we could ask much, and pray for much, and shoot many arrows and plead very earnestly. Look at this city of ours. I would not say a word in derogation of my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come on that was going on there without fearing that national sin would bring national chastisement. And oh! this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! Ye are the salt of the earth; ye that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savour. God forbid that you should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people. Everywhere, sea and land, is compassed by the adversaries of the truth, to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the mercy-seat, that their machinations may be defeated. At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not. Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in providence. We may expect great things if we can pray greatly, and wrestle earnestly. I call you, in God's name, to the mercy-seat. Draw near thither,

with intense importunity; and such a blessing shall come as ye have not yet imagined. Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves; let us pray them into prayer; let us pray God for them, until they at last pray God for themselves. Prayer can mercy's door unlock, for others as well as for our own persons; let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God send us the blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Daniel 9:1-11.

Verses 1, 2. *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

Daniel was himself a prophet, but he studied the inspired prophecies of Jeremiah. If such a man need read Scripture, how much more ought we! Whatever light we may suppose to dwell within us, we shall do well to walk by the more sure word of prophecy.

3-5. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:*

Daniel certainly had rebelled less than any of his countrymen, and yet he is the first to make confession on their behalf. So, my brethren, when we have confessed our own sins, and have found mercy, then we should begin to be intercessors for others. We should make confession for the sins of our families, for the sins of our city, for the sins of our country. If no longer need we plead for salvation for ourselves because we have obtained it, let us give the full force of our prayers for the benefit of others.

6. *Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

It greatly increases sin when we sin against warnings sent from God. Daniel confesses this.

7-9. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him;*

What a gracious verse that is! Surely it might be printed in letters of gold, and every trembling, penitent sinner might look at it till at last beams of light should dart into the darkness of his despair.

10, 11. *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.*

The Honoured Guest

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully."—Luke 19:6.

ARE you prepared, like Zaccheus, to give the Lord Jesus Christ a glad and grateful welcome? If we would obtain the full benefit of his devoted life, his atoning death, and his triumphant resurrection, we must receive him into our hearts by simple faith, and entertain him with tender love. Outside the door of our heart Jesus is a stranger; he is no Saviour to us; but inside the heart which has been opened, by divine grace, to admit him, his power is displayed, his worth is known, and his goodness is felt. My dear hearer, you have heard his fame, you have witnessed the miracles he has wrought upon others, and now it remains that you receive him yourself to ensure your own well-being. He stands at the door and knocks; you must open to him. The promise is, "If any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him." "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Not upon all who heard was the privilege conferred, for many, when they heard, did not believe. Alas! they provoked him, and so they perished in their sins. But those who hail Jesus as a friend salute him as an honoured guest, sit at his feet, and hang on his lips, find how he lights every chamber of their soul with joy, satisfies every craving of their better nature, and enriches them with all the endowments of adopted children.

In many respects Zaccheus supplies us with a noble example. He shows us how to receive the Saviour. You will observe that *he received him speedily*. "He made haste and came down." It is not always easy to come down from a tree with great speed. He came down, however, as fast as he could. There was no demur or hesitancy in his manner. I daresay his heart was down before his feet. In like manner they who would receive Christ must receive him now. This is not a call or a counsel to be trifled with. The procrastination of Felix, which led him to say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee," is a very dangerous spirit. Let those who talked as Felix talked beware lest they perish as Felix perished. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Zaccheus made haste. They who receive Christ heartily must receive Christ immediately.

We notice, too, that Zaccheus *received the Lord obediently*. When the Master said, "Make haste," he made haste. Hardly had he said, "Come down," when down he came. If thou, my hearer, be likewise willing and obedient, thou shalt eat of the good of the land. Christ likes us to be obedient to him, though he speaks to us less as a Lawgiver than as a Saviour and a Friend. If we refuse to take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, how can we reasonably expect to find rest unto our souls? The words of Jesus must be deeply respected and diligently observed by those who would have him for their Rock, their Refuge, and their Hiding Place. Let him be your Councillor if you want to partake of his redemption. Render allegiance to him as your King, if you would enjoy all the grace of his priestly mediation and intercession.

There was also *a thorough heartiness on the part of Zaccheus* in receiving Christ. He made a great feast for him. He did not admit him as one who intruded. It was not with cold civility, but with cordial hospitality that he greeted him. I think I see the satisfaction that sparkled in his face! I think I hear the salutation that leaped from his tongue, "Come in— come in, my gracious Lord; never did my house enter-tain so welcome a guest as thou art!" Would you receive Christ, you must throw the doors of your heart wide open; then your eyes, your lips, every muscle of your body will express your earnestness. Your whole spirit, soul and strength will be stirred to enthusiasm if you know his worth, and feel the honour he confers on you. A man who findeth a treasure hid in a field will congratulate himself on his good fortune. A woman, when she embraceth her first-born child, will dote on him with exquisite fondness. Shall no strong emotions prove our sincerity when we receive the Lord of life and glory?

And mark you, too, this Chief of the Publicans *received Christ spiritually*. His convictions were in keeping with his conduct. When he distributed his goods to the poor, and made a bold confession of his faith before his fellow-men, there was proof positive that Christ had not only crossed the threshold of Zaccheus's house, but had also penetrated the chambers of his heart. Ah! beloved, it is useless to receive Christ nominally, professionally, ceremonially, or with rites and ceremonies, to do him empty homage. By a sincere reception of him who was sent of God, your nature, your disposition, and your habits will be transformed from what they were, and conformed to what he is; and the change will be conspicuous, for if ye be in Christ, and Christ be in you, all things will become new.

A prominent feature, however, so distinctly stated that it should not be carelessly overlooked was this, that he received him joyfully. This was crowning evidence of the purity of his motives, and the artlessness of his actions. In such mirth there could be no guile. Ask now, *Why do not all men thus receive Jesus Christ joyfully? How is it that some men receive him with such exuberant joy? In what ways do those show their joy who have thus received the Master?*

I. Why Is It That All Men Do Not Receive Christ Joyfully?

This is our first question. They need him, all of them. There is no difference in this respect. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are all sold under sin. God has concluded the whole race of man in unbelief. He has shut them all up in condemnation. There is no escape from the universal doom except by the way of the cross. Jesus Christ comes to save; comes with pardon in his hands, with messages of love, with tokens of favour; yet most men bar the doors of their hearts against him. There is no cry heard in their souls, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!" Instead thereof, there is a sullen cry, "Come prejudice; come unbelief; come hardness of heart; come love of sin; bar ye the doors and barricade the gates lest, perhaps, the King of Glory should force an entrance!" Men treat the Saviour as they would treat an invader who attacked their country. They seek to drive him away; they would fain be rid of him. They cannot endure his presence. Nay, they can scarce endure, some of them, to hear about him in the street. Why is this? The chief reason lies in *the depravity of man's nature*. You never know how bad man is till he comes in contact with the Cross.

Although the crimes of savage, uncivilized men may appear to you far more heinous than any that are committed in our favoured country, where just laws are for the most part enacted, and opportunities of education generally enjoyed, yet the propensity to do that which is evil in the teeth of a knowledge of that which is good, the subtlety of perverting truth in the clear light of divine revelation, the perfidiousness of that foul ingratitude which can betray the tenderest friendship, are

never so painfully illustrated as in view of the Crucified. To despise the grace of Jesus, to reject the love of God, to conspire against the Ambassador of peace, to take the inhuman, devilish counsel—"This is the heir; let us kill him!"—this was the last offence of the wicked husbandmen in the parable. Nor does the parable exaggerate the treachery. For this is the greatest offence of human nature, when it says, in effect, "This is the Incarnate God, let us reject him; this is the Word made flesh, let us traduce him; this is the Father's beloved Son—let us betray him!" Oh! Human Nature, how blind must be thy heart, how seared thy conscience, not to see the beauties of Christ! How base must thou be to despise the love and tenderness of such a Saviour!

Were we to select secondary causes, however, which spring out of this deep-seated depravity, and discriminate between the various classes of offenders, we should say that *many men reject Christ instead of receiving him joyfully out of sheer ignorance*. For this ignorance there is not much valid excuse. There are thousands of persons, even in this highly-favoured greatly-enlightened country, who really do not know what the gospel means. The knowledge of salvation is within their reach, but they have no desire to acquaint themselves with this best of all the sciences. We are all sinners, they say; but they do not know what they mean. In the jargon of general confession they lose sight of their own personal transgressions. The plan of salvation by a Substitute, which is the gist of the whole matter, never dawned on their understanding. They do not know the great truth that Jesus took our sins and suffered for us in our room, and in our stead, that justice might be satisfied, that mercy might be magnified, and that we sinners might be liberated. Hence it comes to pass that whosoever trusteth in Christ is saved. Being ignorant of this, they are still depending upon their own works, merits, and professions, or they are relying upon their baptism, their confirmation, or their identification with some ecclesiastical system by means of some outward ceremony, instead of understanding that salvation is by faith, a thing of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter. This ignorance of the blessed Saviour prevents many from receiving him joyfully. So was it with the woman of Samaria; hence the Saviour said to her, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that speaks to thee, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water." Lest ye perish through lack of knowledge, brethren, do entreat the Lord so to guide you in the reading of Scripture, and in listening to the exposition of Scripture that you may get a clear understanding of the way of the Lord. "That the soul should be without knowledge is not good," for ignorance is the parent of many infatuations.

To refuse attention, to resist evidence, to rebut exhortation, in the instance of full many exhibits *a spirit of gross unbelief*. They will not believe in Jesus; they will not acknowledge him to be the Son of God; they will scarcely believe that the man ever lived who had a right to the homage which his few disciples offered him. The Atonement they look upon as an old wives' fable, and they account the resurrection from the dead as an idle dream. I will say but little of their excuse. They are not open to conviction. They live in darkness because they have barred every window of their soul against the light. The precious doctrine of Christ bears on its face the genuine stamp. Its authenticity is graven upon its very forefront. Their stolid disputations cannot diminish its value or its virtue. They wrong themselves when they denounce or disparage the truth as it is in Christ.

Others are actuated by *a positive aversion to the Saviour*. They have no sinister reflections to cast on the story of his life, the purity of his manners, the holiness of his character, or the benevolence of his mission, but they do not desire to be saved from their sins; they rather enjoy revelling, unrebuked and undisturbed, in the gratification of their own sensual propensities. They do not want to be saved from drunkenness; they would rather go on with the drink. They do not want to be

saved from the lusts of the flesh; they would sooner pamper its gross appetites. They do not want to be saved from pride or self-confidence; they would rather indulge their towering ambition. They do not want, in fact, to have a divorce proclaimed between them and their sins; they would sooner discard the high obligations of the divine law, and act upon the expedience of the life that now is, than forego a pursuit or a pleasure in hope of eternal life. Hence they cannot bear the name of Jesus! they recoil from it, unable to conceal their antipathy. Religion is not merely insipid; it is positively nauseous to them. The singing of a hymn in the house would put them out of temper. Did their wife or their child mention the Cross of Christ, or faith in his precious blood, they would either sneer and ridicule with unseemly jest, or else their temper would boil over with malice and wrath. The Lord pluck that black heart out of thee, man! The Lord give thee a new heart and a right spirit. Thou wilt have to bend or else to break. If thou wilt not turn, thou must burn. If thou dost not repent of this hatred of Christ now, thou wilt feel remorse enough for it hereafter. In the day when he cometh in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead, thou wilt seek in vain to elude his eye, or escape from his wrath.

You will find that the reason for not receiving Christ in many others is the fact that they *are worldly, and eaten up with too many cares*. A pitiful apology and very perilous! Such paltry forgets will bring poignant regrets. The hour of death can do little to rectify the years of life misspent. Not then can you seek God, if you have never sought him before. Oh! you are taken up with the farm and the merchandise, with your daily labours and diversions, your losses, and your gains, heaping up, not knowing who shall inherit. These canker-worms eat up your souls. Would that men were not such fools as to be always providing for this poor tenement of the body, while they neglect the precious jewel it encloses—their immortal soul; occupied with trivial personalities, while reckless of their real estate. They are crying, "Buy, buy," in Vanity Fair, while the Lord of life and glory passeth by. Yet they heed not. Talk of the main chance, but they miss the wise choice. They sell gold for dross; they lose their souls and get perdition.

Still more inexcusable, methinks, are those who reject Christ, because they are *taken up with the world's frivolities*. Some people live in a whirl of fashion, where repentance would be accounted vulgar. Not in sportive gaieties, but in pensive solitudes do penitence and contrition find room for exercise. Ridiculous as it may sound, some people are far too genteel, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is fit company, in their esteem, for publicans and sinners, but into their drawing-rooms were he to enter he would soon be expelled. They want him not in the upper circle of the *haut ton*; neither would he be kindly received in the lower circles, among the frequenters of music-halls and dancing saloons. Ah! no; as of old, so now: "There is no room for him in the inn." The world is ready enough to welcome actor, singer, dancer, punster, anyone who can amuse them; but as for Christ, who stands with bleeding hands, and cries, "Come unto me and I will give you rest," they despise him. They miss the soul of beauty for meretricious charms; they turn from the source of joy to indulge in giggling laughter; they spurn the real, and leap after the shadow; they forsake the overflowing fountain, and fly to the broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Ah! brethren, this is a miserable spectacle. It is a dreary sight to see a sinner despising mercy, a drowning man rejecting the life-belt, a sick man declining the physician, a man entering the gates of death refusing life and immortality. Oh! sin, how thou hast befooled men! How thou hast made them hate themselves, and act cruelly to their own souls! What suicides they commit! What a sacrifice of their noblest nature! They go down to hell with a verdict of *felo de se*. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself! Thou hast destroyed thyself! They reject him shamefully whom they should

have received joyfully. They carry out their own will, and they perish in their wilfulness. And now we ask in the next place:

II. Why Do Some Men Receive Him Joyfully?

The answer simply is *because grace has made them to differ*. Grace has subdued their stubborn will, illuminated their darkened understanding, changed their depraved affections, and made their whole mind to judge of things after a different fashion. Do not suppose that we who have received Christ were naturally any better disposed to him than others. Oh! no. If, when the seed was sown, we were like the honest and good ground in which it took root, there had been a previous tillage upon our hearts to make them ready, we should not have been found willing had it not been the day of God's power. I think we all unite in saying:—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast

That sweetly forced us in;

Else we had still refused to taste,

And perished in our sin."

As for the reasons and inducements which prompted us to receive Christ joyfully, I may speak very plainly for myself. *I received Christ because* I could not help it. I was at my wits' end. Methinks no man ever flees to Christ for refuge, or seeks shelter in the port of gospel peace, until he is quite certain that every other harbour is shut up. We make Christ our last resource. We try everything else—grand resolutions to do good works, or to attend gorgeous ceremonies, trivial formalities, or paltry superstitions; anything, the silliest conceit or the emptiest quackery. We go the round of folly before we discover the path of wisdom. At length I must go to Christ, or else woe is unto me if I win him not. Helpless and hopeless, in sheer distress we cry out, "Give me Christ, or else I die." Henceforth he is not merely our choice, but a positive necessity to us to have him as our hourly, daily, and eternal portion. Oh! the strait unto which I was brought when I received Christ. It was Christ or death; salvation by Christ, or damnation without him. I received him because I could not help it. I had no alternative. How many of you are in the like dilemma? How many of you will fly to him in similar destitution? Driven before the tempest, catching a glimpse of the lighthouse, you cry out:—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,

Let me to thy bosom fly."

Well may we receive Christ joyfully since he works such wonderful changes in us, and so beneficent. He cheers the grievous past. It was all black and threatening with the memory of our provocations. He sprinkles his blood upon it, and now it becomes bright and beaming with mementoes of the loving-kindnesses and tender mercies of the Lord. He illuminates the present. There was nought but gloom and blank despair till he shone as the light of life in our dwelling. Then life and salvation dawn upon us like the dayspring from on high. He disperses the clouds that hung over the future. The outlook was dark and threatening till Jesus came, bright and glorious, and discovered a hereafter. Beyond the black river of death we now discern the gleaming of the spirit-land, and the place of meeting where we shall see his face. Thus, when Jesus comes into the heart, the three realms of the past, the present, and the future, all glow with light. When the sun rises, the hills, and valleys, and rivers, above and beneath, are all sown with orient pearl.

Right joyfully do we receive Christ because he *comes into our hearts with such gracious offices*. He came as a priest to put away sin; who could but be glad? He came as a king; who would not receive such a monarch with sound of trumpets and flaunting of banners? He came to us as a

shepherd; shall not the flock of his pasture be glad of the sight of him? He came as a dear and tender friend; does not his sweet sympathy excite any joy? Think, too, of the yet more endearing relationship in which he came. He came as a husband, and our souls are married unto him. Blessed bridegroom! Thou adorable Saviour! Thou hast engrossed our heart and won our love. Does not the bride rejoice when the husband comes home? Is there not gladness in her heart when the nuptial day approaches? Oh! well, well might we welcome Christ when he comes, dressed in such robes and wearing such offices as these! When he came, he came with such wondrous blessings—pardon and peace, justification and acceptance, sanctification and honour, wisdom and righteousness—all these; and now he proclaims himself to be our protector; his paths drop fatness; he maketh rich and addeth no sorrow; such as find him find in him such wealth of goodness—deep, mysterious, unknown—as far exceeds all earthly pleasure, all worldly fortune. Surely on the lowest ground we might afford him the loftiest welcome. Even churlish Laban received Eliezer with courtesy when he saw the presents he brought—the bracelets, and the earrings, and the jewels, and should not we receive Jesus when we mark those costly gifts in his hand, the purchase of his own blood, which he freely gives to those who receive him?

And shall we not receive him joyfully *because he comes in such a blessed spirit*? He upbraideth not. He was all gentleness, meekness, grace, when here below; though of divine pedigree, the Only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Should we not then receive him with sound of the trumpet, with the psalter and harp, yea, and with joy of heart unspeakable? Let me add that the better we know him the more joyfully we should receive him for his own sake. Oh! I could stand here and weep to think that I do not speak better of my Lord and Master. Truly I know more of his grace and goodness than I should ever be able to tell. I trust you can say the same. It is one thing to know the sweetness of his savour, and quite another thing to have to tell that savour to others. There is no exaggeration in the language of the spouse when she says, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." Such as receive him with their hearts will find that the most rapturous expressions that saints have ever used do not exceed, but fall infinitely short of the delight, the heavenly joys, which he brings into the soul. If one might choose a heaven upon earth, it would be to rest for ever in quiet meditation upon the beauties of his person, the perfection of his character, the power of his blood, the prevalence of his plea, the glory of his resurrection, the majesty of his Second Advent. Everything about Christ is delightful. There is not a truth he ever teaches but is fragrant with choice perfume. There is not a word he utters but smelleth of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces from which he came. If you have not received Christ, my dear hearer, you have missed the brightest feature of divine revelation. For a foreigner to visit England and never see the Metropolis of London; for a man to have lived in the world without ever seeing the sun; for one to have beheld tables spread with the most sumptuous provisions, but never to have tasted any of them—in any such case there would be little cause for congratulation. So you do not know what life is; you are dead to all its charms; you do not know what light is; you have only dwelt in the shade, or in the twilight at the best, if you have not beheld the Saviour, entertained him, and tasted that he is gracious. You have missed the cream. You have been stopping outside in the farmyard feeding with the swine. You do not know what the fatted calf is, upon which the children feed at the Father's table. You have been a dog, satisfied with the bones, not knowing the fatness and the marrow of true life. But the Christian, dear friends, finds Christ to be so inconceivably precious, such a fountain of delight, such a river of mercy, that when he receives him, he receives him joyfully, and the longer he knows him the

more joyful he is to think that he ever received him at all. And now, such being the reasons why some receive Christ joyfully, let us ask:—

III. How Do They Show It? In What Ways and by What Means Do They Express Their Joy?

I have known some who have taken very strange ways of showing their joy. They have been inclined to stand up and shout in the very place where they found the Saviour, while others could only sit still and water the floor with their tears, feeling as if for the next week or two they did not want to look anybody in the face, but just in solemn silence of the mind to revel in the company of their adorable Lord. We do not wonder that some people show a little strange enthusiasm when they first come to know Christ. It is no marvel. When a man has been in prison for months he may well be a little demonstrative in his joy on obtaining his liberty; so when a soul has been under the burden of sin, and bound with its galling chain, he may well leap, as Bunyan tells us his pilgrim did, when the burden was loosed off him and rolled away.

Yet there are other and better ways of expressing satisfaction and pleasure than these which have much of the flesh, much of the natural disposition about them. Though not to be condemned, still they are not to be commended. A better way of showing that you have received Christ joyfully is by *turning out his enemies*. When you receive Christ in at the front door, you must not keep the devil in the back parlour. Every traitor sin must be ejected when the Great King takes up his residence in your heart. The thorough cleansing of your house from every defilement is the smallest tribute we can expect you to pay in deference to your royal guest. The soul that receives Christ joyfully sighs and groans because it cannot make, as it would, a clean sweep of its sin. I know you do not love Christ if you cling to your sins; if you love Christ heartily, you will put away your iniquities:—

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

And when you do receive Christ joyfully, *you will be eager to obey his instructions*. Like Zaccheus, you will ask, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Christ was going to Zaccheus's house; and you know what people say when they have a guest they are anxious to please. They entreat him thus, "Now just do as you like; consider yourself at home; whatever you want, ask for; only tell us what we can do to make you happy, and we shall be glad to do it." This is how every cheerful holy soul dealeth with Christ. He says, "Lord, tell us what thou wouldst have me to do; only let me know thy will; tell me by thy Word, by thy minister, by thy Holy Spirit; work in my own heart personally; teach me thy way, and oh! my God, my heart shall be glad to conform to thy wishes." Have you all done this? Have you been obedient to all the Saviour's commands, or have you sought to observe them? If you have, this should be an evidence of your receiving him joyfully.

Another proof of our joy in receiving Christ is *receiving his people*. This, in more ways than one, he has made the test of attachment to himself. "Love one another." "Feed my lambs." "If ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me". Just as Laban said when he took in Eliezer, "There is room for thee, and room for the camels," so let there be room in our hearts for Jesus. There will be room for some of these poor troubled ones, these burdened saints. They may not always be pleasant company, but we shall be willing to receive them, and to join with them, because of their Master. Now, dear friend, if you are a Christian, and have received Christ, unite yourselves with his people; make a profession of your faith; come out and join the people of God, and do not be ashamed with them to suffer the reproach of Christ.

And if you have received Christ joyfully, *you will love his cross*. I mean not only the cross which he had to carry, but the cross which you now have to carry for him. You will count it a great privilege to suffer reproach for his sake. You will love the cross. "No cross no crown," is an ancient motto; but it is just as true today as it was a thousand years ago. The faith that Moses illustrated you will follow, counting the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. If you receive the Master in good part, you will say, "Come in, my Master; come in, and bring thy cross, too, and I will bear it cheerfully, for thy sake."

Moreover, you will prove the grateful welcome you give him by *wishing that other people may receive him joyfully too*. I cannot believe thou knowest my Master if thou doest not wish to make him known. Were you cured of some sad disease, and met with a sufferer as bad as you once were, your tongue would be quick to tell him of the medicine that can cure him. And surely, if you have been saved from the damning power of sin by Christ, you will want to be telling it to the sons of men that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there. Perhaps you cannot preach. Possibly not half a dozen people might be edified were you to try. But you can talk to a neighbour. You can speak with your children. I was pleased today, in reading the life of John Wesley's mother, to notice how she set apart Monday to speak to one of her daughters; Tuesday to speak to another; Wednesday to speak, as she says, "to Jack," meaning John Wesley; and Thursday to speak to Charles; so that they each had a day, and there was an hour each day given to speak to each child about the affairs of the soul. That is the way to win the children for God. Depend upon it, reader, the blessing of God, the Holy Spirit, if we experimentally know the joy of religion ourselves, will be the means of much good to others, if we make it a point to "tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour we have found."

May the Lord, in his mercy, call you as he called Zaccheus. May many of you receive him joyfully as Zaccheus did. Seek him, and he shall be found of you. Trust him; he will not deceive you. Cast your soul upon him; he will be as good as his Word. Mark his promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Faithful is he that gives you this grateful encouragement. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ now, and through countless ages you will look back upon this fleeting hour with joy unspeakable, perennial—with gratitude that eternity cannot exhaust. Amen.

Encouragement for the Depressed

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

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"For who hath despised the day of small things?"—Zechariah 4:10.

ZECHARIAH WAS ENGAGED in the building of the temple. When its foundations were laid, it struck everybody as being a very small edifice compared with the former glorious structure of Solomon. The friends of the enterprise lamented that it should be so small; the foes of it rejoiced and uttered strong expressions of contempt. Both friends and foes doubted whether, even on that small scale, the structure would ever be completed. They might lay the foundations, and they might rear the walls a little way, but they were too feeble a folk, possessed of too little riches and too little strength, to carry out the enterprise. It was the day of small things. Friends trembled; foes jeered. But the prophet rebuked them both—rebuked the unbelief of friends, and the contempt of enemies, by this question, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" and by a subsequent prophecy which removed the fear.

Now we shall use this question at this time for the comfort of two sorts of people—first, *for weak believers*, and secondly, *for feeble workers*. Our object shall be the strengthening of the hands that hang down, and the confirming of the feeble knees. We will begin, first of all, with:—

I. WEAK BELIEVERS

Let us describe them. It is with them a day of small things. Probably you have only been lately brought into the family of God. A few months ago you were a stranger to the divine life, and to the things of God. You have been born again, and you have the weakness of the infant. You are not strong yet, as you will be when you have grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is the early day with you, and it is also the day of small things. Now your *knowledge is small*. My dear brother, you have not been a Bible student long; thank God that you know yourself a sinner, and Christ your Saviour. That is precious knowledge; but you feel now what you once would not have confessed—your own ignorance of the things of God. Especially do the deep things of God trouble you. There are some doctrines that are very simple to other believers that appear to be mysterious, and even to be depressing to you. They are high—you cannot attain to them. They are to you what hard nuts would be to children, whose teeth have not yet appeared. Well, be not at all alarmed about this. All the men in God's family have once been children too. There are some that seem to be born with knowledge—Christians that come to a height in Christ very rapidly. But these are only here and there. Israel did not produce a Samson every day. Most have to go through a long period of spiritual infancy and youth. And, alas! There are but few in the Church, even now, who might be called fathers there. Do not marvel, therefore, if you are somewhat small in your knowledge. Your *discernment, too, is small*. It is possible that anybody with a fluent tongue would lead you into error. You have, however, discernment, if you are a child

of God, sufficient to be kept from deadly errors, for though there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, yet the elect cannot be deceived, for, the life of God being in them, they discern between the precious and the vile—they choose not the things of the world, but they follow after the things of God. Your discernment, however, seeming so small, need not afflict you. It is by reason of use, when the senses are exercised, that we fully discern between all that is good and all that is evil. Thank God for a little discernment—though you see men as trees walking, and your eyes are only half opened. A little light is better than none at all. Not long since you were in total darkness. Now if there be a glimmer, be thankful, for remember where a glimmer can enter the full noontide can come, yea, and shall come in due season. Therefore, despise not the time of small discernment. Of course, you, my dear brother or sister, have *small experience*. I trust you will not ape experience, and try to talk as if you had the experience of the veteran saints when you are as yet only a raw recruit. You have not yet done business on the great waters. The more fierce temptations of Satan have not assailed you—the wind has been tempered as yet to the shorn lamb; God has not hung heavy weights on slender threads, but hath put a small burden on a weak back. Be thankful that it is so. Thank him for the experience that you have, and do not be desponding because you have not more. It will all come in due time. "Despise not the day of small things." It is always unwise to get down a biography and say, "Oh! I cannot be right, because I have not felt all this good man did." If a child of ten years of age were to take down the diary of his grandfather and were to say, "Because I do not feel my grandfather's weakness, do not require to use his spectacles, or lean upon his staff, therefore I am not one of the same family," it would be very foolish reasoning. Your experience will ripen. As yet it is but natural that it should be green. Wait a while and bless God for what you have.

Probably this, however, does not trouble you so much as one other thing, you have *but small faith*, and, that faith being small, your feelings are very variable. I often hear this from young beginners in the divine life, "I was so happy a month ago, but I have lost that happiness now." Perhaps tomorrow, after they have been at the house of God, they will be as cheerful as possible, but the next day their joy is gone. Beware, my dear Christian friends, of living by feeling. John Bunyan puts down Mr. Live-by-feeling as one of the worst enemies of the town of Mansoul. I think he said he was hanged. I am afraid he, somehow or other, escaped from the executioner, for I very commonly meet him; and there is no villain that hates the souls of men and causes more sorrow to the people of God than this Mr. Live-by-feeling. He that lives by feeling will be happy today, and unhappy tomorrow; and if our salvation depended upon our feelings, we should be lost one day and saved another, for they are as fickle as the weather, and go up and down like a barometer. We live by faith, and if that faith be weak, bless God that weak faith is faith, and that weak faith is true faith. If thou believest in Christ Jesus, though thy faith be as a grain of mustard seed, it will save thee, and it will, by-and-bye, grow into something stronger. A diamond is a diamond, and the smallest scrap of it is of the same nature as the Koh-i-noor, and he that hath but little faith hath faith for all that; and it is not great faith that is essential to salvation, but faith that links the soul to Christ; and that soul is, therefore, saved. Instead of mourning so much that thy faith is not strong, bless God that thou hast any faith at all, for if he sees that thou despisest the faith he has given thee, it may be long before he gives thee more. Prize that little, and when he sees that thou art so glad and thankful for that little, then will he multiply it and increase it, and thy faith shall mount even to the full assurance of faith.

I think I hear you also add to all this the complaint that your *other graces seem to be small too*. "Oh," say you, "my patience is so little. If I have a little pain I begin to cry out. I was in hopes I should be able to bear it without murmuring. My courage is so little: the blush is on my cheek if anybody asks me about Christ—I think I could hardly confess him before half a dozen, much less before the world. I am very weak indeed." Ah! I don't wonder. I have known some who have been strong by reason of years, and have still been lacking in that virtue. But where faith is weak, of course, the rest will be weak. A plant that has a weak root will naturally have a weak stem and then will have but weak fruit. Your weakness of faith sends a weakness through the whole. But for all this, though you are to seek for more faith, and consequently for more grace—for stronger graces, yet do not despise what graces you have. Thank God for them, and pray that the few clusters that are now upon you, may be multiplied a thousand-fold to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus I have tried to describe those who are passing through the day of small things.

But the text says, "*Who hath despised the day of small things?*" Well, some have, but there is a great comfort in this—*God the Father has not*. He has looked upon you—you with little grace, and little love, and little faith, and he has not despised you. No, God is always near the feeble saint. If I saw a young man crossing a common alone, I should not be at all astonished, and I should not look round for his father. But I saw today, as I went home, a very tiny little tot right out on the Common—a pretty little girl, and I thought, "The father or mother are near somewhere." And truly there was the father behind a tree, whom I had not seen. I was as good as sure that the little thing was not there all alone. And when I see a little weak child of God, I feel sure that God the Father is near, watching with wakeful eye, and tending with gracious care the feebleness of his new-born child. He does not despise you if you are resting on his promise. The humble and contrite have a word all to themselves in Scripture, that these he will not despise.

It is another sweet and consoling thought that *God the Son does not despise* the day of small things. Jesus Christ does not, for you remember this word, "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom." We put that which we most prize nearest our heart, and this is what Jesus does. Some of us, perhaps, have outgrown the state in which we were lambs, but to ride in that heavenly carriage of the Saviour's bosom—we might well be content to go back and be lambs again. He does not despise the day of small things.

And it is equally consolatory to reflect that *the Holy Spirit does not despise* the day of small things, for he it is who, having planted in the heart the grain of mustard seed, watches over it till it becomes a tree. He it is who, having seen the new-born child of grace, doth nurse, and feed, and tend it until it comes to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The blessed Godhead despises not the weak believer. O weak believer, be consoled by this.

Who is it, then, that may despise the day of small things? *Perhaps Satan has* told you and whispered in your ear that such little grace as yours is not worth having, that such an insignificant plant as you are will surely be rooted up. Now let me tell you that Satan is a liar, for he himself does not despise the day of small things; and I am sure of that, because he always makes a dead set upon those who are just coming to Christ. As soon as ever he sees that the soul is a little wounded by conviction, as soon as ever he discovers that a heart begins to pray, he will assault it with fiercer temptations than ever. I have known him try to drive such a one to suicide, or to lead him into worse sin than he has ever committed before. He:—

"Trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

He may tell you that the little grace in you is of no account, but he knows right well that it is the handful of corn on the top of the mountain, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon. He knows it is the little grace in the heart that overthrows his kingdom there. "Ah!" say you, "but I have been greatly troubled lately because I have many *friends that despise me*, because though I can hardly say I am a believer, yet I have some desire towards God." What sort of friends are these? Are they worldly friends? Oh! Do not fret about what they say. It would never trouble me if I were an artist, if a blind man were to utter the sharpest criticism on my works. What does he know about it? And when an ungodly person begins to say about your piety that it is deficient and faulty, poor soul, let him say what he will—it need not affect you. "Ah!" say you, "the persons that seem to despise me, and to put me out, and tell me that I am no child of God, are, I believe, Christians." Well then, do two things: first, lay what they say to you in a measure to heart, because it may be if God's children do not see in you the mark of a child, perhaps you are not a child. Let it lead you to examination. Oh! Dear friends, it is very easy to be self-deceived, and God may employ, perhaps, one of his servants to enlighten you upon this, and deliver you from a strong delusion. But, on the other hand, if you really do trust in your Saviour, if you have begun to pray, if you have some love to God, and any Christian treats you harshly as if he thought you a hypocrite, forgive him—bear it. He has made a mistake. He would not do so if he knew you better. Say within yourself, "After all, if my brother does not know me, it is enough if my Father does. If my Father loves me, though my brother gives me the cold shoulder, I will be sorry for it, but it shall not break my heart. I will cling the closer to my Lord because his servants seem shy of me." Why, it is not much wonder, is it, that some Christians should be afraid of some of you converts, for think what you used to be a little while ago? Why, a mother hears her son say he is converted. A month or two ago she knew where he spent his evenings, and what were his habits of sin, and though she hopes it is so, she is afraid lest she should lead him to presumption, and she rejoices with trembling, and, perhaps, tells him more about her trembling than she does about her rejoicing. Why, the saints of old could not think Saul was converted at first. He was to be brought into the church meeting and received—I will suppose the case. I should not wonder before he came, when he saw the elders, one of them would say, "Well, the young man seems to know something of the grace of God: there is certainly a change in him, but it is a remarkable thing that he should wish to join the very people he was persecuting; but, perhaps, it is a mere impulse. It may be, after all, that he will go back to his old companions." Do you wonder they should say so? Because I don't. I am not at all surprised. I am sorry when there are unjust suspicions, I am sorry when a genuine child of God is questioned; but I would not have you lay it much to heart. As I have said before, if your Father knows you, you need not be so broken in heart because your brother does not. Be glad that God does not despise the day of small things. And now let me say to you who are in this state of small things, that I *earnestly trust that you will not yourselves despise the day of small things*. "How can we do that?" say you. Why, *you can do it by desponding*. Why, I think there was a time when you would have been ready to leap for joy, if you had been told that you would have given you a little faith, and now you have got a little faith, instead of rejoicing, you are sighing, and moaning, and mourning. Do not do so. Be thankful for moonlight, and you shall get sunlight: be thankful for sunlight, and you shall get that light of heaven which is as the light of seven days. Do not despond lest you seem to despise the mercy which God has given you. A poor patient that has been very, very lame and weak, and could not rise from his bed, is at last able to walk with a stick. "Well," he says to himself, "I wish I could walk, and run, and leap as other men." Suppose he sits down and frets because he

cannot. His physician might put his hand on his shoulder and say, "My good fellow, why, you ought to be thankful you can stand at all. A little while ago you know you could not stand upright. Be glad for what you have got: don't seem to despise what has been done for you." I say to every Christian here, while you long after strength, don't seem to despise the grace that God has bestowed, but rejoice and bless his name.

You can despise the day of small things, again, *by not seeking after more*. "That is strange," say you. Well, a man who has got a little, and does not want more—it looks as if he despised the little. He who has a little light, and does not ask for more light, does not care for light at all. You that have a little faith, and do not want more faith, do not value faith at all—you are despising it. On the one hand, do not despond because you have the day of small things, but in the next place, *do not stand still and be satisfied with what you have*; but prove your value of the little by earnestly seeking after more grace. Do not despise the grace that God has given you, but bless God for it: and do this in the presence of his people. If you hold your tongue about your grace, and never let anyone know, surely it must be because you do not think it is worth saying anything about. Tell your brethren, tell your sisters, and they of the Lord's household, that the Lord hath done gracious things for you; and then it will be seen that you do not despise his grace.

And now let us run over a thought or two about these small things in weak believers. Be it remembered that little faith is saving faith, and that the day of small things is a day of safe things. Be it remembered that it is natural that living things should begin small. The man is first a babe. The daylight is first of all twilight. It is by little and by little that we come unto the stature of men in Christ Jesus. The day of small things is not only natural, but promising. Small things are living things. Let them alone, and they grow. The day of small things has its beauty and its excellence. I have known some who in after years would have liked to have gone back to their first days. Oh! well do some of us remember when we would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon. We had not much knowledge, but oh! how we longed to know. We stood in the aisles then, and we never got tired. Now soft seats we need, and very comfortable places, and the atmosphere must neither be too hot nor too cold. We are getting dainty now perhaps; but in those first young days of spiritual life, what appetites we had for divine truth, and what zeal, what sacred fire was in our heart! True, some of it was wild fire, and, perhaps, the energy of the flesh mingled with the power of the spirit, but, for all that, God remembers the love of our espousals, and so do we remember it too. The mother loves her grown-up son, but sometimes she thinks she does not love him as she did when she could cuddle him in her arms. Oh! the beauty of a little child! Oh! the beauty of a lamb in the faith! I daresay, the farmer and the butcher like the sheep better than the lambs, but the lambs are best to look at, at any rate; and the rosebud—there is a charm about it that there is not in the full-blown rose. And so in the day of small things there is a special excellence that we ought not to despise. Besides, small as grace may be in the heart, it is divine—it is a spark from the ever-blazing sun. He is a partaker of the divine nature who has even a little living faith in Christ. And being divine, it is immortal. Not all the devils in hell could quench the feeblest spark of grace that ever dropped into the heart of man. If God has given thee faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will defy all earth and hell, all time and eternity, ever to destroy it. So there is much reason why we should not despise the day of small things.

One word and I leave this point. You Christians, don't despise anybody, but specially do not despise any in whom you see even a little love to Christ. But do more—look after them, look after the little ones. I think I have heard of a shepherd who had a remarkably fine flock of sheep, and he

had a secret about them. He was often asked how it was that his flocks seemed so much to excel all others. At last he told the secret—"I give my principal attention to the lambs." Now you elders of the church, and you my matronly sisters, you that know the Lord, and have known him for years, look up the lambs, search them out, and take a special care of them; and if they are well nurtured in their early days they will get a strength of spiritual constitution that will make them the joy of the Good Shepherd during the rest of their days. Now I leave that point. In the second place, I said that I would address a word or two to:—

II. FEEBLE WORKERS

Thank God, there are many workers here tonight, and maybe they will put themselves down as feeble. May the words I utter be an encouragement to them, and to feeble workers collectively. When a church begins, it is usually small; and the day of small things is a time of considerable anxiety and fear. I may be addressing some who are members of a newly-organised church. Dear brethren, do not despise the day of small things. Rest assured that God does not save by numbers, and that results are not in the spiritual kingdom in proportion to numbers. I have been reading lately with considerable care the life of John Wesley by two or three different authors in order to get as well as I could a fair idea of the good man; but one thing I have noticed—that the beginnings of the work which has become so wonderfully large were very small indeed. Mr. Wesley and his first brethren were not rich people. Nearly all that joined him were poor. Here and there, there was a person of some standing, but the Methodists were the poor of the land. And his first preachers were not men of education. One or two were so, but the most were good outdoor preachers—head preachers, magnificent preachers as God made them by his Spirit; but they were not men who had had the benefit of college training, or who were remarkable for ability. The Methodists had neither money nor eminent men at first, and their numbers were very few. During the whole life of that good man, which was protracted for so many years, the denomination did not attain any very remarkable size. They were few, and apparently feeble; but Methodism was never so glorious as it was at first, and there never were so many conversions, I believe, as in those early days. Now I speak sorrowfully. It is a great denomination. It abounds in wealth: I am glad it does. It has mighty orators: I rejoice it has. But it has no increase, no conversion. This year and other years it remains stationary. I do not say this because that is an exceptional denomination, for almost all others have the same tale. Year by year as the statistics come in, it is just this. "No increase—hardly hold our ground." I use that as an illustration here. This church will get in precisely the same condition if we do not look out—just the same state. When we have not the means we get the blessing, and when we seem to have the might and power, then the blessing does not come. Oh! may God send us poverty; may God send us lack of means, and take away our power of speech if it must be, and help us only to stammer, if we may only thus get the blessing. Oh! I crave to be useful to souls, and all the rest may go where it will. And each church must crave the same. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Instead of despising the day of small things, we ought to be encouraged. It is by the small things that God seems to work, but the great things he does not often use. He won't have Gideon's great host—let them go to their homes—let the mass of them go. Bring them down to the water: pick out only the men that lap, and then there is a very few. You can tell them almost on your fingers' ends—just two or three hundred men. Then Gideon shall go forth against the Midianites; and as the cake of barley bread smote the tent, and it lay along, so the sound of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon at the dead of night shall make the host to tremble, and the Lord God shall get to himself the victory. Never mind your feebleness, brethren, your

fewness, your poverty, your want of ability. Throw your souls into God's cause, pray mightily, lay hold on the gates of heaven, stir heaven and earth, rather than be defeated in winning souls, and you will see results that will astonish you yet. "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

Now take the case of each Christian individually. Every one of us ought to be at work for Christ, but the great mass of us cannot do great things. Don't despise, then, the day of little things. You can only give a penny. Now then, he that sat over by the treasury did not despise the widow's two mites that made a farthing. Your little thank-offering, if given from your heart, is as acceptable as if it had been a hundred times as much. Don't, therefore, neglect to do the little. Don't despise the day of small things. You can only give away a tract in the street. Don't say, "I won't do that." Souls have been saved by the distribution of tracts and sermons. Scatter them, scatter them—they will be good seed. You know not where they may fall. You can only write a letter to a friend sometimes about Christ. Don't neglect to do it: write one tomorrow. Remember a playmate of yours; you may take liberties with him about his soul from your intimacy with him. Write to him about his state before God, and urge him to seek the Saviour. Who knows?—a sermon may miss him, but a letter from the well-known school companion will reach his heart. Mother, it is only two or three little children at home that you have an influence over. Despise not the day of small things. Take them tomorrow; put your arms around their necks as they kneel by you—pray, "God bless my boys and girls, and save them"—tell them of Christ now. Oh! How well can mothers preach to children! I can never forget my mother's teaching. On the Sunday night, when we were at home, she would have us round the table and explain the Scriptures as we read, and then pray; and one night she left an impression upon my mind that never will be erased, when she said, "I have told you, my dear children, the way of salvation, and if you perish you will perish justly. I shall have to say 'Amen' to your condemnation if you are condemned"; and I could not bear that. Anybody else might say "Amen," but not my mother. Oh! You don't know—you that have to deal with children—what you may do. Despise not these little opportunities. Put a word in edgeways for Christ—you that go about in trains, you that go into workshops and factories. If Christians were men who were all true to their colours, I think we should soon see a great change come over our great establishments. Speak up for Jesus—be not ashamed of him, and because you can say but little, don't refuse, therefore, to say that, but rather say it over twenty times, and so make the little into much. Again, and again, and again, repeat the feeble stroke, and there shall come to be as much result from it as from one tremendous blow. God accepts your little works if they are done in faith in his dear Son. God will give success to your little works: God will educate you by your little works to do greater works; and your little works may call out others who shall do greater works by far than ever you shall be able to accomplish. Evangelists, go on preaching at the street corner—you that visit the low lodging-houses, go on. Get into the room and talk of Jesus Christ there as you have done. You that go into the country towns on the Sabbath and speak on the village-greens of Christ, go on with it. I am glad to see you, but I am glad to miss you when I know you are about the Master's work. We don't want to keep the salt in the box: let it be rubbed into the putrid mass to stay the putrefaction. We don't want the seed forever in the corn-bin: let it be scattered and it will give us more. Oh! brethren and sisters, wake up if any of you are asleep. Don't let an ounce of strength in this church be wasted—not a single grain of ability, either in the way of doing, or praying, or giving, or holy living. Spend and be spent, for who hath despised the day of small things? The Lord encourage weak believers, and the Lord accept the efforts of feeble workers, and send to both his richest benediction for Christ's sake. Amen.

Sincere Seekers Assured Finders

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

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"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee."—1 Chron. 28:9.

ALTHOUGH THIS WAS addressed to Solomon, it may, without any violence to truth, be addressed tonight to every unconverted person here present, for there are a great many texts of Scripture of a similar import which apply to all ungodly ones, such, for instance, as that, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." And that other, "He that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." I should like to go round, if it were possible, and say to every hearer here, as I put my hand upon his shoulder, "If thou seek thy God, he will be found of thee"—even of thee. May I ask you to take it as spoken to each individual—not to your neighbours, not to one who is better or worse than yourselves, but to you? You, young man, and you of riper years, you of all ages, classes and sexes, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." I know that those who think at all about religion, and do not understand it, are very apt to conceive that there is something wonderfully mysterious about it. That a man should follow it, and may perhaps attain the blessing of it towards the end of life, or on a dying bed, though some conceive that then nobody is quite sure that he is saved, unless it is some extraordinarily good man. Oh! is not this strange, that with a book so plain as this, and with a gospel preached by so many in these days, yet the mass of mankind are in a cloud and a fog about the blessed revelation of God? Jesus Christ is salvation. He is to be had—he is to be had now. You may know you have him. You may be now saved—completely saved, and live in the full enjoyment of that knowledge. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." The notion is that there are a great many very mysterious preliminaries, a great deal to do, and a great deal to be, and all quite beyond our power. It is not so, but seek him. We will tell you what that means, and he that seeks him finds him. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." It has been supposed that we should want a good deal of help in seeking after salvation. Certain persons who step in to be absolutely necessary priests between us and God. A great delusion, but there be thousands who believe it and who fancy that God won't hear them if they pray, except they have some respect for these human mediators. Away with the whole, away with any pretence for anyone to stand between the soul and God, save Jesus Christ. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Though thou bring no other man with thee, but come empty-handed as thou art to God here, without paraphernalia, or altar, or sacrifice of the Mass, he will be found of thee. Take the text in its simplicity and sublimity. It is just this: that if any heart really seeks God in his way, it shall find him; if any man really wants mercy from God and seeks it as God tells him to seek it, he shall have it. Any man of woman born, be he who he may, if he comes to God in the way laid down, and sincerely asks for salvation, that salvation he shall surely have. The matter is simple enough; our pride alone obscures it. The way to heaven is so plain that

"a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein." We do but muddle it because we dislike it; we do but add this and that and the other to it because, like Naaman, the Syrian, we want to do some great thing, and we are not content to take the prophetic word, "Wash and be clean." I aim at nothing tonight, therefore, but that some here present may be brought to see the way of salvation, and may be led to run in it. Oh! may God grant that, out of this company, there may be some at least who will be willing to seek and to find. While we shall cast the net, may the Master grant that some may be taken in it to their own eternal welfare. We shall try to do three things, four mayhap; first, to notice *that there is a promise here explained; we will then give directions; thirdly, we will answer objections;* and, if time serves us, we will *offer a stimulant* to the pursuit of this. First, then, there is:—

I. A PROMISE TO BE EXPLAINED.

"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." I have almost completed my explanation already. We have lost our God by the Fall—by our own sin. We have alienated ourselves from him, but our case is not hopeless. Since Jesus Christ has come into the world, and given the gospel, and provided an atonement. It is a certainty that, if we desire the Lord and seek him, he will be found of us. Now he has told us the way in which to seek. It is by coming to him as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, and trusting our souls with Jesus. If we do this, we have found God, and we are saved. The sum and substance of the promise is this: any soul that, by prayer, seeks God, desires salvation through Jesus, through faith in Jesus—such a soul shall be heard, shall get the blessing it desires, shall find its God. You shall not pray in vain. Your tears, and cries, and longings shall be heard. Christ shall be revealed to you, and, through your believing in Christ, you shall certainly be saved. There is not, and never will be, in hell, a single person who dare say that he sought the Lord through Christ and could not find him. There is not living a man who dares say that, or if he did, his own conscience would belie him. They that seek him may not find at once, but they shall ultimately. Delays from God are no denials. I will repeat what I said. There is not, and there never shall be, in the pit of hell a soul that shall dare to say, "I earnestly sought mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and did not find it." They who never found mercy in Christ never sought it, or never sought it aright, and earnestly; but the seeker will become a finder. Seeking in God's way, heartily and earnestly, God will not reject him. "How know you who I may be?" saith one; "you speak at large of all." I do not know who you may be, but I do know this, that if "the wicked forsakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turns unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon" him. I know this also, concerning you, my friend, that "whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," and be you who you may, I am bidden to preach this gospel to every *creature* under heaven, and surely you are a *creature*. And what is this gospel? Why, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' Therefore, however peculiar your case or circumstances, there stands the one grand, glorious promise. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." The only "if" there is, is with thee; if thou seek him—no "if" about his being found of thee. Oh! shall it be an "if"? Shall it be an "if"? The Lord convert that "if" into a certainty, and may you be constrained to say tonight, "I will seek him, and I will never cease my seeking, until in my case the promise is true, and I have found him of whom it was written, 'If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.'" I have thus explained the text, though it scarcely needed it. Now let me give:—

II. SOME DIRECTIONS.

What is it to seek the Lord? To seek the Lord is, in one word, simply this: the readiest way to seek him is *to believe that Jesus is the Christ*, and to trust him; that Jesus, the Saviour, is God's

anointed, and to trust him as God's anointed to save your soul. You shall find peace the moment you do that. "But," saith one, "I want to get this faith you speak of—this trust which you explain." Well then, let me help you somewhat. How do we get faith in anything? Why, surely by trying to know what it is. It would be very idle for me to stand here and say to you, "Believe, believe, believe"; but not tell you what to believe—what is to be believed. A man cannot command his faith about a something that he knows nothing of; therefore, let me say to every soul that is seeking mercy, "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace." "Study the Scriptures." Try to understand what was the result of what he did. Get a clear view of his person and his work, and this will materially help you to believe.

Next to that, remember *faith cometh by hearing*. Frequent, therefore, the hearing of the Word, and be careful that thou seek not after the gaudy words of man's eloquence, which may feed thy pride and vanity, and tickle thine ear, but can never save thy soul. Seek a Christ-exalting ministry. Desire to be where thy soul will be handled with fidelity, and where Christ will be held up before thee with simplicity and earnestness, for the hearing that God blesses is not the hearing of every man that speaketh, but the hearing of the Word of God that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"; "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief." Listen with all thine ears when Christ is being talked of, and pray whilst thou art hearing, and say, "Lord, bless that message to me." Open thy soul to the message; pray the Lord to open it, that thou mayest be like Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things which were spoken to her by Paul. Then when you think you understand the gospel, and have heard it so as to pretty plainly see it, if there should remain some difficulties which do not seem to be opened up to you by the ministry, *seek some earnest Christian*, to whom you may unbosom your soul on such points. You shall find that what is very difficult to you will be very easy to some believers; and they will be able, in God's hands, to be the means of removing the scales from your eyes. It was so with Paul when he was converted—he must go to Ananias, and when Ananias should come in, then should the scales fall from Paul's eyes. Meanwhile, take care to *be constantly in prayer*. Cry unto God to show thee the way; ask him to do it, for, remember, he can do for thee what you canst never do for thyself. Understand that thou canst not save thyself—that thou hast no right to be saved—that if saved, it will be his sovereign grace; therefore, cry humbly, but oh! note the value of the blessing thou needest, and, therefore, pray earnestly. Do not let him go, except he bless thee. Rob thyself of sleep, sinner, rather than rob thy soul of Christ. Search the Word again and again, and turn each promise into a prayer, and if thou canst only get a hold on the edge of a promise, go with it to the mercy-seat and plead it. Be thankful for the smallest degree of hope; trust that the first beams of day will soon expand and deepen into dawn, and into noonday. Grieve not the Holy Spirit by going on with thy old sin. Part with thy old companions; seek the house of God; seek the people of God; *addict thyself to holy company and holy pursuits*; and although I would not put all this together in the place of my first word, which was, "Believe now—believe now in Christ," yet if there be difficulties in the way, they will yield under such an earnest mode of seeking as I have tried to point out to you. Oh! if a soul be resolved, "I will not perish if mercy is to be had; I will stoop to anything; I will have Christ for nothing; I will be nothing; I will let him do what he wills with me, if I may but be saved; I will make no terms and no conditions, only let my sins be blotted out:—my friend, thou art already not far from the kingdom of God. Already grace is at work in thy soul, and "if thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Continue in that blessed search. Let nothing take thee off from it; it is thy life; thy soul hangs on it; heaven and hell tremble in the balance for thee; give thy heart

to God, thy faith to Christ, thy whole soul to the purpose of seeking thy salvation, and say, "It is my only business, with holy faith and holy fear, to make my calling and election sure while here I stand upon this narrow neck of land, betwixt the two unbounded seas." I have thus given you some directions, but I am not going to linger over them, but pass on to:—

III. ANSWER A FEW OBJECTIONS.

I cannot anticipate them all, and objection-hunting from sinners is an endless work, for when you have destroyed fifty objections, they will be ready with fifty more. But still there are a few common ones; and one is, "*I am too guilty*. Why should I seek, when it is impossible I should ever be pardoned?" Oh! if thy soul rested with a man like thyself, or even with an angel, great sinner, I would not encourage thee; but who is the Saviour? Bethink thee for a little. He is the mighty God. He that made the heavens and stretched them out like a tent to dwell in—he who speaks, and it is done—the everlasting Father—is anything too hard for him? Look to him. He becomes a man, and yields himself up to death. With sufferings that can never be understood or fully described:—

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

Is anything impossible for the Saviour? Oh! conceive not so. The idea that any guilt is too great for Christ to pardon scarcely deserves to be replied to. It is so absurd when you are dealing with the infinite mercy of a Saviour who is God himself. It was said some years ago that the city of Peking in China suffered greatly from a severe climate at one part of the year, and paid much for fuel, and yet underneath it, or close to it, there were large coal mines. And when the Chinese were asked why they did not work them, they said that they were afraid of disturbing the equilibrium of the globe, and perhaps the world might turn over, and the celestial empire, which had always been at the top, might be at the bottom. Nobody thought it worthwhile to answer so absurd a theory; and when any say, "My sins are too great for Christ to pardon," I could almost smile in the same way at a conception so ignorant. What can be too great for the infinite mercy of the eternal God, who took our sins upon Himself upon the cross? Sinner, think not so.

There is another objection far more common, however, which is not put into words, but it means this: "*I am too good to seek Christ*. Why, have I not always been brought up religiously? I am not as those poor sinners are that have been drunkards and the like. I have not any need of seeking him." Oh! soul, if there is one that is least likely to be saved, it is you, for they that go about to establish their own righteousness are the last to submit to the righteousness in Christ Jesus, and verily the publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before some of you, for be ye sure of this, no man shall ever enter heaven by his own works. There is one gate to glory, and but one for queen or beggar, for the best or for the worst, and that is through the blood and righteousness of the one only Redeemer, and if thou hast not this, be thou never so good, thou art utterly undone. Oh! lay aside that thought; thou art neither too good nor too bad, but "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee."

But I hear somebody in the corner saying, "It is no use my thinking of seeking Christ, *I am too poor*." Oh, my dear friend, your mistake, indeed, is a strange one, for did not Jesus say, "To the poor the gospel is preached"? I'll be bound to say you are not poorer than the Saviour himself, for he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head." Dream not this. Gold and silver have no value in his kingdom. The poorest is as wealthy as the wealthiest if he come to Christ.

"Ay, ay," saith another, "but I am *too ignorant*. I scarce can read. Unhappily for me, I was brought up where I got no learning. I can never understand these things." Friend, if thou be not able to read a word in the Book, yet mayest thou read thy title clear to mansions in the skies. Thou needest not have all this learning; it were a good thing for thee if thou had it—serviceable for a thousand purposes, but not needful to the entering of that kingdom. If thou knowest thyself as a sinner, and if thou wilt trust Christ as a Saviour, thou shalt be as welcome into the kingdom as doctors who have taken their degree at the Universities, or the wisest men that have ever sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Come and welcome; come and welcome; come and welcome. Let not this keep thee back.

But I have heard one say, "I would fain seek the Lord, but *I have no place to seek him*." "What mean you?" "I have no chamber into which I can go and pray alone." That is a sad deprivation, I grant you, but do not think for a moment that you need any special place in which to seek the Lord. I remember a sailor who used to be much in prayer, and he was asked where he went to pray. "Oh!" said he, "I have been many a time alone with Christ up on the mast." Why not? It is as good an oratory under conviction of sin, to make use of an old coach that was in his master's yard. Why not? Why not? I know one whose prayer-place used to be a saw-pit, and another a hay-loft. What matter?

"Where'er we seek him, he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

Every place is consecrated where there is a true heart. In that seat you may seek and find him. Standing there, up in that corner of the gallery, your soul may find her God. In Cheapside, walking in the busiest street, or at the plough-tail amidst the field, let thy soul but cry, "Jesus, pity a sinner"—let thy heart trust in that Jesus—no place is wanted—any place sufficeth. Raise not that excuse.

"*I have not the time*," says another. Not the time! What time, pray, does it require? But if it did require it, oh! man, art thou mad to say, "I have no time"? Ye have time enough to dress your body; you stay for that other pin, and that other ribbon, and that adornment of your person. Not time to put on the robe of righteousness! You have time to feed your bodies, to sit down to your meals. Not time to eat the bread of heaven! Time to cast up your accounts to see how your business stands, and not time to see to your soul's affairs! Oh! sirs, be ashamed to make such an excuse. I charge you, give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you are saved. A man wakes up in the night, and finds his house is on fire. There is a noise in the street. The fireman is calling to him. The ladder is at the window. "I have not time," says he, "to go down the ladder and escape. I have little enough time for rest, and I must have my sleep while I can." The man is mad, sir, and so is every man who says, "I have not time to seek my God." Perhaps, however, you speak the truth, for ere the next word leaves my lips you may fall down a corpse. God sometimes makes our base excuses turn into solemn truth. Oh! while you have time, use it. "Escape for your life; look not behind thee"; stay not, but hasten till you find the Saviour, and never think of resting till Christ is yours.

Another reason that some bring is one which occurs to them as if it were very satisfactory, and that is, "*I cannot*. No man can come, except he be drawn, and I cannot." Yes, but you may put a truth into such a shape that it is a lie. Will you let me put that into the right shape? Every time when a sinner cannot, the real reason is that he will not. All the cannots in the Bible about spiritual inability are tantamount to will nots. But when you say, "I cannot repent," you mean, "I will not—I will not

seek, I will not believe." Now put it honestly to your own soul, for that is what you mean, for if you would you could. If the will were conquered, the power would be sure to come with it, but the first difficulty is, "You will not"; and this is it, you will not seek eternal life; you will not escape from hell; you will not have heaven; you will not be reconciled to God; you will not come into Christ that you might have Christ. You make it as an objection, but I charge it upon you as a crime, a crime which aggravates all the rest, and is in itself a greater crime, perhaps, than all the rest put together. Ye will not come. "Do you want to come?" "Yes, but there is much I cannot do." "Aye! but there is means provided to help you." God the Holy Spirit helps you, yea, works mightily in you. Have you never heard of that negro servant who was sent by his master on an errand? He did not particularly like to go there. He was sent with a letter. He was back in a short time; and his master said, "Sam, you have not gone with that letter." "No, massa." "Why not?" "Massa couldn't expect Sam to do impossibilities." "What impossibilities, sir?" "I went on as far as I could massa—came to river—couldn't swim across river—very wide river—couldn't swim across it." "But there is a ferry-boat." "Ferry-boat t'other side, massa—ferry-boat t'other side." "Did you call to the ferry-boat, sir?" "No, massa; didn't." "Oh! you rascal," said he; "That is no excuse at all. Why didn't you call for the ferry-boat? Why didn't you call for it?" Now if that negro had only just said, "Boat, ahoy there!" the ferry-boat would have come to him, and all would have been well. It was an idle thing to say, "I cannot." It was true, but it was false. So when I come to a point where there is something in the matter of my being saved which I cannot do, yet if I pray the Holy Spirit to work in me that I cannot work in myself, he will do it. Jesus Christ will give me "true belief and true repentance—every grace that brings me nigh." I have only to ask for all that I want, and I shall have it. It is idle for me to say, "I cannot do it." Nobody asked you to. Christ will give it to you; only do stand and call—call mightily, and cry with all your soul until the blessing be come. But now I must close. I want to offer just a few sentences only.

IV. A STIMULANT, to lead you to seek him who will be found of you. And the first is, "*Is it not our duty to God that we should seek him?*" With some persons this reflection may be important. You remember the Countess of Huntingdon, one of the most remarkably gracious women that every lived—a mother in Israel. Her conversion was to a great degree caused by this: she was a blithe and worldly lady of noble rank, excellent and amiable, and all that, but she had no thought of the things of God. She was at a ball, and the amusements of the evening were engrossing all attention, and suddenly the answer to the first question of the assembly's catechism, which she appears to have learnt when she was a child, came forcibly into her mind, "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." She thought to herself, "Why, here am I, a butterfly among a lot of butterflies. All our chief end is to enjoy ourselves, to spend the evening merrily and make ourselves agreeable, and so on." She went away smitten in her soul with that thought, "The end that God made me for I am not answering." Now there are some minds that have sufficient in them to think of such a thing as that, and I shall leave that to fall into some honest, and good ground. Perhaps some young man will say, "Well, after all, I am not serving my Creator as I should." You remember the conversion of Colonel Gardiner. He had lived a wild soldier's life, and he had appointed that very night of his conversion to perpetuate a gross sin. He was waiting an hour before he went to his appointment, and he thought he saw, I think upon the wall, the Saviour on the cross, and underneath the representation of the Crucified he read these words:—

"I have done this for thee; what hast thou done for me?"

He never kept that sinful appointment. He became a soldier of the cross. Oh! I wish that some here might feel something of nobility within them that would make them feel, "It is mean to act so unjustly to God, as to prefer the trivial things of time to the weighty matters of eternity."

The next stimulus I would offer is one of *hope*. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." "Oh!" says one, "if I could find him, I would seek him." When persons go to South Africa, they search for diamonds; but if any man could be assured that he would find a Koh-i-noor, I warrant you he would be one of the hardest workers there. Oh! there are some here tonight that little dream it, that will yet before long be telling to others what eternal love has done for them. They are very ready to sneer at it, perhaps, at this moment. They think it is impossible. The Lord doth great marvels; he bringeth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth them of low degree. Oh! soul, the gate may not open at the first knock to thee, it may be, but it will open. Let me encourage thee. Thou shalt yet rejoice. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, for there is a harp in heaven that no finger shall every play on but yours, and there is a crown there that will fit no head but yours, and a throne on which no one must sit but you; the Lord hath chosen thee, and, therefore, this night he calls thee. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Go thou, poor soul, to Christ, and thou shalt find it so.

But if that doth not move thee, let me give thee another stimulant, and that is the opposite one, of *fear*. Suppose thou shouldst never seek thy Lord; suppose thou shouldst die without a Saviour; what then? "I shall die," sayest thou; "my soul will go before God." What then? Why, it must be condemned, and by-and-bye thy body shall rise up—from the grave shall thy body spring, and thou in body and soul shalt stand before the bar of that great Saviour whom thou dost tonight despise. Beware, for the books will be opened, and thy rejection of Christ written there shall be read before the assembled world; and then when the earth doth rock and reel and the ungodly in their terrors ask for the mountains to cover them—when the stars fall like withered figs from the trees, and all Creation gathers up her skirts to flee away from the face of him that comes in terror, oh! what will you do? What will you do? Expire, you cannot; be extinguished, you must not; live on, you must; and in anguish that shall never abate, in despair that never shall be enlightened with a hope. "Turn ye, turn ye! Why will ye die?" Why will ye reject him? "If ye seek him, he will be found of you." Oh! do seek him; reject him not. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Oh! who shall give me tears? Who shall teach me to speak with pathos? How shall I reach your consciences and stir your hearts? Eternal Spirit, do thou this mighty work, and win this night to thyself. O Jesu, save many a heart by this testimony of thy grace, which again and again we reiterate, "If we seek him—if thou seek him—he will be found of thee." God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

God's Word Not To Be Refused

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."—Hebrews 12:25.

WE ARE NOT a cowering multitude gathered in trembling fear around the smoking mount of Horeb; we have come where the great central figure is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. We have gathered virtually in the outer circle of which the saints above and holy angels make the inner ring. And now tonight Jesus speaks to us in the gospel. So far as his gospel shall be preached by us here, it shall not be the word of man, but the word of God; and although it comes to you through a feeble tongue, yet the truth itself is not feeble, nor is it any less divine than if Christ himself should speak it with his own lips. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." The text contains:—

I. AN EXHORTATION OF A VERY SOLEMN, EARNEST KIND.

It does not say, "*Refuse* not him that speaketh," but "*See* that ye refuse not him that speaketh"—that is, "be very circumspect that by no means, accidental or otherwise, you do refuse the Christ of God, who now in the gospel speaks to you. Be watchful, be earnest, lest even through inadvertence ye should refuse the prophet of the gospel dispensation—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who speaks in the gospel from heaven to the sons of men." It means, "Give earnest heed and careful attention, that by no means, and in no way you refuse him that speaketh." My object tonight will be to help you, beloved friends, especially you that have not laid hold on Christ, who are not the children of Zion, who are joyful in their king—to help you tonight, that you may see to it.

And to go to our point at once, we shall have many things to say, and we shall speak them in brief sentences, hoping that the thoughts as they arise may be accepted by your mind, and may, by God's Spirit, work upon your hearts and conscience. There is great need of this exhortation from many considerations not mentioned in the text. A few of these we will hint at first.

First, *from the excellency of the Word of God itself*. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." That which Jesus speaks concerns your soul, concerns your everlasting destiny; it is God's wisdom; God's way of mercy; God's plan by which you may be saved. If this were a secondary matter, ye need not be so earnest about receiving it, but of all things under heaven, nothing so concerns you as the gospel. See, then, that ye refuse not this precious Word, more precious than gold or rubies—which alone can save your souls.

See to this, again, because *there is an enemy of yours who will do all he can that you may refuse him that speaketh*. Satan is always busiest where the gospel is most earnestly preached. Let the sower scatter handfuls of seeds, and birds will find out the seeds and soon devour them. Let the gospel be preached, and these birds of the air, fiends of hell, will soon by some means try to remove

these truths from your hearts, lest they should take root in your hearts and bring forth fruit unto repentance.

Give earnest heed, again, "that ye refuse not him that speaketh," because *the tendency of your own mind* will be to refuse Christ. Oh! sirs, ye are fallen through your first father, Adam, and the tendencies now of your souls are towards evil, and not towards the right, and when the Lord comes from heaven to you, you will reject him if left to yourselves. Watch, then, I say; see that ye refuse not, stir up your souls, awaken your minds, lest this delirious tendency of sin should make you angry with your best friend, and constrain you to thrust from you that which is your only hope for the hereafter. When a man knows that he has a bad tendency which may injure him, if he be wise he watches against it. So, knowing this, which God's Word tells you, watch, I pray you, lest ye refuse him that speaketh.

Bethink you well, too, that you have need to see to this, because *some of you have rejected Christ long enough already*. He has spoken to you from this pulpit, from other pulpits, from the Bible, from the sick-bed. He spoke to you lately in the funeral knell of your buried friend—many voices, but all with this one note, "Come to me, repent, be saved"; but until now ye have refused "him that speaketh." Will not the time past suffice to have played this mischievous game? Will not the years that have rolled into eternity bear enough witness against you? Must ye add to all this weight by again refusing? Oh! I implore you to see to it that ye do not again "refuse him that speaketh from heaven," for there is not a word of that which he speaks, but what is love to your souls. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came not armed with terrors to work wrath among the sons of men; all was mercy, all was grace, and to those who listen to him he has nothing to speak but tenderness and loving-kindness; your sins shall be forgiven you; the time of your ignorances God will wink at; your transgressions shall be cast into the depths of the sea; for you there shall be happiness on earth, and glory hereafter. Who would not listen when it is good news to be heard? Who would not listen when the best tidings that God himself ever sent forth from the excellent glory is proclaimed by the noblest Ambassador that ever spake to men, namely, God's own Son, Jesus, the once crucified, but now exalted Saviour? For these reasons, then, at the very outset I press upon you this exhortation, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh such precious truth", which the enemy would fain take out of your minds: truth which you yourselves have refused long enough already, and truth which is sweet, and will be exceedingly precious to your souls if you receive it. But now the text gives us:

II. SOME FURTHER REASONS for seeing to it that we do not "refuse him that speaketh." One reason I see in the text is this: see to this because *there are many ways of refusing him that speaketh*, and you may have fallen into one or other of these. See to it; pass over in examination your own state and conduct, lest you may have been refusing Christ. *Some refuse the Saviour by not hearing of him*. In his day there were some that would not listen, and there are such now. The Sabbath days of some of you are not days of listening to the gospel. Where were you this morning? Where are you usually all the Lord's Day long? Remember, you cannot live in London, where the gospel is preached, and be without responsibility. Though you will not come to the house of God to hear of it, yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God hath come nigh unto you. You may close your ears to the invitation of the gospel, but at last you will not be able to close your ear to the denunciation of wrath. If you will not come and hear of Christ on the cross, you must one day see for yourselves Christ on his throne. "See that ye refuse not him that speaks to you from heaven" by refusing to be found where his gospel is proclaimed.

Many come to hear it, and yet refuse him that speaketh, for *they hear listlessly*. In many congregations—I will not judge this—a very large proportion of hearers are listless hearers. It little matters to them what is the subject in hand: they hear the sentences and phrases that come from the speaker's tongue, but these penetrate the ear only, and never reach their heart. Oh! how sad it is that this should be the case with almost all who have heard the gospel long, and who are not converted! They get used to it; no form of alarm could reach them, and perhaps no form of invitation could move them to penitence. The preacher may exhaust his art. They are like the adder that is deaf. He may know how to charm others, but these he cannot charm, charm he never so wisely.

Oh! see ye gospel hearers up yonder, and ye below here, that have been hearing Christ these many years, see that ye refuse not him that day by day during so long a time has spoken to you in the preaching of the gospel out of heaven.

But there are some who do hear, and have a very intelligent idea of what they hear, but who *actually refuse to believe it*. For divers reasons best known to themselves they reject the testimony of the incarnate God. They hear that God the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and he hath borne testimony that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned. They know but they will not believe in him. They will give you first one excuse, and then another, but all the excuses put together will never mitigate the fact that they do not believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, Jesus Christ, and so they "refuse him that speaketh." How many, how many here are by their unbelief refusing the Christ that speaks out of heaven?

Some are even *offended at the gospel*, as in Christ's day. When he came to a tender point in his preaching they went back and walked no more with him. Such there are to be found in our assemblies. The gospel galls them; there is some point that touches their prejudices, something that touches their favourite sin, and they are vexed and irritable. They ought to be angry—angry with their sin—but they are angry with Christ instead. They ought to denounce themselves, and patiently seek mercy, but this is not palatable to them; they would rather denounce the preacher, or denounce the preacher's Master.

Some will even hear the gospel, the very gospel of Christ to catch at words and pervert sentences to make play of the preacher's words which he uses, when they are honestly the best he can find, and, worse still, make play with the sense, too, with the very gospel—and find themes for loose jokes and profane and ribald words, even in the cross. Dicing, like the soldier at the cross-foot, with the blood falling on them, so some make merriment when the blood of Jesus is falling upon them to their condemnation. May it not be so with any here present, but there have been such who have even reviled the Saviour, and had hard words for God in human flesh—could not believe that he bore the guilt of sin, could not admire the love astounding that made him suffer for the guilt of his enemies—could not see anything admirable in the heroic sacrifice of the great Redeemer, but rather turned their heel against their benefactor, and poured forth venomous words on him that loved the sons of men and died saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And some have practically shown they have refused him that speaketh, for they have *begun to persecute his people*; they have maltreated those that sought the glory of God, and anything that had a savour of Christ about it has been despicable and detestable to them.

Oh! dear hearers, I shall ask you, since there are all these ways of refusing Christ, to see to it that ye do not fall into any of them. The grosser forms, perhaps, you would be too shocked at, but don't fall into the others. Do not especially fall into that indifference which has as much of insult to the Saviour almost as blasphemy. Is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you that God should come

from heaven that he might be just in the salvation of men, and that, coming from heaven to be thus just, he should himself suffer that we might not suffer—the Christ of God bleed and die instead of the undeserving, hell-deserving sinners? Shall this be told you—pressed upon you—and will you refuse it? Will you refuse him who speaks himself, in his own sacrifice, and in the blood which he hath carried within the veil continues now to speak—will you, will you refuse him? Pray God you may see to it that in no form you do.

And now passing on, but keeping to the same point, striking the hammer on the head of the same nail, there are many reasons why men refuse Christ; therefore, see that for none of these reasons ye do it. Some refuse him *out of perfect indifference*; the great mass of men have not a thought above their meat and their drink. Like the cock that found the diamond on the dunghill, they turn it over and wish it were a grain of barley. What care they for heaven, or the pardon of sin? Their mind does not reach to that. See that ye—that ye, *none of you*, are so sensuous as to "refuse him that speaketh from heaven" for such a reason as this. Some reject him *because of their self-righteousness*: they are good enough. Jesus Christ speaks against them, they say; he does not applaud their righteousness, he ridicules them rather; he tells them that their prayers are long prayers, and their many good works are, after all, a poor ground for reliance." So as the Saviour will not patronize their righteousness, neither will they have to do with him. Oh! say not ye are rich and increased in goods; ye are naked, and poor, and miserable. Say not ye can win heaven by your merits; ye have none; your merits drag you down to hell. Yet many will refuse the Saviour because of the insanity of their self-righteousness.

Some, too, reject him because of *their self-reliant wisdom*. "Why," they say, "this is a very thoughtful age." And everywhere I hear it dinned into my ears, "thoughtful preaching," "thinkings," "intellectual preaching." And what a mass of rottenness before high heaven the whole lot is that is produced by these thinking preachers and these intellectual men! For my part I would rather say to them, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," for one word of God is better than all the thoughts of all the philosophers, and one sentence from the lip of Christ I do esteem to be more precious than the whole Alexandrian library, and the Bodleian also if you will, so much as it comes from man. Nay, it is the thinking of Christ we have to think about; otherwise our thinking may prove our curse. A man, if he is drowning, if he have a rope thrown to him, had better lay hold of it than merely be there thinking about the possibilities of salvation by some other means. While your souls are being lost, sirs, there is better employment for you than merely indulging in rhapsodies and inventions of your own supposed judgment. Take hold of this, the gospel of Jesus revealed of God, lest ye perish, and perish with a vengeance.

Some reject the Saviour from another cause: *they do not like the holiness of Christ's teaching*. They refuse him that speaketh because they think Christ's religion too strict, too precise, cuts off their pleasures, condemns their lusts. Yes, yes, it is so, but to reject Christ for such a reason is certainly to be most unreasonable, for it should be in every man a desire to be delivered from these passions and lusts, and because Christ can deliver us, shall we, therefore, reject him? God forbid that we should be led astray by such a reason.

Some reject him because they have *a fear of the world*. If they were Christians, they would probably be laughed at as Methodistic, Presbyterian, Puritanic, or some other name. And shall we lose our souls to escape the sneers of fools? He is not a man—call him by some other name—he is no man that flings away his soul because he is such a coward that he cannot bear to do and believe the right, and bear the frown of fashion.

There are others who refuse the Saviour *simply out of procrastination*. They have no reason for it, but they hope they shall have a more convenient season. They are young people as yet, or they are not so very old, or if they are old, yet still life will linger a little while, and so still they refuse him that speaketh.

I have not mentioned a worthy reason for refusing him that speaketh, nor do I believe there is a worthy reason. It seems to me that if it be so, that God himself has taken upon himself human form, and has come here to effect our redemption from our sin and misery, there cannot be any reason that will stand a moment's looking at for refusing him that speaketh. It must be my duty and my privilege to hear what it is that God has got to say to me: it must be my duty to lend him all my heart to try and understand what it is that he says, and then to give him all my will to do, or to be whatever he would have me to do or to be.

"But did God thus come?" says one. I always feel that the very declaration is its own proof. No heart could ever have contrived or invented this as a piece of imagination, the love, the story of the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus. If I had no evidence but the mere statement, I think I must accept it, for it wears truth upon its very forefront. Who should conceive it? The offended God comes here to redeem his creatures from their own offence. Since he must in justice punish, he comes to bear the punishment himself, that he may be just and yet be inconceivably gracious! My soul flies into the arms of this revelation; it seems to be the best news my troubled conscience ever had—God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Oh! there cannot be a reasonable motive for rejecting the Saviour, and I, therefore, impress it upon you, since so many unreasonable motives carry men away, see that ye refuse not him that speaketh, and may the Spirit of God grant that you may not be able to refuse. But now coming to the text again, we have:—

III. A VERY HIGH MOTIVE GIVEN for seeing that we refuse not him that speaketh. It is this—because *in refusing him, we shall be despising the highest possible authority*. When Moses spake in God's name, it was no light thing to refuse such an ambassador. Still, Moses was but a man. Though clothed with divine authority, yet he was but a man and a servant of God. But Jesus Christ is God by nature. See that ye refuse not him who is of heavenly origin, who came from heaven, who is clothed with such divine powers, that every word he speaks is virtually spoken from heaven, and who, being now in heaven, speaks through his ever living gospel directly out of the excellent glory. Regard ye this, I pray you, and remember well the parable which Jesus gave. A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, and when the time came that he should receive the fruit he sent a servant, and they stoned him. He sent another, and they beat him. He sent another, and they maltreated him. After he had thus sent many of his servants, and the dressers of the vineyard had incurred his high displeasure by the shameful way in which they had treated the servants, he sent his own son, and he said, "They will reverence my son." It was the highest degree of guilt when they said, "This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." Then they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. You know how the Saviour was treated by the sons of men; but here is the point I aim at; it is this: to reject Jesus Christ, to refuse him, to refuse merely his gospel, if he did not speak in it, might not be so high a misdemeanour, but to refuse him!—I don't know how it is, but my heart feels very heavy, even to sinking, at the thought that any man here should be able to refuse Christ, the Son of God, the Everlasting and the ever Blessed. But I cannot speak out what I feel. It fills my soul with horror to think that any creature should refuse his God, when his God speaks, but much more when God comes down on earth in

infinite, wondrous, immeasurable love, takes upon himself the form of man, and suffers, and then turns round to his rebellious creature and says, "Listen, I am ready to forgive you; I am willing to pardon you; do but listen to me." Oh! it seems monstrous that men should refuse Christ! I don't know how you feel about it, but if you have ever measured that in your thoughts, it will have seemed to be the most monstrous of all crimes. If, in order to be saved, the terms were hard and the conditions difficult, I could understand a man saying, "It mocks me," but when the gospel is nothing but this, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?"; when it is nothing but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," what shall I say? I cannot fashion an excuse for any of you, and if you, after having heard the gospel, be cast into hell, I dare not think that its utmost pains will be too severe for so high an insult to such wondrous love. Ye will not be saved, sirs; ye put from you your own life; ye will not be saved when the way of salvation is plain, easy, simple, close to your hand.

"What chains of vengeance they deserve,
That slight the bonds of love."

I cannot—I could not—conceive a punishment too severe for men who, knowing that their rejection of Christ will bring upon them everlasting punishment, yet wilfully reject him. Ye choose your own delusion. If ye drank poison and did not know it, I could pity you; if you made all your veins to swell with agony, and caused your death—but when we stand up and say, "Sirs, it is poison; see others drop and die; touch it not!"—when we give you something a thousand times better, and bid you take that, but you will not take that, but *will* have the poison—then if you will, you must. If, then, you would destroy your soul, it must be so; but we would plead with you yet again, "See, see that ye refuse not him that speaketh." I wish I could raise him before you tonight—even the Christ of God, and bid him stand here, and you should see his hands and his feet, and you should ask, "What are these marks we see there?" He would reply, "These are the wounds that I received when I suffered for the sons of men," and he bares his side and says, "See here, here went the spear when I died that sinners might live." In glory now, yet once, saith he, this face was defiled with spittle, and this body mangled with Pilate's scourge and Herod's rod, and I, whom angels worshipped, was treated as a menial, ay, worse, God himself forsook me, Jehovah hid his face from me, that I, bearing the punishment of sin, might really bear it, not in fiction, but in fact, and might suffer the equivalent for all the miseries that souls redeemed by me ought to have suffered had they been cast into hell. Will ye look at his wounds, and yet refuse him? Will you hear the story of his love, and yet reject him? Must he go away and say in his heart, "They have refused me; they have refused me; I told them of salvation; I showed them how I bought salvation; they have refused me; I will go my way, and they shall never see my face again till that day when they shall say, 'Mountains fall upon us; hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne'"? If you will not have him in mercy, you must have him in judgment, and if the silver sceptre of God will not touch you, the Christ of God, the man of Nazareth, will come a second time on the clouds of heaven, and woe unto you in that tremendous day. Then shall the nations of the earth weep and wail because of him. They would not have him as their Saviour; they must have him as their Judge, and out of his mouth shall the sentence come, "Depart! Depart!"

Now I have to close with the last reason that is given in the text why we should see that we "refuse not him that speaketh." It is this: that if we do:—

IV. THERE IS A DOOM TO BE FEARED, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from *heaven*. You hear the din that goes up from the Red Sea when the angry billows leap over Pharaoh and his

horsemen. Why is the king asleep in the midst of the waters? Why are the chivalry of Egypt cut off? They rejected Moses when he said, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go." If Pharaoh escaped not when he refused him that spake on earth, oh! dreadful shall be that day when the Christ who this day speaks to you, and whom you reject, shall lift up the rods of his anger, and the lake of fire, more direful than the Red Sea, shall swallow up his adversaries. See you that next sight? A number of men are standing there holding censers of incense in their hands, and there stands Moses, the servant of God, and he says, "If these die the death of common men, God hath not spoken by me," for they have rebelled against Moses. Do you see the sight? Can you picture it? If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse him that speaketh from heaven? Go through the peninsular of the Arabian desert. See how the tribes drop, one by one, and leave graves behind them as the track of their march. Of all that came out of Egypt, not one entered into Canaan. Who slew all these? They were all slain there because they resisted the Word of God by his servant Moses, and he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse him that speaketh to us from heaven?

I might multiply instances and give you proof of how God avenged the refusal to listen to his servant Moses, but how much more will he avenge it if we listen not to Jesus Christ the Lord! "Oh!" says one, "you preach the terrors of the Lord." The terrors of the Lord!—I scarce think of them; they are too dreadful for human language; but if I speak severely, even for a moment, it is in love. I dare not play with you, sinner; I dare not tell you sin is a trifle; I dare not tell you that the world to come is a matter of no great account; I dare not come and tell you that you need not be in earnest. I shall have to answer for it to my Master. I have these words ringing in my ears, "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." I cannot bear that I should have the blood of souls upon my skirts, and, therefore, do I again say to you—refuse what I say as much as you will; cast anything that is mine to the dogs; have nothing to do with it; but wherein I have spoken to you Christ's Word, and I have told you his gospel, "Believe and live," "He that believeth on him is not condemned," "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Wherein it is Christ's gospel, it is Christ that speaks, and I again say to you, for your soul's sake, "Refuse not him that speaks from heaven *to you*." May his Spirit sweetly incline you to listen to Christ's Word, and may you be saved tonight.

If you don't have Christ tonight, some of you never will have him. If you are not saved tonight, some of you never will be. 'Tis now or never with you. God's Spirit strives with you, conscience is a little awakened. Catch every breeze, catch every breeze; do not let this pass by. Oh! that tonight you might seek, and that tonight you might find he Saviour. Else remember if you refuse him that speaks from heaven, he lifts his hands and swears that you shall not enter into his rest. Then are you lost, lost, lost, beyond all recall! God bless every one of you, and may we meet in heaven.

I do not know, I sometimes am afraid that there are not so many conversions as there used to be. If I thought there were no more souls to be saved by me in this place, under God, I would break away from every comfort, and go and find out a place where I could find some that God would bless. Are they all saved that will be? You seatholders, have I fished in this pond till there is no more to come? Is it to be so, that in all the ground where wheat ever will grow, wheat has grown, and there can be no more? My brethren and sisters in Christ, pray God to send his Spirit that there may be more brought to Jesus. If not, it is hard, hard work to preach in vain. Perhaps I grow stale and dull to you; I would not if I could help it. If I could learn how to preach, I would go to school.

If I could find the best way to reach you I am sure I would spare no pains. I do not know what more to say, but if Christ himself shall be refused, how shall I speak for him? If his dear wounds, if his precious blood, if his dying groans, if his love to the souls of men all go for nothing, then my words cannot be anything; they may well go to the wind. But do, do turn ye to him. Cast not away your souls. Come to him; he will receive you; he waiteth to be gracious. Whosoever is heavy laden, let him come tonight. One tear, one sigh, one cry—send it up to him; he will hear you. Come and trust him; he will save you. God bless you for Christ's love's sake. Amen.

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