



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 62: 1916

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 62: 1916* by Charles Spurgeon

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Daily Blessings for God's People

A Sermon

(No. 3493)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, 21st September, 1871.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."—Psalm 68:19-20.

WE observe that this Psalm is a very difficult one. One of the ablest commentators calls it a titanic Psalm. It is truly a giant Psalm, and to master it means much labour. Yet it is by no means difficult to understand when it cometh to practical duties, and to those doctrines which are vital. For instance, the two verses before us are very simple and do not need any explanation, but only need to be impressed upon our memory. So is it always throughout Holy Scripture; wherever there are difficult places, they do not touch vital truths. The matter of our salvation is plain enough. The Book of Revelation may be difficult, but not the Gospel according to Matthew. With regard to the future, there may be many clouds, but with regard to that blessed day which is past, which was the crisis of the world's history, when our Saviour hung upon the tree, the darkness is past, and the true light shineth there. Don't, therefore, busy yourselves most about those things which are most difficult, for they are usually of least importance. Concern your heart most with the simplicities of the gospel, for it is there, in the way, the truth, and the life, that the essential matter lies.

Let us come to these two verses, and remark that *they remind us first of the mercies of life*. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." They then *assure us of the mercies of death*. "He that is our God is the God of our salvation, and unto God belong the issues from death." And then the two verses tell us of *the common occupation of both life and death*, namely, the blessing of God, whose mercy continues to us in both states. Blessed be Jehovah, whether I receive the daily load of his benefits, or whether he open for me the gates of the grace.

Let us begin then, and contemplate for a few moments:—

I. THE MERCIES OF OUR LIFE.

The text saith, "He daily loadeth us with benefits." Let us keep to the English version just now. Take the words of it. What is it that he gives us— Benefits. We have a very beautiful word in the English language—benevolence. You know that means good wishing, *bene volens*. He may be a benevolent man who is not able to do any act of kindness, to give any of his substance away for lack of any. But God's goodness to us is not merely *bene volens*, in which he wishes us well, but it is beneficence or good doing. His gifts and benefits are deeds of goodness, acts of goodness. He doth to us that which is good. He doth not only wish us well, and speak to us well, and direct us well, but he doth well unto us. He doth not only say, "I pity thy last estate," but he delivers the lost out of their ruin. He doth not say, as the churl doth, "Be thou warmed, and be thou filled," and do no more, but, wishing us well, he doth well unto us; he warms our hearts with his love, and fills

them with his mercy, and sends us on our way rejoicing. It is true God speaks us well. What more could he say than, to us, he has said in his blessed Word? It is true he wishes us well. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." But the essence of his goodness lies in this, that he goes beyond wishes and words into acts.

Begin, brethren, with the greatest of his acts. "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." In that gift he hath already given us all things, and from that blessed pledge he has never gone back, but he has given us all that we want for this life, and for the life to come, for ye have grace and glory, and hath abounded in each. The upper springs fail not, neither do the nether springs. If Christ is our perpetual bread and wine, so, too, our common bread, in answer to our prayer, is given us according to his assurance, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Will you try to think of the benefits which you have received, dear brother, dear sister? Turn them over now in your mind—the benefits that you have actually yourself received—not only read of, and heard of, and had promises of, but that you have received. Oh! the benefits of early education! the being restrained from, sin. Oh! the benefits of conviction! of being enlightened and made to see the guilt off sin. Oh! the sweet benefit of being led to the Saviour! made to stand at the cross foot, where the blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Oh! the benefit of perfect pardon and of righteousness, which covers us and justifies in the sight of God! What an unspeakable benefit is regeneration! Who shall prize the benefit of adoption? Who is he that shall describe the benefit of daily education in the things of God—of preservation from falling into final, vital sin—of sanctification carried on from day to day? We have benefits that we know of, but we probably have ten times as many that we know not of. Some of them come in at the front door of the house; some of the richest of them seem to steal in at the back door. They are among the most precious bounties that fly in with so soft a wing that we hear them not when they come. Ye shall sooner count the hairs on your head, or the dust upon the sand beach, than you shall be able to estimate the number of his benefits.

Leave that word then, and note the next. It is said in the text concerning God's benefits, that he *loads* us with them—*loads* us with benefits. He does not put a little upon us of his goodness, but much; very much, until it becomes a load. Have you never known what it is to be bowed right down with such goodness? I have, I freely confess it—I have desired to praise him, but a sense of love so bowed me down that I could only adopt the language of the psalmist and say, "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." It seemed as if "words were but air, and tongues but clay, and his compassion's so divine," that it was impossible to speak of them. His mercies, as our hymn said just now, come as think and as fast as the moments do. In fact, it is literally so. Every moment needs heavings of the lungs, pulsings of the blood. The slightest circumstance might prevent one or the other. God's continued benefits come to us even in the simple form of preserved life. We are constantly exposed to peril. "Plagues and death around us fly." God preserves us from perils to the body. Our thoughts—whither might they go? They might in a moment lead us into heresies and foul blasphemies. It is no little thing to be preserved from that spiritual pestilence that walketh both in darkness and the noonday. Glory be to God, who sends us temporal and spiritual benefits so numerous, and each one so weighty, that eye cannot say less than this, "That he daily *loadeth* us with his benefits, until we seem bowed down to the earth under a joyful sense of obligation to his mercy." "He loadeth us with benefits."

Oh! are any of you inclined to murmur? Do you think God deals hard with you? Well, you are what you are by his grace. Though you are not what you wish to be, yet remember you are not what, if strict justice were carried out, you would be. In the poor-house you might be—few admire that residence. In the prison you might be—God preserves you from the sin that would bring you there. In the lunatic asylum you might be—better men and women than you are have come to that. At the grave's mouth you might be—on the sick bed, on the verge of eternity. God's holiest saints have not been spared from the grave. In hell you might be—amongst the lost, wailing, but hopelessly wailing, gnashing your teeth in utter despair. O God, when we think of what we are not, because thy grace has kept us from it, we cannot but say, "Thou hast loaded us with benefits."

But then think of what you are, you Christians. You are God's children; you are joint-heirs with Christ. "All things are yours"; ay, and "things to come," you have guaranteed too—preservation to the end, and you have, after the end of this life, glory without end. The "many mansions" are for you; the palms and harps of the glorified are for you. You have a share in all that Christ has, and is, and shall be. In all the gifts of his ascension you have a part; in the gifts that come to us through his session at the right hand of God, you have your share; and in, the glories of the Second Advent, the grand hope of the Church of God, you shall partake. See how, in the present, and in the past, and in the future, he loadeth you with benefits. There are two great words already.

But the next word is equally large. "Blessed be the Lord, who *daily* loadeth us with benefits." A poor man shall call at your door, and you shall give to him all he wants for food, and cover him, and give him something to make glad his heart withal. If you do it once, you reckon that you have done well. Supposing he should call again to-morrow, you might find it in your heart to do the same. But suppose he called upon you seven days in the week: I am afraid that by degrees that would become seven times too often, for we count, when we have done men a good turn, that someone else should see to them next time. If we load them especially with benefits, we say, "Don't encroach; don't ride a willing horse too fast. You must not come again so often. You weary me." Ah! this is man; but look at God. He *daily* loadeth us with benefits. How many days has he done that with some of us? Thirty years? "Ah!" saith one, "I can talk of sixty years"—yes, and some of you of seventy and eighty years. Well, he has loaded you with benefits every day. You have never been above the rank of a pauper, so far as your God is concerned. But I will put it differently. You have been a gentleman commoner upon the goodness of God all your life. It has been your lot, like that of Mephibosheth, to sit daily at the King's table and give a portion from him. And yet you murmur. You have been unbelieving, proud, idle; all sorts of ill-temperers have you shown. Yet has he daily loaded you with benefits. It has sometimes seemed to be a wrestling between our sin and God's love, but up to this hour his love has conquered. We have drawn mightily upon his exchequer, but that exchequer has never been exhausted. The load of mercy which was used yesterday won't do for to-day. Like manna, it must come fresh and fresh, and the blessing is that it does come fresh and fresh. When God draws the curtain and stands in the sunlight, mercy streams in on the sunbeam; and when he shuts the eyelids of the day and the evening comes, it is mercy that puts its finger upon our eyelids and bids us rest. He "daily loadeth us with benefits"—every day; and he loads us with benefits not only on bright days, but on dark days. When we are sick, and tossing to and fro upon the bed, he still is loading us with benefits, only in another form. He sends sometimes his choicest mercies to us in black-edged envelopes. The very brightest gems of heaven come to us, and we know them not. They sparkle not until faith's eye has seen them. Nature has not perceived their excellence. How he loadeth us with benefits on Sabbath days! There is a dear brother who is

almost always here, who, when he sees me on Sunday mornings, generally makes use of some such exclamation as this, "Every day is good to me, but the Sabbath day is seven good days in one. It is blest seven times over." And, indeed, it so is. He loadeth us with benefits on the Sabbath. But then we have our Monday mercies and our Tuesday mercies too; and right on to the close on Saturday night the Lord continues to heap on his mercies one after another, that he may make us feel that we shall sooner weary with thanking him than he will weary in giving us cause for thankfulness.

There is one other word—a very little one, but a sweet one too: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth *us* with benefits." "*Us*." Personal matters bring sweetness to our soul, and herein lieth the wonder. That God should load David with benefits was marvellous to David, but not to me. The marvel to me is that he should load *me* with benefits. Beloved brethren and sisters, I do not feel your imperfections, and, therefore, I do not so much perceive the sovereignty of God in dealing graciously with you, but I know some of my own shortcomings, and they seem to me to be greater than those of others; therefore, do I with gratitude admire the abounding mercy of God that he should load me with benefits.

"Why do I meet to hear his voice,
And enter where there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

There may be some whose consciences will allow them to think that their praying made the distinction. I am not able to believe that, but I am compelled to feel that, if I enjoy the things of Christ that others do not, it is of the Lord's mercy, and not of any goodness in me, but entirely of his infinite grace. Let us bless the Lord at this hour because he loadeth us with benefits when he might have passed us by. He might have suffered us to go on heaping up our transgressions until the measure thereof had been filled, and then he might have made us reap for ever that which we had sown. Instead of this, he has made us—many of us—however unlikely persons—to be his chosen ones, and he hath loaded us with benefits.

I have spoken very simply entirely with the view that those hearts that have tasted that the Lord is gracious may now wake up all their powers to praise and bless the name of the Most High. We must not pass away from this, however, without observing that our translation is not literal—indeed, is not the meaning of the passage. Those of you who will look at your Bibles will perceive that the words "*who*" and "*with benefits*", are put in it italics to show that they are not in the Hebrew, but have been supplied by the translators, as they thought them necessary to the sense; and some of the best interpreters say that the passage means this, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burdens"; and I have little doubt that that is the correct translation. It is not so much that he loads us, as that he lifts our load for us, and bears it for us. Well, at any rate, that is a sweet rendering, "He daily bears our burden"; and it is a rendering which is a word of rebuke to some of you. Did you not come into this tabernacle tonight with your burdens on your back? Well, it was wrong you should ever have them. "Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you." A man who has a burden-bearer certainly need not bear the burden himself. Faith is never burdened, because she knows where to lay her burden. She hath a burden, but she puts it on the Almighty God. But unbelief, with a far less load than faith carries easily, is bowed down to the dust. Arise, O child of God, whatever thy burden is, and by an act of faith cast it upon God. You have done your little all; leave it now. Your fretfulness will not alter things. You cannot change the night, nor make one hair white or black. Why fret and worry? The world went on very well before you were born; it will when

you are dead. Leave the helm. Whenever you have been foremost you made a mistake. He that carves for himself will cut his fingers; but when God has been foremost, and you have been content to follow, you have never had any mistake then; and when God has been your shepherd, you have been constrained to say, "I shall not want." Oh! then, have done with burden-bearing, and take up the language of the text, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens."

And then the text adds that he is "the God of our salvation." In this life we ought to praise him. His daily mercies are all sweetened with this reflection—that we are saved souls. Our morsel may be dry, but we dip it in this dainty sauce of his salvation. It is true I am poor, but I am saved. It is true I am sick, but I am saved. It is true I am obscure and unknown, but I am saved; and the salvation of God sweetens all. Then is it added to that, it is "*our*" salvation. He that can grasp the salvation which is in Christ and say, "This is mine," is rich to all the intents of bliss, and has his daily life gilded with joy.

And then it is added beyond that, "*our* God." God is ours. He that is our God is the God of salvation. His omnipotence and omniscience, his immutability and his faithfulness—all his attributes are ours. The Father is ours; the Son is ours; the Spirit is ours. The God of election is ours; the God of redemption is ours; the God of sanctification is ours. Oh! with all this, how can we be cast down? Why should we repine! We have certainly abounding cause for blessing and praising the Lord. Those are the mercies of life. And now for a few minutes let us contemplate:—

II. THE MERCIES OF DEATH.

"Unto God belong the issues from death." This may mean several things. We will include its meanings under these heads. Unto God belong escapes from death. Oh! blessed be his name, we may come very near the grave, and the jaws of death may be open to receive us; but the pit cannot shut her mouth upon us until our hour is come.

"Plagues of death around me fly.

Till he please, I cannot die.

Not a single shaft can hit,

Until the God of love see fit.

"What though a thousand at thy side,

At thy right hand ten thousand, died?

Our God, his chosen people saves,

Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

Whatever occurs around us, we need not be alarmed. We are immortal until our work is done. And amidst infectious or contagious diseases, if we are called to go there, we may sit as easily as though in balmy air. It is not ours to preserve our life by neglecting our duty. It is better to die in service than live in idleness—better to glorify God and depart, than rot above ground in neglecting what he would have us to do. Unto God belong the issues from death. We may, therefore, go without temerity into any danger where duty calls us.

But then unto God belong *the issues that lead actually down to death*. It may be we shall not die. There are some who are comforted much by the belief that Christ will come, and they shall not die. I do not profess to be among the number. I would as soon die as not, and rather, I think, if I might have my choice, for herein would be a greater conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in actually passing through the grave and rising again, than will fall to the lot of those who do not die. At all events, those who die not shall have no preference beyond them that sleep. So the Apostle tells us. "To" die is "gain"; and we will look upon it as such. But whenever we die, if we die, it will

be at God's bidding. No one hath the key of death but the Lord of life. A thousand angels could not hurl us to the grave. All the devils in hell cannot destroy the least lamb in Christ's flock. Till God saith "Return," our spirit shall not leave the body; and we may be well content to depart when God saith the time is come. Oh! how blessed it is to think that the arrows of death are in the quiver of God, and they cannot be shot forth unless as the Lord wills it! Unto the Lord belong the issues from death.

Think of this, then, about your departed friends The Master took them home. Think about your own departure. It is not to be arranged by your folly, not by the malice of the wicked. It will all be planned and designed by the infinite love of God.

But the text may mean something more. Unto God belong the issues from death; that is, *the coming up from death again*. We place the bodies of the saints in the territory of death, but they are only put there, as it were, because there is a lien upon them for a time. They must come out. They must be delivered. for his word says, if we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, "so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." There shall not be a bone or a piece of a bone of one of the saints kept by the enemy as a trophy of his conquest over the Saviour. Christ shall vanquish death entirely, and from the sepulchre he shall snatch all the trophies of the grave. We shall rise again, beloved. What though our bodies rot? What though they feed plants, and in due time feed animals, and pass through innumerable permutations and combinations? Yet he that made us can re-make us; and the voice that bade us live shall bid these bodies live again. "Unto God belong the issues from death." In this we are comforted—to fall asleep, because the angel of the churches shall guard our dust.

And then this further thought. The issues from death grasp *all that comes after death*. The spirit issues from death—never touched by it indeed. Leaving the body behind a while, the spirit enters into a glory, waiting for the fulness. Then when Christ descends, and the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ rise in the first resurrection, then shall the re-united manhood enter into the fulness of the glory with a manifested Saviour. These issues from death belong to God, and God secures them to his people. He shall give them to them for whom he has appointed them. He shall give them to those whom he has made worthy by his grace to be partakers of this heritage. They belong to him—not to us by merit, but they are his gifts by covenant and by grace. Oh! then, how sweet it is to think, "The path down to the grave, my God has planted it. It is all his—all his own; and when my turn shall come to go into that garden wherein is the sepulchre, I shall be in my Father's territory." Jesus Christ is Lord of the sick-bed. He makes the bed of his people in their affliction. Even down to the borders of the grave—to the edge of Jordan's river—it is all Immanuel's land; and he often makes it the land of Beulah. And then, when I dip my foot in that chill stream, it is still my Master's country. I am not out of the presence of the Lord of life now I am coming to the land of death-shade and through the river, but it is the Master's river still, and, on the other side, it is my Lord's own land. When the shining ones shall meet me to conduct me up to the jewelled "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," I shall be always at home, always in my Father's country, never an exile, never come upon a tract of territory over which he hath no power. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for he is with me. His rod and his staff, even there have they sway, and they shall comfort me." Be of good cheer, beloved. "Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life," and, life being ended, you shall "dwell in the house of your God for ever." In life and in death, you shall prove the tokens of his special love. And now we wind up with this. Here is:—

III. THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF BOTH CONDITIONS.

"I will praise thee in life
I will praise thee in death
I will praise thee as long
As thou lendest me breath."

"I will praise thee for ever and ever." The one occupation of a Christian is to praise his God. Now, in order to do this, we must maintain by God's grace a grateful, happy, praiseful frame of mind; and we must endeavour to express that condition of mind by songs of gratitude. This should be our morning's work. Should there not be the morning song? This should be the evening's work. Let it be our vespers to bless and praise God. Israel had the morning lamb and the evening lamb. Let us make both ends of the day bright with his praise, and during the day. We are in a wrong state of mind if we are not in a thankful state of mind. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with you if you cannot praise God. "Oh!" says one, "what, in trouble?" Yes, in every bitter trouble too, for Job could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." "But are we never to be sorrowful?" Yes, yet always rejoicing. How can that be? Ah! the Lord teach you it! It is a work of grace. Cast down, but yet, for all that, rejoicing in the Lord! He lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, even when heart and flesh are failing us. I say again, there is something amiss with us when our heart does not praise God. Do as much as you can also. When your heart is glad, try to praise him with your lip. Do you work alone? Sing. Perhaps, if you work in company, you cannot; but sing with the heart. Men of the world, I am afraid, sing more than we do. I do not admire the most of their songs. They do not seem to have much sense about them—at least the modern ones. But let us sing some of the songs of Zion. You do not want to put your harps on the willows, but if they are there, take them down and praise the Lord, who leadeth you with benefits in life and in death. Therefore, habitually praise him. And, brethren and sisters, all our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should tend to, the praise of him who always blesses us. You may stop praising God when he stops having mercy upon you—not till then; and as there is always a new mercy coming to your doors let new praise be going up out of your hearts." But how can I praise God by my actions? saith one. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." I try to praise God by preaching to-night. Some of you will go to your trades. Well, praise God at your trades. Any work, any lawful calling may be to the Christian priest—and all Christians are priests—the exercise of his sacred functions. You may make your smock-frock, if you will, a vestment; you shall make your meal a sacrament; you shall make everything in the house like the pots that were before the altar; the bells upon the horses shall be "holiness unto the Lord."

And, dear brethren, to close. Let me remark that if we praise God ourselves by word and life, we ought to try to bring others to praise him too. You do not praise God, indeed, unless you want others to do so. It is a mark of sincere thankfulness that it desires others to assist it in the expression of its joy. Blessed be the Lord, this same Psalmist here, who says for himself, "Blessed he the Lord", is the writer of the 67th Psalm. You know how he says there, "Let the people praise thee—yea, let all the people praise thee! Oh! let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" Then he says again, "Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!" Do your utmost to be the means, in God's hands, of bringing others to praise him. Tell them what he has done for you. Tell them of his saving grace. Invite sinners to Christ. Let it be:—

"All your business here below

To say, "Behold the Lamb!"

and in this way you will be setting other tongues a-praising God, so that when your tongue is silent, there shall be others that will take up the strain. Labour for this, beloved, every one of you. Labour for the extension of the choir that shall sing the praises of the Saviour I trust we shall never fall into that narrow-minded spirit which seems to say, "It is enough for me if I am saved, and if those that go to my little place of worship are all right. It is quite enough." No, Master, thy throne is not to be set up in some little conventicle in a back street, and there alone. Thou art not to reign in some little corner of a city, and there alone Thou art not to take this island of Great Britain, and reign in it alone; nor in Europe—in one quarter of the earth alone. Let the whole earth be filled with his praise! And what Christian heart will refuse to say, "Amen and amen"? God grant it may be so! Amen.

Divine Destruction and Protection

A Sermon

(No. 3494)

Published on Thursday, January 13th, 1916.

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it."—Ezekiel 17:29.

CAN your minds fly back to the time when there was no time, to the day when there was no day but the Ancient of Days? Can you speed back to that period when God dwelt alone, when this round world and all the things that be upon it, had not come from his hand; when the sun flamed not in his strength, and the stars flashed not in their brightness? Can you go back to the period when there were no angels, when cherubim and seraphim had not been born; and, if there be creatures elder than they, when none of them had as yet been formed? Is it possible, I say, for you to fly so far back as to contemplate God alone—no creature no breath of song, no motion of wing—God himself alone, without another? Then, indeed, he had no rival; none then could contest with him, for none existed. All power, and glory, and honour and majesty were gathered up into Himself. And we have no reason to believe that he was less glorious than He is now, when his ministers delight to do his pleasure; nor less great than now, when he has crested worlds on worlds, and thrown them into space, scattering over the sky stars with both his hands. He sat on no precarious throne; he needed none to add to his power; he needed none to bring him a revenue of praise; his all-sufficiency could spirit of no lack. Consider next, if ye can, the eternal purpose of God that he would create. He determines it in his mind. Could any but a divine motive actuate the Divine Architect? What must that motive have been? He creates that he may display his own perfections. He does beget, as it were, creatures after his own image that he may live in them; that he may manifest to others the joy, the pleasure, the satisfaction, which he so intensely feels in himself. Certain I am his own glory must have been the end he had in view; he would reveal his glory to the sons of men, to angels, and to such creatures as he had formed, in order that they might reflect his honour and sing his praise. You are not ignorant, my brethren, of the fact that sin entered into the world. You know that the creation, which had been harmonious as a psalm in God's praise, voluminous and exhaustive as a book in which he revealed his own character—this creation, once exceedingly fair, became foully marred. Rival instincts were produced, and rival Interests were set up. Man's will stood up against God's will; man's profit against God's honour; man's device against God's counsel. Eve took of the accursed fruit, and Adam partook of the same, and henceforth man became a rival to God, just as Satan, aforetime, had rebelled against the blessed and only Potentate, and usurped authority. From the time when Satan fell, God's purpose was to break down everything which set itself up in opposition to him. From that day till now, no matter how great, how lofty, how apparently excellent a thing might be, it has been the rule with God to pull it down if it did not stand in him, and for him; yea, and wherever he has looked, no matter how mean a thing may

have been, how low, how degraded to outward appearance, it has been God's constant rule to lift it up, if it stood in him, and for him. Or if, by the lifting up of the humble, he might throw scorn upon the haughty, he would thereby magnify his own absolute right to exercise sovereign control, and to do with men as he willed.

Oh! that I could command the words of some of the mighty masters of song, or that I had an angel's voice, so much rather would I hymn this high majestic theme than speak of it in listless prose. But I cannot rise to the awful heights of this incomparable design. I contemplate it with awe not unmingled with admiration—the Eternal God withstanding everything that opposes itself against him—thrusting down the mighty from their seats, plucking off crowns from the heads of princes, degrading the escutcheons of nobles, trampling in the mire the fine linen and the scarlet of the rich, setting at nought the wisdom of the wise, divesting the philosopher of his toga, rending in pieces the robes of the priest, and pouring contempt upon everything that vaunts pretension or arrogates prestige in defiance of his sacred prescriptive, irrevocable lordship. There is no power or permanence, no warrant or worth, in any claim to greatness or goodness independent of God, or antagonistic to him. My conceptions are too dwarfish, my language is too feeble, to compass the grandeur of this theme. Its truth commends it, and its usefulness enhances it: since it bows the heart before God, and convinces us that then only are we in a fit state to be filled with his fulness, to live in his life, to be wise with his wisdom, and to be glorious in his glory, when we are emptied of our own conceits. Mine, however, will be a more practical lesson at this time; and I shall use more homely words than that nobler subject might have demanded.

METHINKS I see a great forest which reaches for many a league. The trees are of divers growths, and of various ages. Some of them are very lofty. Here a towering cedar and yonder the storks have made their nests among the tall fir trees. Stout oaks there are that laugh at storms, and elms that will not be twisted with the tempest. See how they rival each other! And there are lowlier trees; some bearing fruit, though scarcely seen; others, like the vine, creeping upon the ground—so obscure they can hardly be observed. It is a strange forest in which trees of every clime are to be found; some green, verdant, lader with blossoms and with fruit; others dead, dry, withered, with scarce here and there a leaf. It is the evening, the cool of the day. The Lord God that visited the fair garden of Eden is come to walk in this forest. Along those deep glades, amidst that thick shade, the Almighty appears. He comes. How see I him? Bears he in his hand an awful axe, and cloth he pass his finger along its edge to see that it be keen? Strong is the arm that wields it. Howl, cedars, if once he life that axe against you. What means that Woodman to do? Wait, and let us hear him speak. Oh! ye trees of the field be silent before the Lord. Clap not your hands until we have heard him speak. "The trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree—beware, ye towering cedars!"—"that I have exalted the low tree"—take courage, ye lowly vines!"—"have dried up the green tree"—wail, ye verdant elms—"and have made the dry tree to flourish";—hope, ye withered boughs!"—"I the Lord have spoken, and have done it." Let the trees be silent before the Lord, for he cometh to judge them, and he judgeth them with much jealousy. That forest I have before my eyes; men like trees appear to me in the vision. While I gaze on this dense mass of people listening to my voice, let me interpret the Mighty Woodman's words to you. There are four notes of which we shall speak one after the other. May God sanctify the emblems to our profit, touching our ears, and teaching our hearts, that we may rightly understand what the Lord saith to the trees of the forest.

I. "THUS SAITH THE LORD, THE TREES OF THE FIELD SHALL KNOW THAT I THE LORD HAVE BROUGHT DOWN THE HIGH TREE."

Look over history, and you will see that everything gigantic in stature and colossal in dimensions, whatsoever has been great to human apprehension, grasping at earthly fame, has become an object for God's penetrating arrows, and a subject for his withering blight. A grand idea of universal monarchy flashed upon the mind of man. He would build a tower, the top whereof should reach to heaven. What did the Lord do with this fine scheme? "I will come down," said "to Babel, and see if it be altogether as they have said." Then he touched their tongues, and confounded their language, and scattered the imaginations of their hearts: so he laughed them to scorn, and left them to be a laughingstock to all generations. Then came the great power of Egypt. Pharaoh said, "Am I not lord of Thebes, with its hundred gates, and with its myriads of brazen chariots? Have I not a mighty host of cavalry? Who is equal to me? I speak, and the nations tremble." When the king hardened his heart, how did Jehovah—the King of kings—get himself honour from Pharaoh and his hosts? "Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider bath he cast into the sea!" In after years Babylon set herself up as a queen. "I shall be a lady for ever," said the gay metropolis of; the earth, the mighty city of Euphrates. "I sit alone; I shall see no sorrow." Behold, she decketh herself out with scarlet, she arrayeth herself with silk; all the nations of the earth are quiet when she ariseth nor is the sound of a whisper heard when the voice of her command goes forth. But where art thou, daughter of Assyria, where art thou now, O daughter of Chaldea, where is the crown which once circled thy brow and adorned thy heady Go, mark a leap of rubbish, and of desolate stones; hear the hooting of the owls and the howling of the dragons, as each one calleth to his fellow in the midst of a desolation which cannot be repaired! How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning! Thus *God breaketh in pieces with his right hand everything arrogant and supercilious*, that dares to assert greatness apart from his endowment, or to presume on authority other than he delegates. I might prolong the strain. I might tell you of Rome, and all the boastings of that Imperial mistress, point to her faded charms, and tell of her decay and her decadence. I might lead you back to Sennacherib and all his hosts overthrown, or recite the story of Nebuchadnezzar, driven out from the abodes of men, and feeding the beasts. I might show you lesser kings, kings of Israel, brought exceeding low, until they who had sat on the throne as princes pined in the dungeon among slaves. To multiply instances would be only to confirm the general current of history, and illustrate the fact that the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, always cuts down the high tree, humiliates the creature that exalts itself, and suffers no flesh to glory in his presence. That is the law of his government.

The question arises, how does it concerns us? Doubtless it opens a sad prospect to those who are lifted up with pride, or inflated with self-opinion. Are there any among you who boast in heraldry a long succession of illustrious names which has ennobled your pedigree? Some people seem to think that the world is hardly good enough for them to tread upon, as if they were made of china, while other men are moulded but of common clay; they look down upon the public as an ignoble herd, and speak of the masses as the "many-headed" and the "great unwashed." Such a man will play the parasite to his own dear self, passionately cherish his own conceits and petulantly hold that whatever belongs to him is better than anyone else can procure for love or money, be it his house, or his horse, the water from his well, or the wine from his cellar. At his wit let all inferiors laugh; to his greed let all who, would receive his patronizing nod do obeisance. In stately isolation

he will acknowledge no rival. Knowest thou, man, that in one respect thou hast a veritable pre-eminence?—thou mayest fairly challenge all thy fellows for one whose disposition the Lord hates more than he abhors shine. Among the seven abominations, your order ranks highest. No liar or murderer can claim a preeminence over you in vice so long as the Proverbs stand. Ere long, the heel of the Almighty shall be lifted higher than thy haughty head. He will cast thee down, be thy look never so proud; for the Lord hath purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth.

There is, *again, an arrogance of mind, of judgement, of opinion*, just as ignorant—if not quite so grotesque—as his who dreams that his birth is of higher caste, and his blood of richer hue than other men. Humanity in the bulk is the idol of some people; and yonder I see the man who quotes himself as an illustrious specimen. He does not believe in the total depravity of human nature. Judging by himself, the statement that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, is a myth; or if it were ever true of a recreant Jew, it never was a fair indictment against such an orthodox Christian as he is. No, no; he has kept the law; he feels that in all things he is blameless; he has not erred, neither will he humble himself before the word that God speaks to us. In the opinion of such, the gospel that we preach is very good for harlots, thieves, and drunkards, but it is of no use to the righteous, for they have put down their own names among those who need no repentance. Admirable in their conduct, their temper amiable, and their disposition generous, a salvation by free grace would be wasted on them. The Lord will abase thee, be thou man or woman, whosoever thou mayest be; he will shame thee; the axe is ready to be laid at thy root even now. Thy goodness is not God's goodness, and thy righteousness is not Christ's righteousness; therefore, shall the moth consume it, and it shall be eaten away. Or it is my friend yonder, a working man, who says, "Well, I work as hard as anybody; I bring up my children as well as I can; I have nothing from the parish; and if I see a poor mate out of work, I always subscribe my mite, though I have not much to give away; can it be right to tell me that I am not in a fair way of going to heaven?" Ah! the Lord will deprive you of such boasting, for he will bring down all these high trees. You that have any righteousness of your own, whether you be rich or poor, the same word will apply to you all. What mattereth it whether you are born of princes, or the offspring of beggars, pride will nestle in any heart, and presumption will take advantage of any circumstances? Perhaps I may address some person who says, "Well, I am a member of the orthodox and true church; I have been baptized, and I have been confirmed after the most proper manner; I receive the Lord's supper on all fit and proper occasions. The clergyman from whom I take the sacrament has received apostolical ordination. How tasteful the architecture of our church! How decorous; the congregation! How enchanting the music! There are none of your rough wild notes that give vent to the feelings. Our organ is the perfection of mechanism, and it is played with the utmost skill. Our sacred singers perform their parts with reverent taste. Our litanies are wailed out in plaintive tones. We do the thing in the right style; and as I am a member of a branch of a catholic church, I hold myself to be an heir of eternal life." From thy towering imaginations, O man, thou shalt speedily totter. God will cast thee down, as surely as thou livest. No boasting, even of our orthodoxy, or of our attention to religious formalities, shall ever be allowed to abide his judgment. The Lord hath set his face against all boastings, and all confidences, other than a trust in the cross, and a holy reliance on the finished work and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Or shall it fare better with another class? There is our friend who says, "Well, well, I do not believe in forms and ceremonies; but, mark you, I always judge and weigh everything." He estimates

himself as *an independent thinker*; he is bound by no precedents, fostered by no creeds, and considers that he is amenable to no judgment but his own. He owns no lord but his own conscience, no duty but such as he prescribes himself, and as for wisdom, he looks with indifference on all things whatsoever that his private judgment has not endorsed. Moreover, he doubts the inspiration of the Bible, and has his misgivings as to the authenticity of some parts of it. He indulges a little suspicion as to the deity of Christ, and as to the doctrines of grace; he professes much intelligence, but he exhibits gross negligence. Strong in his self-assertion, he makes light of the Word of God, and the will of God, while he holds prophets and apostles in little esteem. Ah! well, brother! God is against you; he will make a fool of you one of these days, if you are so wise as to exalt yourself above his revelation. The world shall see your folly. I tell thee, captious questioner, that the Lord will bring thee down. "Tut, tut, tut, I do not believe in any of these things," exclaims the successful merchant; "I say the best thing is to push ahead on one's own account; I mean to save money, to get rich, to rise in the world, as others have done who have made capital of their own wits, and taken care of their own interest." This is the religion of many people; their creed being that God will help those who help themselves; in their account, the highest wisdom is to attend to this world, and as for the world to come, the best policy is to ignore it. To the statutes of the Lord they give no heed; Evidently you see no need to depend on God. With a stout pair of arms and a good clear brain, you are confident you can make your own way in the world. Will you prosper, sir? I tell you no; for God is against you. The Lord will you down. Whether it be strength of limbs and lungs, force of brain and intellect, cunning works or scheming plans you rely upon, he will lay you level with the dust ere long. You shall know that he who exalteth himself against his maker maketh a sorry adventure. Disaster and everlasting confusion are your inevitable fate. II. FURTHERMORE THE LORD SAYS, "I WILL EXALT THE LOW TREE."

Here is a word of comfort to some who specially need it. You remember Joseph in the dungeon, Israel in Egypt, Hannah in the family of Elkanah, David when Samuel would have passed him by, Hezekiah when Sennacherib rebuked him. Are not all these instances of God exalting the low tree? We have no time to expatiate on them, though they are well worthy of attentive study. But rather now let us ask, Where are the low trees here among ourselves? Who are they? The low trees are *those poor in spirit, who think others better than they are themselves*; who, instead of carving their names high, are willing to have them written low, because they feel they have nothing whereof to glory, nought wherein to boast. The low trees are the penitents, those who take their stand afar off with the publican, and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner"; you that feel your own weakness to do anything aright; you who are conscious of your own worthlessness, and afraid that God will never hear your prayers; you that are bowed down low with a sense of guilt, and hardly dare to look up to the place where his honour dwelleth; you are the low trees, you are such as God exalteth. You, too, who tremble at his word; when, you see the threatening, fear lest it should be executed upon you; when you hear the promise, hardly think it possible that it can belong to you—you are low trees—God shall exalt you. You that feel your ignorance, and are willing to be instructed; you that are modest as children, and ready to sit at the feet of Jesus; you that have been broken in pieces until you feel that a crumb of mercy would be more than you deserve, and are willing to take any dole he is pleased to give—you are the low tree. *And you that are despised, who walk in darkness and see no light; slandered for Christ's sake; reproached with crimes you never committed; you of whom the world is not worthy, though the world accounts you to be unworthy of its esteem—you are the low trees, and God shall exalt you.* God grant us grace to humble ourselves under his mighty

hand. The Lord exalteth the low trees. Is there a soul among you that is ready to despair—a low tree, so low that it can only compare itself to a bramble-bush? Well, God dwelt in a bush. You may think that if he should have enemy upon all other men, yet he must make an exception of you, so aggravated are your offenses, so depraved your disposition, and so alien to anything good your natural temperament. Oh! bless the Lord! He exalteth the low tree. If voice can reach now any humble, fearful, broken-hearted soul, even though that soul should say it is too good to be true, yet, in God's name, Let me assure you it is God's message to you. Rejoice, yea, sing unto your God, for he will lift up the poor from the dunghill, while he casteth down the mighty from the seats of their pomp and their places of power.

III. THE LORD HAS ALSO DECLARED THAT "HE WILL DRY UP THE GREEN TREE."

Whether that green tree be high or low, it does not matter; if it be green in itself, he will cut it down. Mark you, a man may be as high as heaven; if it is God that makes him high, he will stand; but if he be high in creature-strength, land creature-merits, and creature-glory, he shall be brought down; and a man may be low without merit, if he is merely mean and mire, paltry and pitiable, not worth a straw. That is not the spirit of lowliness that God blesses. In like manner, a man may be garden because he is planted by the rivers of God's living waters, that is healthy enough; but those that are like the *green bay tree of the Psalmist*, trees growing in their own soil, never transplanted by grace, green in the verdure of worldly prosperity, and taking all their delight in earthly things—those are the trees God will dry up. Many I know of this kind! They profess to be God's people, and they say, "Well, I never have any anxiety about my eternal state; I do not see why I should ever have any doubts or fears. I have no prickings of conscience." This green tree boasts "that its leaves never fade, that its evidences are always bright." "They have no changes; therefore, they fear not God." "They have not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They have no cares; they walk confidently, they talk arrogantly; they smile disdainfully at some of God's people who groan over their infirmities and bemoan their sins. Perhaps they go the length of protesting that they have no vices, and do no wrong; or they will say, "Why, as for me, I have overcome my bad habits and made amends for my youthful follies and indiscretions; and if I have any faults, they are only such as are natural to men, and they do not cause me any trouble." He will even turn round and rail on this wise, "I cannot think how some of God's people can do as they do." No; he is such a blessed, heavenly-minded hypocrite, that after he has condoned his own crimes, he condemns other people's customs; hence he holds up the severity of his judgment as a proof of the integrity of his character. He makes broad fringes to his own garment, and he cannot think how good men can wear such narrow fringes to theirs; he has a wide phylactery, and he cannot imagine how a godly man can wear a smaller one; he prays an hour and a half at the corner of the street; he cannot think that any man is godly who prays for ten minutes in his closet; he sounds a trumpet, and gives away three halfpence to the poor; he cannot understand people when they give away ten pounds, or a hundred pounds, in the cause of religion; he thinks they must have mercenary motives. He might stand up and say, "Look at me if you want to see what a man should be, how a Christian should live, and what his manner, and conduct, and conversation should be." Behold the man who counts himself the paragon of perfection. Have you never met with such green trees? I have. These people feed without fear, and mock without motive. They laugh at the idea of Paul's apprehension, when he said, "I keep under my body, lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." They think such fears inconsistent with the doctrine of final perseverance, though in this they are mistaken. A man may know that a true believer will persevere and yet be very much afraid that he

shall not himself hold out, because he may suspect himself whether he is a true believer at all. This green tree is never troubled about the future; it is all right with him; he has launched upon a smooth, deceitful sea, and he believes it will be calm until he gets to the other side, as for human weakness, he knows nothing at all about that. He hears God's children crying, "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" and he looks shocked.

The professor, too, who boasts his deep experience, is like this green tree. Young Christians he frowns at—he does not like young people. No; he would not have many young people in the church, because they might adulterate it, and bring down its spiritual tone. As to doctrine, he is profoundly learned; "he can a hair divide, betwixt the west and south-west side," and he censures at once the man who does not understand all the points. He understands more than the Bible reveals; he has improved upon the Scriptures; and those who cannot get up to his standard he despises. As for the poor, and meek, and sickly among the people of God, he, one of the strong ones, pushes them on either side, and will give them no rest. Never a man yet had anything to boast of as his own, but God was sure to dry him up. Let your life be green as emerald, it shall be brown as March dust before long. You seek sap and nourishment from yourselves. The spider's web—how soon it is blown away! Well it may, because it cometh out of the spider's own bowels. Everything that comes out of self, and lives on self, and hands on self, and fattens on self, no matter how green it may be, verily, verily, it shall be dried up. Lastly:—

IV. THE LORD MAKES "THE DRY TREE TO FLOURISH."

There are some dry trees to be pitied in their present condition, yet to be congratulated on their prospects. I would not say a word to encourage doubting, but I would say a great many words to encourage doubters. How many of God's people may be fitly compared to a dry tree! They have little joy; *they have not got to full assurance*. They are afraid to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Every night, before they go to bed, they feel such consciousness of sin that they can hardly sleep. They feel themselves so weak that where others go and think nothing of it, they dare not trust themselves. They are afraid to risk temptation; sometimes they are so conscious of their own weakness, that they do not exert themselves as they ought, and hence their low spirits, their melancholy, and their mourning. They think they are of no use to the church, they are half inclined to suspect it was a mistake for them to be baptized, and that they were to blame for uniting themselves with the people of God. "Oh!" say they, "if I be a lamb, I am the sickliest of the whole flock." Were I an heir of promise, should I feel the assaults of sin as I do? or should I be so much the prey of indwelling corruption, and become so dry and withered? Do they retire to the closet to pray, hardly a word can they utter. They come to, the assembly of believers, and though they do sing with their lips, the heart cannot sing as it would. There are times, too, when walking home they say, "I go where others go, but I get no comfort; if I were really the Lord's, should I be thus; if I did trust Christ, should I ever be so languid?" Brethren, if it is of your own bringing about that you are thus dry, I do not offer you any comfort; but if the Holy Spirit has led you to see your weakness, your nothingness, your deadness, then I am glad you have been brought to this pass, for God will cause the dry tree to flourish. When we are weak, then are we strong. The death warrant is gone out from God against everything that is of the creature. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled; not your bad nature only, but your good nature; not your vices only, but your virtues; not your sins alone, but your graces; all these must be contemned and despised so far as you venture to put them in the place at Christ. You must cry "Away with them; away with them," as if they were so much dung and dross. Christ's blood only for our hope, the Spirit's work only for our life. Here let us

stand, and we shall be safe. The dry tree by divine grace shall flourish; the green tree, deserted by the dew of heaven, shall dry up. The low tree, fostered by the husbandman, shall mount even to the stars; the high tree, cut down by the axe of judgment, shall lay outstretched along the plains of ruin for ever.

I think I see the last great day. There is a greater forest than this; this is but one corner of it. I see that forest stretched over sea and land, over mountain and valley. It is a forest of men. There stand the Pharisees, the self-righteous, the tyrants, the autocrats of haughty mien, the men of profound intellect with lofty brows, the men that questioned God's government; the infidels who said "Atheos," and denied his being. I see the high trees, that towered to such an elevation, and attracted so much admiration; and there, too, are the low trees contented to be low, for Christ of Nazareth was lowly. He, whose disciples they are, came riding on an ass even in the day of his highest earthly triumph. And now I hear the trumpet ring exceeding loud and long. Through the glades of that vast human forest the sound comes ringing broad and clear, "Smite! smite! smite! and let all the high trees fall!" O God, what a crash!

He smote great kings and slew famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever. He smites. What! another crash? The orthodox who rested in their orthodoxy, and the self-righteous men and women fall there; yonder the philosophic atheist, and here the scoffing sceptic; there the haughty persecutor, and there, again, the pompous priest and pretentious ceremonialist. Gather them; in Tophet, ordained of old, pile them together, cedar upon oak, and elm upon fir, gather them together. pile them on, pile them up; let the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, come upon the mighty pile. It is the funeral pyre of the giants. There lies the dead body of sin, and here comes the living spouse of sin, to be immolated upon that same pile. Her name is Pride. She comes; they clasp. The great transgression and the evil imagination, together they lie down, and the flames arise. Now the cedars, full of resin, give forth their flame, the sparks go up to heaven, and the flames even unto the throne of God, whilst I hear the voices of multitudes singing, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for thou hast judged the great temptress, even Pride, and thou hast given her up to be burned with fire!" But what of you, what of you, that will be faggots to that great burning? What of you, proud sons of men, that will be fuel to that flame? Turn ye, turn ye! Fly ye to Christ, and then you shall stand in the judgment, and join in the anthem, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Oh! that we all may be found among the humble—not the haughty—in our present life, and that we may be gathered among the blessed, not destroyed among those whom the Lord abhorreth, in our future destiny!

The Judgment Upon Zacharias

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"Thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."—Luke 1:20.

UNBELIEF is everywhere a great sin, and a grievous mistake. Unbelief has proved the ruin of those countless multitudes who, having heard the gospel, rejected it, died in their sins, have been consigned to the place of torment, and await the fiercer judgment of the last day. I might ask the question concerning this innumerable host, "Who slew all these?" The answer would be, "Unbelief." And when unbelief comes into the Christian's heart, as it does at times—for the truest believer has his times of doubt; even Abraham, the father of the faithful, sometimes had his misgivings—that unbelief does not assail his thoughts without withering his joys, and impairing his energies. There is nothing in the world that costs a saint so dear as doubt. If he disbelieve his God, he most assuredly robs himself of comfort, deprives himself of strength, and does himself a real injury. The case of Zacharias may be a lesson to the Lord's people. It is to them I am going to speak: Zacharias is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief. In reviewing these, we mark:—

I. THE CHARACTER AND POSITION OF ZACHARIAS.

Here we cannot fail to discover some profitable lesson. He was undoubtedly *a believer*. He is said, in the sixth verse, to have been righteous before God. No man ever obtained such a reputation except by faith. "The just shall live by faith." No other righteousness than that which is faith is of any esteem in God's account. Such was the righteousness of Abraham, and such was the righteousness of all the saints before the advent of our Redeemer. Such, too, has been the standard ever since. Zacharias evidently was a real believer. Yet for all that, when the angel appeared to him, and God gave him the promise of a son, he was amazed, bewildered, incredulous, and could not credit, but only question the announcement. "How shall I know that these things shall be?"

Nor was he merely a genuine believer; he was *well instructed and greatly enlightened*, for he was a priest, and, as a priest considered, he was righteous before God, and blameless, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. That he was well instructed in the Word of God is undeniable. He could not otherwise have discharged his duty, for the priest's lips must keep knowledge, and he must teach men. Being proficient in the one, and competent for the other, ignorance offered him no excuse. Moreover, as a man of years, he was probably to be classed among the experienced saints of his time. He had borne the burden and heat of the day, and received proof upon proof of the abundant mercy of God. Now mark this. For any of us to doubt, who have been justified by faith is a shameful delinquency. For those to doubt who have, in addition to their first convictions, a thousand confirmations of the truth they have embraced, who are acquainted with the covenant and its rich inventory of promises, who are deeply taught in the things of God—for

such to doubt involves a higher degree of guilt. I do not think that had Zacharias been a mere babe in grace, or an inexperienced stripling, his unbelief would have met with so stern a rebuke. It was because he was a venerable priest, one thoroughly schooled in sacred truth, a man who for many years instructed the people of Israel in the oracles of God, that it became a crying evil for him to say, "Whereby shall I know this?" when the angel told him of his prayer being heard, and of the manner of answer the Lord would vouchsafe him.

The high office that Zacharias held as a priest caused him to be *looked up to*. Hence his conduct was more narrowly watched, and his example had a wider influence. On a similar account we have need, all of us in our several spheres, to consider the effect of our actions upon others. The higher a man's position, the greater his responsibility; and in the event of any delinquency, the graver his offense. For you to disbelieve, my dear brother, who are at the head of a household, is worse than a personal infirmity; it is a violation of duty to your family. And you, dear friend, who preach the gospel, for you to disbelieve, who are looked upon by many as an advanced Christian, as a mature saint whose example may be safely followed by those who listen to your counsels—this is a great and a crying evil, whereby you dishonour the Lord. I pray God that your conscience may be tenderly sensitive, and that you may be aroused to a sense of the dishonour you bring to him by your faithlessness.

How *peculiarly favoured* Zacharias was! An angel of the Lord appeared unto him. Not to any of the other priests, when they were offering incense, did such a heavenly visitor come. And what welcome tidings he brought! It was a wonderful message that he was to be the father of a child great in the sight of the Lord, one who should minister in the spirit and power of Elias, and become the forerunner of the Messiah. This surely was a signal instance of Divine favour. And mark this, beloved, our God is very jealous of those whom he highly favours. You cannot have privileged communications from the Lord, or be admitted into close communion with him, without finding that he is a jealous God. The nearer we draw to him, the more hallowed our sense of his presence will be. But to doubt his Word, or question the fulfillment of his promise when he speaks kindly to us, must incur his censure. I speak after the manner of men; we do not expect from a stranger the esteem which we ought to merit from our servants. But our friends, who know us better than servants, ought to trust us more implicitly. And yet beyond common friendship in the near relation and tender attachment of a wife to her husband, the most unqualified confidence should be reposed. Even so, my brethren, if you and I have ever been permitted to lean our heads on Jesus' bosom; if we have sat down at his banquets, and his banner over us has been love; if we have been separated from the world by peculiar fellowship with Christ, and have had choice promises given us, we cannot, like Zacharias, ask, "Whereby shall I know" without grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and bringing upon ourselves some sad chastisement as the result.

What *soothing comfort had just been administered* to Zacharias by the angel of the Lord! Was not the manner of the salutation fitted to allay terror, and inspire him with trust? The troubled thoughts that perplexed him, and the fear that fell upon him when the angel appeared standing at the right hand of the altar, met with no rebuke. If it was natural that so unwonted a vision should startle him, there was a gentle sympathising tenderness in the angel's address that might well have stilled the throbbings of his heart. "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard." And so is it with us when the consolations of God have been neither few nor small, and when his good will towards us has been pointedly expressed, does it not make doubt and questioning more inexcusable? Do we not thereby aggravate the sin? Some of us have lived in the very bosom of comfort. Precious

promises have been brought home to our souls; we have eaten of the marrow and the fatness; we have drunk the wines on the lees well refined. We are no strangers to the blessing of his eternal and unchanging love, or to the light of his countenance, which they prove who find grace in his eyes. Oh! if we begin to doubt after these discriminating love tokens, what apology can we offer? How can we hope to escape from the chastening rod?

Moreover, *the misgivings that Zacharias betrayed relate to the very subject on which his supplications were offered.* It was in response to his own petition that the angel said to him, "Thy prayer is heard." I marvel at his faith that he should persevere in prayer for a boon which seemed, at his own and his wife's age, to have been out of the course of nature, and beyond the domain of hope, but I marvel a great deal more that, when the answer came to that very prayer, Zacharias could not believe it. So full often is it with us; nothing would surprise some of us more than to receive an answer to some of our prayers. Though we believe in the efficacy of prayer, at times we believe so feebly that when the answer comes, as come it does, we are astounded and filled with amazement. We can scarcely think of it as a purpose of God, it seems rather to us like a happy coincidence. Surely this adds greatly to the sin of unbelief. If we have been asking for mercy without expecting it, and pleading promises while harbouring mistrust, every prayer we have offered has been only a repetition of our secret unbelief; and it is God's faithfulness that brings our inconsistency to light.

One other reflection is suggested by the narrative. *Zacharias appears to have staggered at a promise which others, whom we might well imagine to have been weaker in faith than himself, implicitly believed.* The veteran falters where a babe in grace might have taken courage. And is it not always a scandal if any of us who have been conspicuously favoured of God are ready to halt, while our feebler brethren and sisters are animated and encouraged? No dubious thought seems to have crossed the mind of Elizabeth, no incredulous expression fell from her lips. She said, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me."

This case was the very opposite of that of Abraham and Sarah. There Abraham believed, but Sarah doubted; here the wife believes in the face of her husband's scruples. In like manner, Mary, that humble village maiden, accepts with simple faith the high and holy salutation with which she was greeted. She just basks a natural question, and that being answered, she replies, "Be it unto me, according to thy Word." Her surprise was soon exchanged for joy, and by-and-by she begins to sing with a loud voice, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Not a little remarkable is this opening chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Woman, who had been in the background through long preceding generations, seems suddenly to take a foremost place. Zacharias and Joseph stand in doubt, while Elizabeth and Mary exultingly believe. And who knows but I may be addressing some poor woman here who, in the depth of affliction, bodily suffering, and poverty, nevertheless rejoices in God with all her heart? But without a doubt, I am now speaking to many a man who is vexed with trifling cares, murmurs bitterly because of petty annoyances, and distrusts his God when clouds come over the sky so that he sees not his way. Shame on our unbelief. Think shame of yourselves because of it, I pray you. Never does it disgrace us more than when the weaklings of the Lord's family put us to the blush by the simplicity and sincerity of their faith. The character and position of Zacharias may furnish a striking moral, but I do urgently entreat each Christian to point the keen edge of criticism at himself, and consider how much he is personally to blame for his own unbelief. Let us now proceed to investigate:—

II. THE FAULT OF ZACHARIAS.

Whence this perilous wavering at that privileged hour His fault was that *he looked at the difficulty*. "I am an old man," said he, "and my wife is well stricken in years." And while he looked at the difficulty he would fain suggest a remedy; he wanted a sign. "Whereby shall I know this?" It was not enough for him that God had said so; he wanted some collateral evidence to guarantee the truth of the word of the Lord. This is a very common fault among really good people. They look for a sign. I have often trembled in my own soul when I have felt an inclination thus to tempt the Lord by looking for some minute circumstance to verify a magnificent promise. When I have thought, "Hereby shall I know whether he does hear prayer or not," a cold shiver has passed over me, the shudder has gone through my soul that ever I should think of challenging the truth of God's word, when the fact is so certain. To us who have full often cried unto the Lord in our distresses and been delivered out of our troubles, to raise such a question is indeed ungrateful. For a child of God who habitually prays to his Father in heaven to look upon his faithfulness as a matter of uncertainty is to degrade himself, and to dishonour his Lord. Yet there is no denying the tendency and disposition among us to want a sign. As we read a prophecy of the future, we crave a token in the present. If the Lord were pleased to give us a sign, or if he told us to ask for a sign, we should be quite right in attaching a high importance thereto, but for us to doubt a plain promise, and, therefore, ask a sign, is to sin against the Lord. Sometimes we have wanted signs in spiritual things. Meet and proper is it for us to rejoice in the true delights of fellowship with Christ, but it ill becomes us to make our feelings a kind of test of our acceptance, or to say, "I will not believe God if he does not indulge me with certain manifestations of grace; unless he gives me the sweetmeats I crave, I will be sulky and sullen, and refuse to eat the children's bread." Why, such conduct is wilful and wicked; it is weak, and utterly inexcusable. Yet how many of us have been guilty of this folly? Now, as Zacharias stood upon the threshold of the gospel dispensation, and he was the first among those who heard the glad tidings to express unbelief, it was necessary that he should be made an example of.

God would show at the very outset, even before John the Baptist was born, that unbelief could not be tolerated nor should it go unchastened. Therefore, his servant, Zacharias, must, as soon as he had asked for a sign, have such a sign as would make him suffer for months to come, constrain him to be sorry that he had ever dared to proffer the request. Oh! beloved, is our faith still so weak, and our experience still so contracted, that we cannot yet trust our God? Twenty years have we known him. Has he been a wilderness to us? Have his mercy and truth ever failed us in time of need? Shall all his tender dealings with us count for nothing? Do ye think so lightly of the gift of his Son, the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the dally providence which has guarded you, and of the hourly benediction which has been vouchsafed to you, that ye would fain put aside these unfailing benefits from your grateful remembrance, while you indulge in some paltry whim, and tempt the Lord your God by your mistrust? That be far from any of us! We would rather take up the position of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who, when arraigned before Nebuchadnezzar, and adjudged to be thrown into the furnace of fire, said, "Our God is able to deliver us; but," they added, "if not (though he should do nothing of the kind), nevertheless be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." That is the spirit in which we ought to walk before God—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." What if he does not spare my mother's precious life? What if he does not preserve my child from the ravages of the fatal epidemic? What if he take away the desire of mine eyes with a stroke? What if my business should cease to thrive? What if my health fail and my strength decay? What if I be dishonoured by the

scandal of my neighbours? Shall I, therefore, cast off my allegiance to God, or betray my trust in him? Am I to engage in rebellion like this? Not flood nor flame could quench or extinguish his love to me. Shall anxiety or tribulation, disappointment or disaster sever my heart from devotion to him? Nay, God give me grace to see my cattle destroyed, and my goods swept away, and my children cut off in their prime, and to hear cruel taunts from the wife of my bosom; to be covered with sore boils, and to sit on a dunghill and scrape myself with a potsherd and find my best friends miserable comforters, and yet, in the midst of accumulated distresses, to be able to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; he has not failed to deliver me hitherto, and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Though the fig-tree should not blossom, though the flocks and herds be cut off, yet will I trust in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation." If true to our high profession, the Christian's faith should not borrow its hue from the circumstances by which he is surrounded. To hanker after signs that a promise shall be fulfilled is obviously to show distrust of the promiser. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." So shall you be restrained from asking for a petty sign to justify you in relying on his princely bounty. The Lord keep you from this great transgression! We pass on to observe:—

III. THE PENALTY ZACHARIAS INCURRED.

His morbid propensity was followed by *a mortifying punishment*. He had doubted, and he became dumb, and as the narrative clearly shows us, he was deaf likewise. Such was his chastisement, and it was sent not in anger, but in God's own covenant love. What a salutary medicine! Although bitter to the taste, how effective it was! Read his song, and you will see the evidence. He had been for months silent, quiet, shut out from all sound, and unable to make any. But well he had occupied his months of seclusion. He had searched the prophets—do you see that? He had been musing much upon the coming one—do you see that? Deep humility had taken the place of arrogant presumption. He was bowed down before the majesty of God, yet at the same time full of peace and blissful hope. Thus he looked into the glorious future. Oh! dear brethren, if you are prone to doubt, this sickness of the mind will require a strong corrective. Very likely God will give you some sharp medicine, but it shall work for your good. As his child, he will not chasten you so as to injure you, but he will chasten you so as to benefit you. I do not think children generally court the rod, however beneficial it may be, and yet I am quite sure there is no wise child of God who would not shrink from the graver ills which render such discipline essential to his soul's health.

See how judgment *was tempered with mercy*. The punishment sent to Zacharias was not so severe as it might have been. Instead of being struck deaf and dumb, he might have been struck dead. As I read this passage, I wondered that God had not struck me deaf and dumb when I have spoken unbelieving words—when I have been depressed in spirit, and spoken unadvisedly with my lips. Oh! had the Lord been wroth with me, and said, "If that is your witness about me, you shall never speak again." That would have been most just, and I might have been a mournful instance of his indignation against his unbelieving servants; he has not dealt so with me; glory be to his name!

And this chastisement *did not invalidate the promise*. The Lord did not say, "Well, Zacharias, as you don't believe it, your wife, Elizabeth, shall not have a son. There shall be a John born, but he shall not come to your house." Oh! no; that is a grand passage—"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." The promise still stands. God does not take advantage of our unbelief to cry off and say, "I will give thee no blessings because thou doubttest me"—no, but having

said it, he does it and his Word does not return unto him void. Even the trembling, doubting children, though they get the rod, get the blessing too; and the promise is fulfilled, though the father is dumb when the blessing comes. Very painful, indeed, was his chastisement. One would not like to be deaf and dumb for a day; but to be deaf and dumb for the space of nine months must have been a very painful trial to this man. Moreover, he could not bless the people; he could not speak a word; he could not instruct the people; he was useless for that part of the priest's work; and when the song went up within the hallowed walls of the temple, he could not hear it. He might know by signs that they were singing a hallelujah, yet his ears could not catch its grateful strains. That poor tongue of his was silent. He could not add a note to the volume of praise that went up to the God he loved. It must have been mournful to him to have no prayer in the family which he could hear, and in which he could join, and to be as good as dead for all practical purposes. Now I am afraid thence are many believers who have had to suffer something like this, for many days, on account of their unbelief. I think I can point out some who are unable to hear the gospel as once they did many years ago, a friend said that he could not hear me preach. I said to him, "Buy a horn." "No," he said, "it is not your voice; I can hear that, but I don't enjoy it." My reply was, "Perhaps that is my fault, but I am far from sure that it is not your own." I fear, in such cases, it is quite as often the hearer's fault as the preacher's fault. At any rate, when others profit, and our judgment approves, though our hearts find no refreshment, there is reason to suspect that in the dullness of our senses we are compelled to bear chastisement for our unbelief. You go where others go, and find no solace. You hear what edifies and comforts them, but there is no cheer for you. You are deaf; your ears are closed to what the Lord says. Very often it has happened, I fear, to some here, that, for want of faith, they have lost their speech. Time was when they could tell of the Lord's goodness, but they seem silent now. They could sing once, but their harps are hung on the willows now. As they get with their companions, they seem as if they have lost all their pleasant conversation. If they try the old accustomed strings of the time-worn harp, the ancient skill is gone. They cannot praise God as once they did; and all because on one occasion, when the promise was clear before their eyes, they would challenge and mistrust it. They could not rely upon their God. Little do we know how many Fatherly chastisements come upon us as the result of our unbelief.

The lessons I gather, and with which I conclude, are these—First, if any of you, beloved, are weak in faith, do not be satisfied about it. Cry to God. Our God deserves better homage of us than a weak, attenuated faith can render him. He deserves to be trusted with such confidence as a child gives his parent. Ask him to increase your faith. And you who have faith, oh! keep it jealously, exercise it habitually; pray to the Lord to preserve it. Never begin to walk according to the sight of the eyes. Confer not with flesh and blood. Don't come down from that blessed height of simple confidence in God, but ask that you may abide there, and no longer doubt. The Church wants believers to believe for her, and to pray for her. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Art thou strong in faith, be thou stronger still; art thou weak in faith, be thou strong.

But let the unbeliever, the utter unbeliever, tremble. If a good man, a saved man, a noble and a blameless man was nevertheless for months struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all? He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God. To you, unbeliever, no angel Gabriel will appear, but the destroying angel awaits you. What shall be your fearful chastisement? You will be silent; it will be eternal. Oh! you shall stand silent at the judgment-seat of Christ, unable to offer any excuse for your rebellion and unbelief.

Unbelief will destroy the best of us: faith will save the worst of us. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath eternal life—he that believeth not (whatever else his apparent excellences will assuredly perish. Faith, faith! this is the priceless saving thing to every one of us. The gift be yours to believe. The grace be yours to inherit the righteousness of faith. The joy be yours to believe in Jesus Christ with all your hearts. The triumph be yours to believe now to the saving of your souls. Amen.

Our Glorious Transforming

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's-day Evening, September 3rd, 1871.

"But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Ephesians 2:13.

I DO not want you to feel at this time as if you were listening to a sermon, or to any sort of set discourse, but rather I should like, if it were possible, that you should feel as if you were alone with the Saviour, and were engaged in calm and quiet meditation; and I will try to be the prompter, standing at the elbow of your contemplation, suggesting one thought and then another; and I pray, dear brethren and sisters in, Christ, as many of you as are truly in him, that you may be able so to meditate as to be profited, and to say at the close, "My meditation on him was sweet. I will be glad in his name." There are three very simple things in the text. The first is *what we were*. Some time ago "we were far off." But secondly, *what we are*—we are "made nigh" And then there is the how, *the means of this great change*. It is "in Christ Jesus," and it is added, "by the blood of Christ." First, then, let us with humility consider, as believers:—

I. WHAT WE WERE.

There was a day when we passed from death unto life. All of us who are children of God have undergone a great and mysterious change; we have been new created, we have been born again. If any of you have not experienced this great change, I can only pray that you may, but you will not be likely to take much interest in the theme of meditation this evening. As many of you as have experienced this great change are now asked to recollect what you were. You were far off, first, in the respect that *you were aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel. The Jew was brought nigh. The Jewish people were favoured of God with light, while the rest of the world remained in darkness. "To them he gave" the oracles; with them he made a covenant; but as for the rest of the nations, they were left unclean and far off. They could not come near to God. This was our condition. We were Gentiles. We had no participation in the covenant that God had made with Abraham; we had no share in the sacrifices of Aaron or his successors. We could not come in by the way of circumcision. We were not born after the flesh, and we had no right to that fleshly covenant, however great its privileges. We are brought nigh now. All that the Jew ever had we have. We have all his privileges, and more. He had but the shadow, we have the substance. He had but the type: we have the reality. But aforetime we had neither shadow nor substance; we were afar off, and had no participation in them.

And, beloved, when we think of our distance from God, there are three or four ways in which we may illustrate it. We were far off from God, for *a vast cloudland of ignorance hung between our souls and him*. We were lost as in a tangled wood in which there was no pathway. We were like some bird drifted out to sea that should be bereft of the instinct which guides it on its course,

driven to and fro by every wind, and tossed like a wave by every tempest. We knew not God, neither did we care to know. We were in the dark with regard to him and his character; and when we did make guesses concerning God, they were very wide of the truth, and did not help to bring us at all near. He has taught us better now; he has taught us to call him Father, and to know that he is love. Since we have known God, or, rather, have been known of God, we have come nigh, but once our ignorance kept us very far off. Worse than that, there was between us and God a vast range of the *mountains of sin*. We can measure the Alps, the Andes have been sealed, but the mountains of sin no man has ever measured yet. They are very high. They pierce the clouds. Can you think of the mountains of your sin, beloved? Reckon them all up since your birth-sins of childhood, and youth, and manhood, and riper years; your sins against the gospel, and against the law; sins with the body, and sins with the mind; sins of every shape and form—ah! what a mountain range they make! And you were on one side of that mountain, and God was on the other. A holy God could not wink at sin, and you, an unholy being, could not have fellowship with the thrice Holy God. What a distance!—an impassable mountain sundered you from your God. It has all gone now. The mountains have sunk into the sea, our transgressions have all gone, but, oh! what hills they were once, and what mountains they were but a little while ago! In addition to these mountains, there was, on the other side nearest to God, *a great gulf of divine wrath*. God was angry, justly angry, with us. He could not have been God if sin had not made him angry. He that plays with sin is very far from knowing anything of the character of the Most High. There was a deep gulf. Ah! even the lost in hell know not how deep it is. They have been sinking: but this abyss hath no bottom. God's love is infinite. Who knoweth the power of shine anger, O Most High? It is all filled now, as far as we are concerned. Christ has bridged the chasm. He has taken us to the other side of it; he ho brought us nigh; but what a gulf it was! Look down and shudder. Have you ever stood on a glacier and looked down a crevasse, and taken a great stone and thrown it down, and waited till at last you heard the sound as it reached the bottom? Have not you shuddered at the thought of falling down that steep? But there you stood but a little while ago, an heir of wrath, even as others. So the Apostle puts it, "even as others." Oh! how far off you were!

Nor was this all, for there was another division between you and God. When, dear friends, we were brought to feel our state, and to have some longings after the Most High, had the mountains of sin been moved and the chasm of wrath been filled, yet there remained another distance of our own making. There was *a sea of fear* rolling between us and God. We dare not come to him. He told us he would forgive, but we could not think it true. He said that the blood would cleanse us—the precious blood of the atoning sacrifice—but we thought our stains too crimson to be removed. We dared not believe in the infinite compassion of our Father. We ran from him; we could not trust him. Do you not remember those times when to believe seemed an impossibility, and salvation by faith appeared to be as difficult a thing as salvation by the works of the law? That sea has gone away now. We have been ferried o'er its streams. We have no fear of God now in the form of trembling, slavish fear; we are brought nigh and say, "Abba Father," with an untrembling tongue. You see then something of the distance there was between us and God, but I will illustrate it in another way. Think of God a moment. Your thoughts cannot reach him: he is infinitely pure; the heavens are not clean in his sight; and he charges his angels with folly. That is one side of the picture. Now look at yourself, a worm that has rebelled against its Creator, loathsome with sin, through and through defiled. When I see a beggar and a prince stand together I see a distance, but ah! it is but an inch, a span, compared with the infinite leagues of distance in character and nature

between God and the fallen man. Who but Christ could have lifted up from so low an estate to so high a condition—from fellowship with devils unto communion with Jehovah himself? The distance was inconceivable. We were lost in wonder at the greatness of the love that made it all to vanish. We were afar off.

Now I have stated that very simply. Think it over a minute. And what do you feel as the result of your thought? Why, humility rises. Suppose you are a very experienced Christian, and a very intelligent reader of the Bible; suppose that for many years you have been able to maintain a consistent character. Ah! my dear brother, my dear sister, you have nothing whereof glory when you recollect what you were, and what you would have been still if it had not been for sovereign grace. You, perhaps, have forgotten a little that you were just what the Bible says. You have been so contemplating your present privileges that you have for a while failed to remember that it is only by the grace of God that you are what you are. Let these considerations bring you back to your true condition. And now with lowly reverence at the cross-foot bow down your soul and say, "My Lord, between me and the greatest reprobate there is no difference but what thy grace has made; between me and lost souls in hell there is no difference except what shine infinite compassion has deigned to make. I humbly bless thee, and adore thee, and love thee, because thou hast brought me nigh."

And now we shall continue our contemplation, but take the second point. We have a bitter pill in this first one, but the next consideration kills it, takes the bitterness away, and sweetens it. It is:

II. WHAT WE ARE—WHAT WE ARE

"We are made nigh through the blood of Christ." You will please to observe that the Apostle does not say, "We hope we are"; he speaks positively, as every believer should. Nor does he say, "We shall be." There are privileges reserved for the future, but here he is speaking of a present blessing, which may be now the object of distinct definite knowledge, which ought to be, indeed, a matter of present experimental enjoyment. We are brought nigh. What means he by this? Does not he mean, first, what I have already said, that as we were far off, being Gentiles, and not of the favoured commonwealth of Israel, we are now brought nigh, that is to say, *we have all the privileges of the once favoured race*. Are they the seed of Abraham? So, are we. for he was the Father of the faithful, and we, having believed, have become his spiritual children. Had they an altar? We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. Had they any high priest? We have an high priest we have one who has entered into the heavenly. Had they a sacrifice and paschal supper? We have Christ Jesus, who, by his one offering, hath for ever put away our sin, and who is to-day the spiritual meat on which we feed. All that they had we have, only we have it in a fuller and clearer sense. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and they have come to us. But we are brought a great deal nearer than the Jew—than most of the Jews were, for you know, brethren, the most devout Jew could not offer sacrifice to God; I mean, as a rule. Prophets were exceptions. They could not offer sacrifices themselves; they could bring the victim, but there were some special persons who must act as priests. The priest came nigh to God on the behalf of the people. Listen, O ye children of God, who were once afar off! It is the song of heaven. Let it be your song on earth—"Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hath made us priests and kings." *We are all priests* if we love the Saviour. Every believer is a priest. It is for him to bring his sacrifice of prayer, and thanksgiving, and come in, even into the holy place in the presence of the Most High. And I might say more, for no priest went into the most holy place of all, save one, the high priest, and he once in the year, not without blood and not without smoke and of incense, ventured into the most holy place. Be we, brethren, see the

veil taken right away, and we come up to the mercy-seat without the trembling which the high priest felt of old, for we see the blood of Jesus on the mercy-seat and the veil rent, and we come, boldly to the throne of heavenly grace to obtain grace to help in time of need. Oh! how near we are; nearer than the ordinary Jew; nearer than the priest; as near as the high priest himself, for in the person of Christ we are where he is, that is, at the throne of God. Let me say, dear brethren, that we are near to God today, for *all that divides us from God is gone*. The moment a sinner believes, all that mountain of sin ceases to be. Can you see those hills—those towering Andes? Who shall climb them? But lo! I see one come who has the soar of one that has died upon a cross. I see him hold up his pierced hand, and one drop of blood falls on the hills, and they smoke; they dissolve like the fat of rams; they burn to vapour, and they are gone. There is not so much as a vestige of them left. Oh! glory be to God, there is no sin in God's book against the believer; there is no record remaining; he hath taken it away and nailed it to his cross, and triumphed in the deed. As the Egyptians were all drowned in the sea, and Israel said, "The depths have covered them; there was not one of them left," so may every believer say, "All sin is gone, and we are pure, accepted in the Beloved, justified through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ." Oh! how glorious this nearness is when all distance is gone!

And now, brethren, we are near to God, for *we are his friends*. He is our mighty friend, and we love him in return. Better than that, *we are his children*. A friend might be forgotten, but a child—a father's bowels yearn towards him. We are his children. He has chosen us that we may approach unto him, that we may dwell in his courts and abide, and go no more out for ever." The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." And this is our privilege. And yet even more than that. Can anybody here imagine how near Jesus Christ is to God, So near are we, for that is truth which the little verse sings:—

"So near—so very near to God,
More near I cannot be;
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he."

If we are, indeed, in Christ, we are one with him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and he has said, "Where I am, there shall also my servants be," and he has declared that we shall receive the glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. What nearness is this!

Now I have stated that truth, I want you now to feed on it for a minute, and draw the natural conclusions, and feel the fit emotion. Beloved, if you are brought so near to God, what manner of lives ought you to lead? Common subjects ought never to speak traitorous word, but a member of the Privy Council, one who is admitted to the Court, should certainly be loyal through and through. Oh! how we ought to love God, who has made us nigh!—a people near unto him. How ought heavenly things and holy things to engross our attention! How joyously we ought to live too, for with such high favours as these it would be ungrateful to be unhappy! We are near to God, brethren. Then God sees us in all things—our heavenly Father knows what we have need of; he is always watching over us for good. We are near to him—let us pray as if we were near God. There are some prayers that are dreadful from the distance there is evidently in the mind of the offerer. Too generally liturgies are addresses to a God too far off to be reached, but the humble familiarity which boldly comes trembling with fear, but rejoicing with faith, into the presence of God—this becomes those who are made nigh. When a man is near a neighbour whom he trusts he tells him his griefs, he asks

his help. Deal thus with God; live on him, live for him, live in him. Be never distant from a God who has made you nigh unto himself. Our life ought to be a heavenly one, seeing that we are brought nigh to God—the God of heaven. Brethren, how assured every one of us may be of our safety if we are, indeed, believers in Christ, for if we are made nigh by love and friendship to our God, he cannot leave us. If, when we were enemies, he brought us nigh, will he not keep us now he has made us friends? He loved us so as to bring us up from the depths of sin, when we had no thoughts, nor desires towards good, and now he has taught us to love him and to long for him, will he forsake us? Impossible! What confidence this doctrine gives!

And once more, dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord has brought us nigh, what hope we ought to have for those who are farthest off from God to-day! Never be you amongst that pharisaical crew who imagine that fallen women or degraded men cannot be uplifted again. Ye were sometimes far off, but he has made you nigh. The distance was so great in your case that surely he who met that can also meet the distance in another case. Have hope for any who can be got under the sound of the gospel, and labour on until the more hopeless, the most hopeless, are brought there. Oh! let us gird up our loins for Christian work! believing that if God has saved us, there remain no impossibles. The chief of sinners was saved years ago. Paul said so. He had no mock modesty. I believe he said the truth The chief of sinners has gone through the gate into heaven, and there is room for the second worst to get through—there is room for thee, friend, as there is room for me. The God that brought me nigh has taught me to know that no man is beyond the reach of his grace. But I must leave that with you, hoping that it will flavour all your thoughts to-night. Once more. The last thing we are to consider is:—

III. HOW THE GREAT CHANGE WAS WROUGHT.

We were put into Christ, and then through the blood we were made nigh. The doctrine of the Atonement is no novelty in this house. We have preached it often, nay, we preach it constantly, and let this mouth be dumb when it prefers any other theme to that old, old story of the passion, the substitution, and consequent redemption by blood. Beloved, it is the blood of Jesus that has done everything for us. Our debts Christ has paid; therefore, those debts have ceased to be. The punishment of our sin Christ has borne and, therefore, no punishment is due to us; substitution has met a case that is never to be met by any other means. The just has suffered for the unjust to bring us to God. We deserved the sword, but it has fallen upon him who deserved it not, who voluntarily placed himself in our room instead, that he might give compensation to justice and full liberty to mercy. It is by the blood that we are brought nigh then. Christ has suffered in our stead, and we are, therefore, forgiven. But think about that blood a minute. It means suffering; it means a life surrendered with agony. Suffering—we talk about it; ah! but when you feel it, then you think more of the Saviour. When the bones ache, when the body is racked, when sleep goes from the eyelids, when the mind is depressed, when the head turns; ah! then we say, "My Saviour, I see a little of the price that redeemed me from going down into the pit." The mental and physical suffering of Christ are both worthy of our consideration, but depend upon it his soul's sufferings were the soul of his sufferings; and when we are under deep depression, brought near even unto death with sorrow, then again we guess how the Saviour bought us. The early Church was noted in its preaching for preaching facts. I am afraid now that we are too noted for forgetting facts and preaching doctrine. Let us have doctrine by all means, but, after all the fact is the great thing. When Paul gave a summary of the gospel which he triad preached, he said, "This is the gospel that I have preached—that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried, rose again." There in Gethsemane, where bloody sweat

bedews the soil; there on the pavement, where the lash tears again and again into those blessed shoulders till the purple streams gush down, and the ploughers make their furrows, and the blood fills them; there when they hurl him on his back to the ground, and fasten his hands to the wood with rough iron; there when they lift him up and dislocate his bones, when they fix the gross into the earth; there when they sit and watch him, and insult his prayers, and mock his thirst, while he hangs naked to his shame in the midst of a ribald crew; there where God himself forsakes him, where Jehovah turns his face away from him, where the sufferer shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—there it is that we were brought nigh, even we that were far off. Adore your Saviour, my brethren—bow before him. He is not here. for he is risen; but your hearts can rise, and you can bow at his feet. Oh! kiss those wounds of his; ask that by faith you may put your finger into the print of his nails, and your hand into his side. "Be not faithless, but believing," and let all your sacred powers of mind assist your imagination and faith to realise now the price with which the Saviour brought you from a bondage intolerable. God grant you grace to feel something of this.

I have laid the truth before you. Now sit down and quietly turn it over in your mind. And what will strike you? Why, surely first *the heinousness of sin*. Was there nothing that could wash out sin but blood, and was there no blood that could wash it out hut the blood of the Son of God? O sin! O sin! what a black, what a damning thing thou art! Only the blood of an incarnate God can wash out the smallest stain of sin. My heart, I charge thee to hate it; my eyes, look not on it; my ears, listen not to its siren charm; my feet, run not in its paths; my hands, refuse to handle it; my soul, loathe, loathe that which murdered Christ, and thrust a spear through the tenderest heart that ever beat.

Next to that, do you not feel emotions of *intense gratitude* that, if such a price was needed, such a price was found? God had but one son, dearer to him than Isaac was to Abraham, and though there was none to command him to do it, as there was in Abraham's case, yet voluntarily the gracious Father led his son up to the cross. and it pleased the Father to bruise, him; he put him to grief; he gave him up for us. Which shall I most admire—the love of the Father, or the love of tile Son? Blessed be God, we are not asked to make distinctions, for they are one. "I and my Father are one," and in that sacred act of the sacrifice for the sins of men the Father and the Son are both to be worshipped with equal love. You see, then, the heinousness of sin in some degree, for its needing for its pardon the love of Jesus, and the love of God that gave the Saviour's blood.

But, dear friends, ere I sit down, let me remark that we learn from our text and from the whole contemplation. what it is that would bring us nearer experimentally than we are to-night. How did I get nigh first? Through the blood. Do I want to get near to God to-night? Have I been wandering? Is my heart cold? Have I got into a backsliding state? Do I want to come close now to my blessed Father, and again to look up to him, and say, " Abba," and rejoice in that filial spirit? There is no way for me to come nearer except the blood. Let me think of it then, and let me see' its infinite value; it is sufficient, let me hear its everlasting, ever-prevalent plea, and oh! then I shall feel my soul drawn; for that which draws us nearer to God, and will draw us right up to heaven, is none other than the crimson cord Of the Saviour's endless, boundless, dying, but ever-living love.

And this teaches me, and teaches you, too, and here I have done, *what it is we ought to preach and teach* if we would bring the, far-off ones in—if we would bring near to God those that now wander from him. Philosophy, bah! You will philosophize men into hell, but never into heaven. Ceremonies you can amuse children, and you can degrade men into idiots with them, but you can

do nothing else. The gospel, and the essence of that gospel, which is the blood of Jesus Christ—it is this which is an omnipotent leverage to uplift the filth, debauchery, and poverty of this city into life, into light, and into holiness. There is no battering-ram that will ever shake the gates of hell except that which every time it strikes sounds this word, "Jesus, Jesus, the Crucified." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If it will save us, it will save others; only let us spread the good news, let us tell the good tidings. Every one of us ought to preach the gospel somehow. You that speak in common conversation forget not to speak of him. Scatter such tracts as are most full of Christ—they are the best; others will be of little use. Write letters concerning him. Remember his name is like ointment, full of sweetness, but to get the perfume you must pour it forth. Oh! that we could make fragrant all this neighbourhood with the savour of that dear name! Oh! that wherever we dwell every one of us might so think of Christ in our hearts that we could not help speaking of him with our lips! Living, may we rejoice in him; dying, may we triumph in him. May our last whisper on earth be what our first song shall be in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood." Oh! I pray God to make this season of communion very sweet to you, and I think it will be if you have the key of our meditation to-night, and can unlock the door—if you know how far off you were, and see how near you are by the precious blood.

Oh! there are some far-off ones here to-night, however, to whom I must say just this word. Far-off one, God can make you nigh; you can be made nigh to-night. Whoever you may be, he is able still to save, but the blood must make you nigh—the blood of Jesus. Trust him. To believe is to live, and to believe means only and simply to trust, to depend upon. That is faith. Have confidence in Christ's sacrifice, and you are saved. God grant you may be enabled to do it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

A Solemn Embassy

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Corinthians 5:20.

THERE has long been war between man and his Maker. Our federal head, Adam, threw down the gauntlet in the garden of Eden. The trumpet was heard to ring through the glades of Paradise, the trumpet which broke the silence of peace and disturbed the song of praise. From that day forward until now there has been no truce, no treaty between God and man by nature. Man has been at variance with God. His heart has been at enmity towards God. He would not be reconciled to God. Never in the heart of any natural man, unless divine grace has put it there, has a desire to re-establish peace been felt or entertained. If any of you long to be at peace with your Maker, it is because his spirit has made you long for it. Left to yourselves, you would go from conflict to conflict, from struggle to struggle, and perpetuate the encounter, until it ended in your eternal destruction. But though man will not make terms with God, nor sue for peace at his hands, God shows his unwillingness any longer to be at war with man. That he anxiously desires man to be reconciled unto him, he proves by taking the first step. He, himself, sends his ambassadors. He does not invite them from the other party—that were grace—but he sends ambassadors, and he commands those ambassadors to be very earnest, and to plead with men, to pray them, to beseech them that they would be reconciled to God. I take this to be a sure pledge that there is love in the heart of God. Why, at the very announcement of these tidings, the rebellious sinner's ears should be opened! It were enough to make him say, "I will hearken diligently; I will hear what God the Lord shall speak, for if it be true that he takes the first step towards me, and that he is willing to make up this deadly quarrel, God forbid that I should turn away; I will even now hear and attend to all that God shall speak to my soul. "May he bless the message to you, that you may be reconciled to him without a moment's delay. John Bunyan puts it plainly enough." If a certain king be besieging a town, and he sends out the herald with a trumpet to threaten the inhabitants that, if they do not give up the town, he will hang every man of them, then straightway they come to the walls and give him back a reviling answer; they swear that they will fight it out, and will never surrender to such a tyrant. But if he sends an embassy with a white flag to tell them that, if they will but surrender and yield to their lawful king, he will pardon every one of them, even the very vilest of them will relent." Then, saith honest John, "do they not come trembling over the walls, and throw their gates wide open to receive their gracious monarch." Would that such a result might be accomplished to-night! While I speak of the great grace of this Prince of Peace, who now sends his ambassadors to the rebellious, may some rebel say, "Then I will be at peace with him; I will hold out no longer. So irresistible a love as this has dissolved my heart, resolved my choice, and constrained my allegiance."

Well now, let us speak awhile of *the Ambassadors—the Commission* with which they are entrusted—the *duty* they have to discharge—and close with a question—*What then?* First, then, we have to speak of:—

I. THE AMBASSADORS.

Welcome messengers are they! All nations, with one accord, have agreed to honour ambassadors. Strange, then, that all nations and all people should have conspired to dishonour the ambassadors of God! Which of God's ambassadors in the olden time was not persecuted, rejected, or slain? Were they not stoned, beheaded, sawn asunder? How continually they were maltreated, and made to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, though of them the world was not worthy! But there have been some men to whom the ambassadors of God have always been welcome. The men whom God had ordained to eternal life. Those on whose behalf, from before all worlds, he had made an effectual covenant of peace. From them the ambassadors get a hearty welcome. Standing here to preach as an ambassador, I shall get but little attention from some of my audience. The proclamation of mercy will sound commonplace to many. They will turn on their heel and say, "There is nothing in it." But mark you, the ambassador of God will be very welcome to some of you, who have bitterly felt your estrangement, to some whose hearts are prepared by a sense of ruin for the good tidings of redemption; to some in whom the secret mystery of predestination begins to work by the overt energy of effectual calling. These shall find their souls greatly but surely drawn to the proclamation of mercy that shall be made, and they will say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, that publish salvation!"

Ambassadors are always *especially welcome to a people who are engaged in a war which is beyond their strength*, when their resources are exhausted, and the peril of defeat is imminent. If some tiny little principality has ventured to rebel against a great empire, when it is absolutely certain that its villages will be consumed, its provinces, ravaged, and that all its power will be crushed, ambassadors are pretty sure to receive a cordial welcome. Ah! man, thou best bid defiance to the King of Heaven, whose power is irresistible; by whom rocks are thrown down; whose voice breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; whose hand controlleth the great deep sea. He it, is who bindeth the clouds with a cord, and girdleth the earth with a belt! Angels that excel in strength cannot stand against him. From the lofty battlements of heaven he hurled down Satan, the great archangel, and the mighty host of rebellious morning stars! How canst thou stand against him; shall the stubble contend with the fire? Shall the potter's vessel resist the rod of iron? What art thou but a moth, easily crushed beneath his finger! The breath is in thy nostrils, and that is not thine own; how then canst thou, poor mortal, contend with him who only hath immortality? With art thou but a moth, easily crushed beneath his finger! Thy breath broken more rapidly than a sear leaf by the wind! How canst thou venture to be at war with one who has heaven and earth at his command, who holds the keys of hell and of death, and who has Tophet as his source of ammunition against thee? Listen to his thunders, and let thy blood curdle! Let his lightning flash, and how art thou amazed! How, then, canst thou stand against the greatness of his power, or endure the terror of his wrath? Happy for thee that terms of peace are proclaimed in your ears. God is willing to cease the warfare; he would not have thee be his adversary. Wilt thou not gladly accept what he proposeth to thee? Never, surely, was war more charged with disaster than that into which thou hast madly rushed.

An ambassador is always *welcome when the people have begun to feel the victorious force of the king*. Yonder province has already yielded. Certain cities have been taken by the sword and given up to be sacked. Now the poor miserable inhabitants are glad enough to get peace. They

dread the foot of the conqueror now that they have felt its weight. Doubtless there are some here present who have known the power of God in their conscience. Perhaps he has soared you with visions, and frightened you with dreams. Though it be but the voice of a man that you heard, yet the law has been very terrible to you, and now you find no pleasure in your pleasure; no joy in your joys. God has begun to break your bones with conviction; he has made you feel that sin is a bitter thing; he has made you drunken with wormwood, and broken your teeth with gravel stones. He has brought you down as the fool in the hundred and seventh Psalm, by affliction and by labour, and you are crying out in anguish, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Ay, doubtless, you that have once felt the weight of God's hand upon your conscience, will rejoice to hear that there is an embassy of peace sent to you.

An ambassador is likewise always *welcome to those who are labouring under a few of total and speedy destruction*. If none of you are in that plight, I remember when I was, when I thought every day it was a marvel of mercies that I was kept alive, and wondered as I woke at morn that I was not lifting up my eyes with Dives in hell. Everything about Christ was precious to me then! I think I would have stood in the most crowded chapel, nor would I have been weary had I sat upon the hardest seat; no length of service would have wearied me, might I but have had an inkling that God would peradventure have mercy upon my soul. My eyes were full of tears. My soul was faint with watching, and I would have kissed the feet of any man who would have told me the way of salvation. But, alas! it seemed as if no man cared for my soul, till at last God blessed an humble instrument to give light to his poor dark child. Hence I know that the news of mercy will be exceedingly welcome to you who stand upon the jaws of hell, fearing that the gates will soon be bolted upon you, and that you will be for ever lost. You will be ready to cry like our Methodist friends, "Hallelujah! Glory! Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!" whilst you hear that God still sends an embassy of peace to your soul.

Most acceptable, too, is a messenger of peace *if the people know that he brings no hard terms*. When a certain king sent to the inhabitants of a town that he would make peace with them, provided he put out their right eyes and cut off their right hands, I am sure the tidings must have caused the utmost consternation, and the ambassador could not be very popular. But there are no hard terms in the gospel. In fact, there are no terms, no conditions at all. It is an unconditional peace which God makes with men. It is a gospel which asks nothing of men, but gives them everything. The Lord saith, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; all things are ready, come ye to the supper." There is nothing for man to get ready; all things are prepared. The terms—if I must use a word I do not like—are simple and easy. "Believe, and live." With what joy should a rebellious sinner hear the voice of the ambassador who brings no hard conditions from God.

And should not the fame of the King increase the zest with which the embassy is received? Comes it not from him who cannot lie! No temporary peace is proposed that may presently be broken, but a peace that shall stand fast for ever and ever. No temporary armistice, no brief interlude between the deeds of battle do we herald. Peace; eternal, unbroken peace; peace that shall endure in life and outlive death; peace which shall endure throughout eternity, we testify and make known to you.

This peace is proclaimed to all men. It is proclaimed without exception." Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude. Such an ambassador bringing such a message must surely be a welcome messenger from his God. Let us ask now, What is:—

II. THE COMMISSION OF PEACE which God has entrusted us to proclaim? The words are concise, the sense is transparent." To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespass unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. "Let us open the commission. It lies in a nutshell." Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow. Our commission begins with the announcement that God is love, that he is full of pity and compassion, that he is desirous to receive his creature back, that he willeth to forgive, and that he electeth, if it be consistent with the high attribute of his justice, to accept even the most rebellious, and to put them amongst his children. Our commission goes on to disclose the manner, as well as the motive, of mercy. Inasmuch as God is love, he, in order to remove all difficulties in the way of pardoning rebels, has been pleased to give his only begotten Son that he might stand in the room, place, and stead of those whom God has chosen; their sins he engaged to take; to carry their sorrows, and to make an atonement on their behalf. Thus the justice of God should be satisfied, and his love flow over to the human race. We declare, therefore, that God has given Christ, and he has made it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that he came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. Christ, the Son of God, has become man. Cheerfully and willingly he took upon himself our nature; veiled the form of Deity in a humble garb of clay; was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of holiness, and died a death of sacrifice. Through this marvellous death of the Man, the God, Christ Jesus, God is at peace with his people. The peace is made already, for he is our peace. God is at peace with every man for whom Jesus died. Jesus Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of his chosen people. Christ was punished for their sins. Justice cannot punish twice for one offense. Christ, the substitute, being punished, the sinner cannot be amenable for his own offences. Those for whom Jesus died go free. The proclamation is that God is willing to be reconciled, that he is reconciled. It is an announcement, not that you may have peace merely, but that peace is made with God by Jesus Christ for you—full peace, without condition, not half-made, but wholly made; the penalty being completely paid to the last doit, and the sacrifice completely slaughtered till the last drop of blood had expiated the last offence.

But the proclamation needs something more to give us any satisfaction. Are there any tidings in it for you and me? Well, our message goes on to announce that whosoever in the wide world will come to Jesus Christ, and commit his cause to him as Redeemer, Saviour, and Friend, shall forthwith be at peace with God, receive full pardon for all offences, and be welcomed as a favourite of the Most High. He shall know that for him Jesus Christ did die in his stead, and as surety did stand for him when he appeared before God. From condemnation he is, therefore, free; of salvation he is, therefore, sure. This proclamation, I say, is to be made universally. Though every man will not be blessed by it, the preacher cannot discriminate between those who must and those who will not inherit the blessing. Though only some will accept it, the preacher is not warranted in showing any partiality. It is the Holy Spirit's work to impress the Word on the conscience, and to arouse the conscience by the Word. As for us, we are willing enough to turn our face to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west. Gladly would we proclaim it to the red man who hunts the savannahs of America, to the swarthy man who never heard the name of Christ before, or to the white man who has often heard, but never heeded it. The same message, that God has accepted Christ as a substitute for every man that will believe in Christ, and that whosoever trusts Christ to save him is

in that moment saved, will suffice for all. Yea, we would tell them that before the sinner does trust Christ he is reconciled unto God by his death, because the atonement which he offered had been accepted, and there was peace forestalled between God and that sinner. What a message I have to present! What a proclamation I have to make! Nothing is necessary on your part. God expects nothing of you to merit his esteem, or to enhance the value of his gift. If repentance be indispensable, he is prepared to give it to you. If a tender heart be needed, he is ready to give you a heart of flesh. If you feel that you have a heart of stone, he has engaged to take it away. Does your guilt oppress you, he says, "I will sprinkle clean water, water of pure fountains, upon them, and they shall be cleansed from all their filthiness, and from all their uncleanness will I save them." Know, all men, that there is no exception made. When Charles II came back to England there was an amnesty, except for certain persons, and these were mentioned by name—Hugh Peters and others were proscribed; but there is no exception here. I find not any traitors singled out and denounced by name. I have to proclaim an indemnity of such universal import that it is indiscriminate, "Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

Moreover, there is no exception made in my commission to any form of sin—unless it be the sin against the Holy Ghost—which carries its own evidence as well as its consequence. Those to whom I now speak, if they feel any drawings of heart towards God have not committed that mortal crime. Murder, theft, forgery, felony, fornication, adultery, and covetousness, which is idolatry—black and hideous as is the catalogue—here is pardon for the whole. Ransack the kennels, however filthy; rake the slums, however odious; drag out the abominations of the age, however degrading; here is pardon not only possible, probable, but positive. Bring a man here who has stained himself crimson all over with every sort of infamy, though it be not the lapse of an hour, but the habit of a life, yet God is still able to forgive. Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

I do not know whether you find it very good to hear the proclamation, but I do know that I feel it most gratifying to utter it. Thrice happy am I to have such an announcement to make to rebels. Unwonted hearers, listen to my voice. By what strange chance have yon reckless, heedless, unconverted souls mingled with this throng of worshippers? Not often do you darken the floor of a place of worship. You hardly know how you were led to come in hither. To what depths of sin you have run, to what extremities of iniquity you have gone! You marvel to find yourself in the company of God's people. But since you are here, give heed to the message," Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins. Return unto me, for I am married unto thee. I have given my blood to redeem thee. Return, O wandering child of man; return, return, and I will have mercy upon thee, for I am God, and not man." Having thus opened my commission, I will endeavour to perform:—

III. A VERY SOLEMN DUTY.

My text supplies me with a warrant. It says, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." Then it seems we have not merely to read our commission, but we have to beseech you to accept it. Why should we beseech you? Is it not because you are rational creatures, not automata, men not machines. A machine might be compelled to perform functions without persuasion, but the Spirit of God often acts upon the heart of man by the sound arguments and affectionate entreaties of his servants whom he commissions. We are to beseech you because your hearts are so hard that you are prone to defy God's power, and resist his grace. Therefore, we pray you to put down your weapons. We are to beseech you because you are

unbelieving, and will not credit the tidings. You say it is too good to be true that God will have mercy on such as you are. Therefore, we are to put our hand on you, to go down on our knees to you, and to beseech you not to put away this blessed embassy. We are to beseech you because you are so proud and self-satisfied that you will sooner follow your own righteousness and cling to your own works, than accept a peace already and freely proffered to you. We are to beseech you because you are careless. You give little heed to what is spoken: you will go your way and forget all our proclamations; therefore, are we to press you urgently, instantly, importunately, And to beseech you as when a mother pleadeth for her child's life, as when a condemned criminal beseeches the judge to have pity on him, so are we to beseech you. I think I never feel so conscious of my own weakness as when I have to ply you thus with exhortations. Oh! there have been a few times in my ministry when I could with flowing eyes beseech you to be reconciled to God, but these dry eyes of mine are not so often fountains of tears as I could wish. We need such an one as Richard Baxter to dilate upon this last part of the text. Perhaps we could handle the former part better than he, but he could handle this last far better than we can. Oh! how he would have summoned you by the terrible reality of things to come! With what glaring eyes and seething words he would say, "Oh! men, turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? By the need of a Saviour you will feel in the pangs of parting life, when the pulsings shall be few and feeble, till with a gasp you shall expire; by the resurrection when you will wake up, if not in his likeness, to everlasting shame and contempt; by the judgment-seat, where your sins shall be published, and you shall be called to account for the deeds done in the body; by the dread decree which casteth into the pit for ever those that repent, not; by the heaven you will lose:, and by the hell into which you will fall; by eternity, that dread eternity whose years never waste; by the wrath to come, the burning indignation of which shall never cool; by the immortality of your own souls, by the perils you now run, by the promises you despise, by the provocations you multiply, by the penalties you accumulate, we do beseech you to be reconciled to God." Fly to Jesus. Call upon his name. Trust him; his word; his work, his goodness and his grace. This is the way of reconciliation. Bow the knee and kiss the Son. We do conjure you to do so. Acquaint yourselves now with God, and be at peace with him. My text bangs like a crushing weight upon my soul at this moment. It is awful in its grandeur, and it is majestically full of divine love. I must read the words again in your hearing. Oh! that the sense might break in on your understanding!

We are to beseech you as though God did beseech you, and we to do it in Christ's stead. You see God speaks when his ambassadors speak. I wonder, oh! I wonder, whether I have brain enough to compass the thought of how God would beseech you to be reconciled! 'Tis the Father's own self-pleading with his prodigal son. Can you imagine the father in the parable going after his son, and finding him in rags feeding swine? Can you conceive him saying, "My son, my dear son, come back! come back and I will forgive you all!" You think you hear that son saying to his father "Get you gone, I will not hear of it", till his father says "My dear son, why will you prefer the company of swine to your father's house? Why will you wear rags when you might be clothed in the best robe? Why will you starve in a far-off country when my house shall be full of feasting on your return?" What if that son should utter some indignant word, and tell his father to his face he never would go back! Oh! I think I see the venerable, loving man falling on his son's neck and kissing him, in his filth just as he is (for "the great love wherewith he loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!")—and he says to the rebel that insults him and resents his tenderness, "My dear son, you must come back; I must have you; I cannot be without you. I must have you; come

back!" In such a style we ought to plead with men. Ah! then, I cannot plead with you as I would. As though God himself, your offended Maker, came to you now as he did to Adam in the cool of the day, and said to you, "Oh! return to me, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love," even so, as though God spoke, would I woo you, ye chiefest sinners, to return to him. You know, dear friends, that the great God did send another ambassador, and that great ambassador was Christ. Now the Apostle says that we, the ministers, are ambassadors for Christ in Christ's stead. Christ is no more an ambassador; he has gone to heaven; we stand in his stead to the sons of men, not to make peace, but to proclaim it. What! am I then to speak in Christ's stead! But how can I picture my Lord Jesus standing here? Alas, my imagination is not equal to the task. Would that I had sympathy enough with him to put myself in his case so as to use his words. Methinks I see him looking at this great throng as once he looked at the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He turns his head round to these galleries, and about on yonder aisles, and at last he bursts into a flood of tears, saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." He is choked with tears, and when he has paused a moment, he cries, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; a bruised reed I will not break, nor quench the smoking flax."

Again, I think I see him, as he looks at you again, and when he observes some hearts so obdurate and hard that they will not melt, he unwraps his mantle, and exclaims, "See here." Do you mark the gash in his side? As he lifts his hands and shows the nail-prints, and points downward to his pierced feet, he says, "By these, my wounds, which I endured when suffering for you, O my people, return unto me; come, bow at my feet, and take the peace which I have wrought out for you. Oh! be not faithless, but believing! Doubt no longer! God is reconciled! Tremble no more! Peace is established. Toil no more at the works of the law, cling not to your own doings. Cease to consult your feelings. It is finished. When I bowed my head upon the tree, I finished all for you. Take salvation: take it now! Come to me; come now to me just as you are." Alas! this is but a poor representation of my Lord and Master. I could wish myself laid among the clods of the valley, sleeping in my grave, rather than that I should be so poor an ambassador. But, Lord, wherefore didst thou choose thy servant, and why givest thou this people still to hear his voice, if thou wilt not more mightily enable him to plead with men. I have no more words, oh! let these, tears plead with you. I feel that I could freely give my life if it would avail for the saving of your souls. Fain would I meet a martyr's death, if you would be persuaded thereby to come to Christ, for life. But oh! sinners, no pleading of mine will ever prevail if the pleading of Christ prove ineffectual with you. To each one of you, a distinct proclamation of salvation is addressed. Whosoever among you will believe that Christ died, and that he is able to save you, and will trust your soul upon what he did, shall be saved. Oh! why reject him? He will not hurt nor harm you. Do lay hold of this good hope, for your time is short! Death is hastening on; eternity is near! Do lay hold of it, for hell is hot, the flames thereof are terrible! Lay hold of it, for heaven is bright, and the harps of angels are sweet beyond compare! Lay hold of it. It shall make your heart glad on earth, it shall charm away your fears and remove your griefs! Lay hold of it! It shall bear you through Jordan's billows, and land you safe on Canaan's side. Oh! by the love of the Father, by the, blood of Jesus, by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you, sinner, believe and live! By the cross and the five wounds, by the agony and bloody sweat, by the resurrection, and by the ascension, sinner, believe and live! By every argument that would touch your nature, by every motive that can sway your reason or stir your

passions, in the name of God that sent me, by the Almighty that made you, by the Eternal Son that redeemed you, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, sinner, I command you, with divine authority to sanction my vehemence, that ye be reconciled to God through the death of his Son! And:—

IV. WHAT THEN?

When we have answered this question we shall have done. What then? Are there not some of you with whom this peace is made at this good hour? I will go back and tell my Master so. Then there shall be fresh ratifications between you and him. The angels will hear of it, and they will strike their harps anew to sweeter lays than they have known before.

Others there are of you that will not be reconciled. I must have an answer from you. Do you hesitate? Do you delay? Do you refuse? You shall never have another warning, some of you! No tears of pity shall be wept for you again; no loving heart shall ever bid you come to Christ again must have your answer now. Yes or no. Wilt thou be damned or not? Wilt thou be saved or not? I will not have thee say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Sinner, it cannot be a more convenient one than this. This is a convenient place; it is God's house. It is a convenient time; it is the Lord's day. Now, sinner, wilt thou be reconciled, restored, forgiven? "Wilt thou be made whole?" said Jesus, and I say the same to thee, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Do you say, "No"? Must I take that for an answer? Mark you, sinner, I have to tell my Master must tell him when I seek the closet of the King to-night; I must tell him your reply that you would not. What then remains for an ambassador to do when he has spoken to you in the name of the Sovereign? If you will not turn, we must shake off the dust of our feet against you. I am clear, I am clear, of the blood of you all, I am clear. If you perish, being warned, you perish wantonly. The wrath cometh upon you, not on him who, to the best of his power, has told his Master's message. Yet again, I beg you to accept it. Do you still say no? The white flag will be pulled down. It has been up long enough. Shall I pull it down, and run up the red flag now? Shall I hurl threatenings at you because you heed not entreaties?

"If your ears refuse
The language of his grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race,
The Lord in anger drest,
Shall lift his trend and swear
Ye that despised my promised rest
Shall have no portion there."

But no, I cannot pull it down, that white flag! My heart will not let me do so; it shall fly there still, it shall fly there as a sign and a symbol of the day of grace. Mercy is still held out to you. But there is one coming—I can hear his footsteps—who will pull down that white flag. The vision haunts my eyes. That grim, heartless skeleton whom men call Death will rend the white flag from its place, and up will go the blood-red flag, with the black escutcheon of the thunderbolts. Where are you then, sinners? Where will you be then? You shudder at the thought. He lays his hand on you. There is no escape. Oh! turn ye, turn ye, turn ye! Come and welcome, sinner, come now while you are welcome. 'Tis love invites you. Jesus stretches out his hand to you all the day long. He has stretched out his hands to a rebellious, and a gainsaying generation. Do not say, "I will think of it," but yield to his love who around you now the bands of a man doth cast. Do not make a resolution, but commit yourself to the good confession. Now, even now, may sovereign grace constrain, and

irresistible love draw you. May you believe with your heart, may you record your profession at once. Before you close your eyes in sleep, just as you would wish before your eyes are closed in death, may you be at peace with God. I pray God, as I entreat you, that this may come to pass, for his Son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

God's Gentle Power

A Sermon

(No. 3498)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's-day Evening, September 10th, 1871.

"And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?"—1 Kings 19:11-13.

ELIJAH was a man of like passions with ourselves. We all know that when we have passed through any great excitement of high joy there almost always comes following, a corresponding reaction and depression. Elijah had gone to the top of Carmel and had pleaded his cause, and the rain floods had come in answer to his prayer He had taken the prophets of Baal, and had slain them, and gained a glorious victory for his God; and so full of excitement was he that he girded his loins as though he had been a young man, and ran before the chariot of Ahab, like the royal footmen. It was almost inevitable that after an excitement so high, and strong, that he should be desponding and depressed in spirits, and we find that he was so depressed. If the like should ever happen to any of you' my brethren and sisters, count it no strange thing, nor suppose that some extraordinary trial hath happened unto you. It is but a physical result from physical causes. The mind has operated upon the body. It has strung the bow too tightly, and now, unless the string be relaxed, there is a danger of its breaking altogether. Now as Elias was a man of like passions with us, we may conclude that the way in which God dealt with him is very much the way in which he would deal with us. With a similar case, and the same physician, we may look for the same treatment. As, therefore, the Lord spake to Elijah not by earthquake, nor wind, nor fire, but by the still small voice, so in all probability will he speak to us. It may be, it is just possible it may be, that here to-night there is some worker for God very much in the same condition as Elijah. You, my dear brother, have been working for God in a neighbourhood where you have met with little but opposition and disappointment, and you have almost resolved that you will go away from the place. "The soil is hard," you say, "and breaks the ploughshare. Shall oxen plough upon a rock?" 'Tis in vain for you to continue your labour there, you, think, and you have come here to-night still with this thought uppermost—that you have laboured in vain, and spent your strength for nought. Hear you the word of the Lord this night. He speaks not to you by any earthquake of judgment with which he means to visit you, neither by any fiery word of severe rebuke; but perhaps through me, this evening, he may speak with a still small voice that shall just meet your case and send you back to your labour. Brother, will you play the Jonahs Will you refuse to go to tile great city—to Nineveh? Remember there are worse places than Nineveh. He that goes out of the path that God marks for him may yet

come to be at the bottom of the sea with Jonah, with the weeds wrapped about his head. You go at your own cost, remember, if you go away from the post of duty, however arduous. Don't attempt the risk. But thus saith the Lord unto thee, "It may be thou hast not laboured in vain as thou hast supposed." Elijah knew nothing of the seven thousand men that God had in reserve. You don't know what converts God has given you. There are scattered up and down the world—perhaps some precious ones who owe their salvation instrumentally to you, and could they all stand before you—you would blush with shame at the thought of leaving a harvest—field that has really been so prolific, though not in your sight. Go back again to thy work, for the Lord has blessed thee. Play not the fool by deserting the post where he will give thee honour yet.

But then the voice told Elijah also that God would punish the people who had treated him so ill; that he, would send Hazeel with his sharp sword and Jehu, yet to mow the ground a second time. And oh! thou true servant of God, the Lord will not suffer thee to be rejected. If they have rejected thee, they have rejected thy God also. If thou hast been faithful to his truth, leave thou that matter to him—go thou back to thy work. And one other word there was to Elijah. He was to go back to anoint his successor. If Elijah flees, and if Elijah at length is taken up to heaven, yet Elisha shall succeed him. Perhaps there may be a brother here who is in the state I have described who does not know what God has in store for him. You are to call into the Christian ministry a brother that shall do greater than you have, you shall light as greater candle shall your own. Oh! what joy Elijah must have had when he felt there would be someone to take up his work! You have not, my dear brother, yet called out for your master the man the Lord means to call. What a happy man he must have been who was the means of the conversion of Whitefield or Jonathan Edwards, or some great missionary of the cross. You may be that, in that little village—in that back slum. Go thou back then. What doest thou hero Elijah? What doest thou here? With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? The Master's voice speaks to thee. Go to thy closet, and get fresh strength from on high, and then go back to thy difficulties—go back to thy self-denials, go back to all thy service with a good heart and true."Fear not thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the Lord." Arise, thou worm, and thresh the mountain, for "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth." I have delivered the message. It is to somebody, I know not to whom, in this place.

But now the drift, the great aim of the sermon at this time is to speak to the unconverted. With them I dealt also this morning. I feel persuaded God will bless it. Now, this evening, let us have another word with them. We will read the text again. "Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake. but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." Our first observation is that:—

I. POWERFUL MEANS MAY ALTOGETHER FAIL TO IMPRESS SOME MINDS

Let us think a while. *Terrible judgments appear as if they must convert sinners;* yet there may be those here, and there certainly are those in many places who have passed through a whole series of judgments, and are rather hardened than softened by them. You may have been, dear friend in a storm of sin; you may have been just barely washed upon a rock, and escaped as with the skin of your teeth. You have also passed through a time of cholera. You have been in a city smitten with the plague. You have lived in a house where others have sickened and died; and at those times you did pause a little, and you made some good resolutions, but they all ended in smoke; and here you

are still, a proof that God is not in the earthquake, nor yet in the wind, nor yet in the fire. It may be you have suffered a great deal of personal sickness. Do I not know some here present who have been laid very low with fever—who have been the subjects of very frightful accidents, and brought to the borders of the grave? These things were loud voices to you, but you did not hear them. They were God's terrors, sent to fetch you to himself, but they failed to do it. You remained just where you were, perhaps worse instead of better; for when the sun shines on wax, it melts it, but if it shines on clay, it hardens it; and so God's judgments have had just that effect on you. You are hardened, instead of softened by them. Men are not converted by judgments. They may submit themselves in a false way, but power and displays of terror do not win the heart.

Again, *we naturally expect that men will be converted during the times of earnest religious excitement*. Some are brought in; but there are certain persons who do not seem to be affected by revivals. When others bow like the corn that waveth in the wind, they stand stiff and firm, and are altogether untouched. It is a solemn thing when a season of grace is not a season of grace to us. When we lie, like Gideon's fleece, all dry, while all around us is wet with the dew of heaven, yet with some it is just so—gracious excitements and spiritual revivals do not touch them. The Lord is not in the wind, and the Lord is not in the earthquake, and the Lord is not in the fire—at least to them. *The same is the case with powerful sermons*. I do not mean by this "eloquent sermons," so called. "Eloquent sermons" usually seem to me to be the least eloquent things in the world; for eloquence means speaking from the heart; and I cannot believe that the fine periods we sometimes hear read ever spring anywhere but from the head. But I mean when a sermon is full of gospel truth, when it is pertinently put, when it is pathetically urged, when the heart of the preacher is warmed, and his eyes overflow with tears; when you see a congregation melted, you say to yourself, "Surely that must touch so-and-so's heart." And then there comes a passage in the sermon that seems so touching that the very rocks might weep, and the stones might break; but oh! when it is all over it is all over, and it is forgotten too; and to many a hearer the Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. And so it is also *in the dealing out of the judgments of God in the ministry*. It is the duty of the Christian pastor, if he would make full proof of his ministry, to warn men of the results of sin—to tell them that there is a judgment—that for every idle word they speak they will have to account. We ought continually to declare that for every transgression there shall be a recompense of reward. But ah! dear hearer, though we have read books and heard sermons that were full of the terrors of the Lord, which we thought surely would move men, yet there are men who care nothing whatever about the wrath to come, nor the fire that is kindled for the wicked, nor the dreadful terrors of Divine Justice. The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, so far as they are concerned. The means that appear to be powerful are powerless to them; and when you think they will surely turn and repent, they harden their necks and go on in their sin. This, abundant facts could prove.

But the next observation shall be that *sometimes a much gentler force effects what could not otherwise have been achieved*. Many have been converted to God by the still small voice whom no wind, though it rose to a hurricane, no earthquake, though it rent the world to its centre, and no fire, though it licked up the forests, could ever move. A gentle word has done it. Sometimes that still small voice has come to us by apparently very, very inadequate means. It is astonishing what little things God will use when he pleases to do so. He wanted to soften the heart of that rough prophet Jonah, and he sent a worm and a gourd, and they did it. He would bring Peter to repentance, and he bade a cock to crow. It was a strange preacher, but it was as good as a dean of a cathedral

to the Apostle. Means may seem to be absolutely ridiculous, yet God maketh use of the things that are not, as though they were. I remember to have heard the story of a man, a blasphemer, profane, an atheist, who was converted singularly by a sinful action of his. He had written on a piece of paper, "God is nowhere," and bade his child read it, for he would make his child an atheist too. And the child spelt it, "God is n-o-w h-e-r-e-God is now here." It was a truth, instead of a lie, and the arrow pierced the man's own heart. I remember one who had lived a life of gross iniquity who stepped into Exeter Hall and found Christ there. It was not my sermon, however, that God blessed: it was only this. I read the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul." Just those words touched his heart. "Jesus, lover of my soul," he said to himself. "Did Jesus love my soul? Then how is it that I could have lived as I have done?"; and that word broke him down. God works great results by little things. A little hymn learnt at the Sunday School is sung at home by a little prattler, and the heart of the father is softened by it. One little sentence uttered by a friendly visitor reaches a mother's conscience and impresses her heart. Ay, and God can use the quiet of the evening, or the stillness of the night, or a flash of lightning, or a peal of thunder, or a dewdrop, or a little flower—he can use anything he wills to bring his banished home. Often cloth the Spirit speak thus with a still small voice.

But, brethren, beloved, *the Holy Ghost also speaks to men* without any means at all. With no outward agency whatever, the still small voice will come. Oh! how I wish it would come to-night to some sitting here listening to the preacher! I wish you could forget—forget the congregation, and forget everything except yourself and your God. We have known persons who have been walking in the fields, thoughtless and careless. All around has been still, and they have suddenly thought, and thought is often the avenue to prayer. We have known some passing through a country churchyard, and though no text upon the tomb how touched them, yet the very sight of those green hillocks has been a sermon to them. Aye, and men have walked through orchards, and the leaves have said to them, "We all do fade as a leaf." Or sitting in their chamber, or lying on their bed wakeful, the old times have come over again. The man that lives to be an old sinner recollects the little prayer he said at his mother's knee. The soldier that has been at battle recollects the teaching of the Sunday School, though he has passed now his fiftieth year; and he says, "I wish I could blot out all that which lies between my mother's kiss and this hour. It has been a dark, dark season." Only the thought has done it. God's Spirit did but touch the secret spring, and the soul was moved aright. The still small voice has done it. Oh! how satisfied I should be if the Lord would not give me a single soul in this place by my preaching, if he would but do it himself! What matters it so long as they are saved? He does put honour upon his preached word, and he brings in the most of men thereby; but so long as they are brought in, and he gets glory, what will it signify as to the means he uses? May he still speak to you by his still small voice. I commend to him in my earnest prayer some of you who are very familiar with my voice, and to whom it is as useless as familiar. You will never be brought to Christ by me. God will never give me your souls I fear. For these many years have I laboured for them, and they have not been given me. Well, good Master, call them by some other means, only bring them; and grant that this very night, conscience may be aroused by thoughts which thou thyself shalt suggest, and they may come to thee.

You see, then, the first two points, that the most powerful means will often fail, and that the least means may be successful. Ay, and the Holy Ghost may work without means altogether. And now once again:—

II. WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO MEN, HIS VOICE IS ALWAYS LINKED WITH PERSONAL ADDRESS.

Look at the text. What says the still small voice? "What doest thou here *Elijah*?" There was the man named. It was no general statement about prophets who proved faithless, or about believers who grew doubtful, or about men of courage that played the coward. Oh! no; it was, "What doest *thou* here, *Elijah*?" It is a mark of God's Spirit that when he speaks to men *he speaks to them personally*. Just take a case or two. You remember Jesus Christ going through Jericho, preaching as he went. He meant to call that rich publican who had climbed the tree. In what way did the effectual voice of grace do it? He says, "Zaccheus" It was not a general observation about people up in trees that were to come down; but "Zaccheus"—that is the man. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house." The personal call did it. And Mary, when she did not know her Master, and was in the garden, and thought he was the gardener—what was it that opened her eyes to know her Lord, and made her say, "Rabboni"? It was no word else except that he said unto her, "Mary." The tone in which he said it, and the name—the old familiar name, Mary—that did the work. And when the Saviour meant to break Simon Peter's heart, and yet to assure him that he was forgiven, how did he speak to him? Three times he said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" This is how God speaks to men. And when out of the open heavens Jesus spake to the maddened persecutor who was on the road to Damascus, but whom he meant to make his elect apostle to the Gentiles, how did he speak but thus? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Now here I cannot speak except to the crowd and the congregation, and though one labours hard to make a description apt and plain, and to fit the cap to all wearers' heads, yet men slip through in the crowd; they will not take it to themselves, nor can we make them. But when the Holy Ghost speaks with the still small voice, it is always, "*Thou art the man. Thou art the man. Thou art the sinner condemned. Thou art the sinner invited to mercy. Thou art the sinner that shall be received by grace.*" Believe *thou*, and *thou* shalt be saved, for he loves thee and gave himself for thee. May the Lord send us such personal work as this. I know every Christian here, if he could state his experience, would tell you that the word never came with power to his soul until it came right to him as though he were the only sinner, and the gospel were meant for him above all others. Oh! for an arrow from the great archer's bow to go right into you, that, like a stag that is smitten by the archer, you might retire into the glades of the forest, to weep alone and die alone, unless the hand that sent in the dart shall gently draw it out and heal the wound that it has made! Oh! for this personal conviction!—conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment laid home to each man's heart. It must be so, or you cannot be saved. But now another truth is suggested by the text. It is this, that:—

III. WHEN GOD'S STILL SMALL VOICE SPEAKS TO MEN PERSONALLY, THE SUBJECT IS THEMSELVES AND THEIR ACTIONS.

"What doest thou here, *Elijah*?" This was the voice of God. May the same voice come to-night to some here about their actions. Let me take the text and use it to you. What are you doing? What doest thou? What have you been doing? You are getting on in life. What have you done? Mischief I fear. What good have you done? You were made to glorify God, that was the end for which you were created. Have you glorified him? You have been fed by him, clothed by him. Have you made him any return? What have you done? No good—much evil. What are you doing now? Sitting here and listening. Ay, but how are you treating the Word? Are you receiving it? Do you hear the voice of mercy, and do you reject it, or will you accept it? What are you going to do? What are you going to do to-night when you get out of this place? How will the last hours of the precious Sabbath be

spent? And to-morrow, and the next day—what are you planning? Is there anything holy in it, anything noble in it, anything that will be glorifying to God? Do you never take stock? Spiritual trader, do you never take stock? Mariner upon the sea of life, dost thou never consult thy chart? Dost thou never heave the lead, or take thy bearings? Art thou so mad as to sail on in the fog, and not care what becomes of so goodly a vessel as thy soul? Oh! pause. What hast thou done? What art thou doing? What wilt thou do? Especially what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? Unsaved, what will you do when the death-sweat stands upon your brow—when the cold beaded drops are there, and the marrow is frozen, and the strong man gathers up his feet in the bed for the last dread struggle—what will you do without a Saviour? What will you do when the trumpet rings through heaven and earth, and sea, and men live again, and you, with them, stand before the judgment-seat, and amidst the rolling thunder the book is opened and your sins stand there unforgiven? What will you do? What will you do? Oh! that you may never be brought to this, but be brought to Christ to-night! Do you notice how the word was put? It was not, "What are you doing?" only, but "What doest thou—thou, Elijah?" And there are some special persons whose sins receive an aggravation by the very fact that they are what they are. I know thee—what thou wast of old. What a sweet child. How his mother loved him, and loved to hear him sing, and pray, too, in his way. What happiness it was to the parents! Ah! they fell asleep and died, and 'tis a mercy they did, else perhaps your course would have brought them to the grave with grief. What doest thou, child of many prayers and many tears? What doest thou? Still to be an enemy to thy mother's God, and to blaspheme the name they father loved. You have been hearers of the gospel, some of you almost ever since you can recollect. Your mother carried you in her arms to God's house, and sometimes conscience has pricked you, and the word has gone through, and through, and through; but you have resisted it. What has led you, I pray you, to remain still what you are? What infernal power has helped you to steel your heart? In what fire has your soul been annealed to make it hard as adamant stone? O soul, soul, sinful soul, delaying, procrastinating soul! what doest thou in such a state after so much love and mercy? And I might speak to some that promised fair many times, and that have been almost persuaded to be Christians, and yet still are out of God, and out of Christ, and on the borders of destruction. What do you here? Perhaps there is someone who has come to London lately, that in the country was an observer of religion, apparently sincere, but oh! this wicked London! You have given up those good habits; you—have got into bad company, and oh! I shall not tell what you have done; but I hope you will confess it to God in your own secrecy. But how dare you do it? How could you do it? Oh! how could you do it? How could you be a prodigal?—you, your fathers dearly beloved, taught so well, with so much light, with such a tender conscience—how could you sin? Why the very tramps of the street might be ashamed of you, for they never knew much better. Those that go into foulest sin might condemn you, for with their bad street training, educated perhaps in the kennel, who wonders that they are what they are? But for you, it is a wonder. The angel Lucifer, son of the morning, fell down to the deeps of hell. You have fallen from the side of the pulpit, fallen from a Christian parent's side, and almost from inside the Church of God, and fallen into sin. Perhaps I speak to some that have belied their baptism, have given up the profession that they made when they there were buried with Christ, who have belied the sacramental table where they once sat, and professed to eat his bread and drink of his cup, and to be partakers of his body and of his blood. You have crucified the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" My, and you used to preach too; you used to preach to others, and now what

are you? You were once, as it were, a priest at the altar of God, and now you are a priest at the altars of Baal. God have mercy upon you, and may his still small voice now speak in your soul.

There was one point in the question which was asked, which was this: "What doest thou *here*?" Each man, when he is called to search himself by the Spirit of God, must recollect his surroundings. I thank God, my brethren and my sisters, that you are hearers—not to commend you that you may be Pharisees, because you happen to go to a place of worship. I do, nevertheless, praise God that you are here. When the sick lay round the Pool of Bethesda, there was some hope of their being healed. You are favoured in being where Christ is preached; but what *doest* thou *here*? Did you come to find a jest? Did you come to hear one who was much talked of in your hearing? Did you come from curiosity? Did you come from a worse motive? Well, never mind, but what are you doing *now*? Are you willing to listen to God's voice? Will you *now* yield? He round you now, as with the bands of a man, would cast the bands of his love, who was given for you, and to his altar bind you fast. 'Tis but to yield; and surely it must be hard to resist when it is divine mercy that plies you, and eternal love that persuades you. "Come unto me," says Jesus; "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Will you not come? "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Will you not come? Oh! that your answer to the question, "What doest thou here?" might be to-night, "I am doing this here; I am laying my sins on Jesus; I am confessing the past; I am asking grace for the future; I am looking to the wounds of him that was cleft as a rock is cleft that I may shelter in him; I am saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" Thy God be praised if such is the case. But I must close with the last observation, and that is, that:—

IV. WHERE THE LORD DOES SPEAK WITH A STILL SMALL VOICE TO MEN PERSONALLY ABOUT THEIR CONDUCT AND THEIR SIN, IT IS ALWAYS EFFECTUAL.

You notice what Elijah did. He first wrapped his mantle about his face—he became subdued and awe-stricken—full of reverence. Oh! it is a great thing when a sinner is willing to wrap his face when he is confounded, and say, "I cannot defend my course; I am guilty." We know that if at our judgment-seat a man pleads guilty, he is punished; but at the judgment-seat of the gospel whoever pleads guilty is forgiven. Wrap your face. Oh! but you thought that you were better than most; you went to church, and you went to the meeting-house, the chapel, regularly, and were you not better than others? Ah! wrap your face. Your church-goings and your chapel-goings have only increased your responsibilities if you have rejected the Saviour. Take the mantle of self humiliation, and wrap it about your face now. Say, with the leper, "Unclean! Unclean!" Where you are in the Tabernacle, where you are, never mind where you stand or sit, I commend to you the publican's prayer. Say it now, and God help you, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did you say it from your heart? Go home. You shall go home to your house justified, for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

But you must notice that while Elijah thus wrapped his face in reverence, he stood still and listened. It was a still small voice, and the prophet was attending. No other sound was heard but this, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" But he stood. I doubt not that man of iron stood and wept, and seemed to say in his soul, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "He that bath earn to hear, let him hear." Oh! be very attentive to the voice of God's Spirit! If you have only a half of a good thought, take care of it. It may be the beginning of another one. Oh! if you have only just got a little leaning, thank God for it. Remember Christ does not quench the smoking flax; don't quench it yourself. "Quench not the Spirit." Oh! I have known times when I would have given my whole life to have had one tear of repentance. Can you repent now? Can you long after God now? Oh! cherish

that longing! Yield to the Spirit of God. Don't be like iron to the fire that needs to have the blast-furnace on it before it will melt; but oh! be like wax to the flame, like cork on the water that moves up and down with every influence. God make you so. It wants a strong wind to shake the oak; but the fern that grows under it waves its branches at every breath of the zephyr. May you be just as sensitive as that. Bow before the Spirit's influence. The Lord make you to do it for his name's sake.

And then, best of all and last of all, the prophet was not only reverent, humble, and attentive, but he was obedient. God told him to go and do this and that. He never questioned, but away he went and executed the divine commission, and until the time when he was taken up in the chariot of fire Elijah never quailed again. The still small voice had made him twice a man, and steeled him once again to bear all that he had to endure in his chequered life. He was obedient to the heavenly vision. Will you be obedient to-night?" If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." May God make you to be obedient. But you say, "What is his command then? What is the work of God—this great work that God commands? This is the one gospel precept, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; or take it in the shape in which the Master put it, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." To believe is to trust. To be baptized is to be immersed into Christ—immersed in water upon profession of faith, for so it is put, and I dare not give you half the gospel. So it is put, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Don't leave out any part of the divine command. Be obedient to the whole of it. "Believe and be baptized," or as the Apostle put it, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you." May God grant that you may be obedient to this. The great command is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Trust in him—in his substitutionary work for sinners. He bore their guilt, and was punished in their stead, and whosoever trusts in what he did—in a word, trusts in him, is saved. God grant you to do it. I leave it to his still small voice to work this blessed result. Amen.

* Light for those who sit in darkness. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, 1,010.

The Bliss of the Glorified

A Sermon

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"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."—Revelation 7:16.

WE cannot too often turn our thoughts heavenward, for *this is one of the great cures for worldliness*. The way to liberate our souls from the bonds that tie us to earth is to strengthen the cords that kind us to heaven. You will think less of this poor little globe when you think more of the world to come. This contemplation will also serve *to console us for the loss*, as we call it, *of those who have gone before*. It is their gain, and we will rejoice in it. We cannot have a richer source of consolation than this, that they who have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished; they have not lost life, but they have gained the fullness of it. They are rid at all that molests us here, and they enjoy more than we as yet can imagine. Cheer your hearts, ye mourners, by looking up to the gate of pearl, by looking up—to those who day without night surround the throne of their Redeemer. It will also *tend to quicken our diligence* if we think much of heaven. Suppose I should miss it after all! What if I should not so run that I may obtain! If heaven be little, I shall be but a little loser by losing it; but if it be indeed such that the half could never be told us, then, may God grant us diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may be certain of entering into this rest, and may not be like the many who came out of Egypt, but who perished in the wilderness and never entered into the promised land. All things considered, I know of no meditation that is likely to be more profitable than a frequent consideration of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. I ask, then, for a very short time that your thoughts may go upward to the golden streets.

And, first, we shall think a little of *the blessedness of the saints* as described in the simple words of our text; then we will say a few words as to *how they came by that felicity*; and thirdly, *draw some practical lessons from it*. First, then, we have here:—

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE GLORIFIED.

We have not the full description of it here; but we have here a description of certain *evils from which they are free*. You notice they are of two or three kinds—first, *such as originate within*—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more"—they are free from inward evils; secondly, *such as originate without*—"Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." They are altogether delivered from the results of outward circumstances. Take the first: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." We are never so to strain Scripture for a spiritual sense as to take away its natural sense, and hence we will begin by saying this is no doubt to be understood physically of the body they will have in glory. Whether there will be a necessity for eating and drinking in heaven, we will not say, for we are not told, but anyhow it is met by the text, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them"—if they need food—"and lead them to living fountains of water" if they

need to drink. Whatever may be the necessities of the future, those necessities shall never cause a pang. Here, the man who is hungry may have to ask the question, "What shall I eat?"; the man who is thirsty may have to say, "What shall I drink?"; and we have all to ask, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But such questions shall never arise there. They are abundantly supplied. Children of God have been hungry here: the great Son of God, the head of the household was hungry before them; and they need not wonder if they have fellowship with him in this suffering. Children of God have had to thirst here: their great Lord and Master said, "I thirst"; they need not wonder, therefore, if in his affliction they have to take some share. Should not they who are to be like their head in heaven be conformed unto him on earth? But up yonder there is no poverty, and there shall be no accident that shall place them in circumstances of distress. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

While we take this physically, there is no doubt that *it is to be understood mentally*. Our minds are also constantly the victims of hungerings and thirstings. There are on earth various kinds of this hunger and thirst—in a measure evil, in a measure also innocent. There are many men that in this world are *hungering after wealth*, and the mouth of avarice can never be filled. It is as insatiable as the horse-leech, and for ever cries, "Give, give!" But such hunger was never known in heaven, and never can be, for they are satisfied there; they have all things and abound. All their enlarged capacities can desire they already possess, in being near the throne of God and beholding his glory; there is no wealth which is denied them. Here, too, some of the sons of men hunger *after fame*, and oh! what have not men done to satisfy this? It is said that breaks through stone walls; certainly ambition has done it. Death at the cannon's mouth has been a trifle, if a man might win the bubble reputation. But in heaven there is no such hunger as that. Those who once had it, and are saved, scorn ambition henceforth. And what room would there be for ambition in the skies? They take their crowns and cast them at their Saviour's feet. They have their palm-branches, for they have won the victory, but they ascribe the conquest to the Lamb, their triumph to his death. Their souls are satisfied with his fame. The renown of Christ has filled their spirit with everlasting contentment. They hunger no more, nor thirst any more, in that respect. And oh! what hunger and thirst there has been on earth by those of tender and large heart *for a fit object of love!* I mean not now the common thing called "love," but the friendship which is in man's heart, and sends out its tendrils wanting something to which to cling. We must—we are born and created for that very purpose—we must live together, we cannot develop ourselves alone. And oftentimes a lonely spirit has yearned for a brother's ear, into which to pour its sorrows; and doubtless many a man has been brought to destruction and been confined to the lunatic asylum whose reason might have been saved had there been some sympathetic spirit, some kind, gentle heart that would have helped to bear his burden. Oh! the hunger and the thirst of many a soul after a worthy object of confidence. But they hunger and they thirst, up there, no more. Their love is all centred on their Saviour. Their confidence, which they reposed in him on earth, is still in him. He is their bosom's Lord, their heart's Emperor, and they are satisfied, and, wrapped up in him, they hunger and they thirst no more.

And how many young spirits there are on earth that are *hungering after knowledge* who would fain get the hammer and break the rock, and find out the history of the globe in the past. They would follow philosophy, if they could, to its source, and find out the root of the matter. Oh! to know, to know, to know! The human mind pants and thirsts for this. But there they know even as they are known. I do not know that in heaven they know all things—that must be for the Omniscient only—but they know all they need or really want to know; they are satisfied there. There will be

no longer searching with a spirit that is ill at ease. They may, perhaps, make progress even there, and the scholar may become daily more and more wise; but there shall never be such a hungering and thirsting as to cause their mental faculties the slightest pang. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. Oh! blessed land where the seething ocean of man's mind is hushed, and sleeps in everlasting calm! Oh! blessed country where the hungry spirit, that crieth every hour for bread, and yet for more, and yet for more, and spends its labour for that which satisfieth not, shall be fed with the bread of angels, and be satisfied with favour and full of the goodness of the Lord.

But, dear friends, surely the text also means *our spiritual hungering and thirsting*. "Blessed is the man that hungers and thirst to-day after righteousness, for he shall be filled." This a kind of hunger that we ought to desire to have; this is a sort of thirst that the more you have of it will be the indication of the possession of more grace. On earth it is good for saints to hunger and to thirst spiritually, but up there they have done even with that blessed hunger and that blessed thirst. Today, beloved, some of us are *hungering after holiness*. Oh! what would I not give to be holy, to be rid of sin, of every evil thing about me! My eyes—ah! adieu sweet light, if I might also say, "Adieu sin! "My mouth—ah! well would I be content to be dumb if I might preach by a perfect life on earth! There is no faculty I know of that might not be cheerfully surrendered if the surrender of it would deprive us of sin. But they never thirst for holiness in heaven, for this excellent reason, that they are without fault before the throne of God. Does it not make your mouth water? Why this is the luxury of heaven to be perfect. Is not this—the heaven of heaven, to be clean rid of the root and branch of sin, and not a rag or bone, or piece of a bone of our old depravity left—all gone like our Lord, made perfect without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And here, too, brethren and sisters, we very rightly hunger and thirst *after full assurance and confidence*. Many are hungering after it; they hope they are saved, and they thirst to be assured that they are. But there is no such thirst as that in heaven, for, having crossed the golden threshold of Paradise, no saint ever asks himself, "Am I saved?" They see his face without a cloud between; they bathe in the sea of his love; they cannot question that which they perpetually enjoy. So, too, on earth I hope we know what it is to hunger and thirst *for fellowship with Christ*. Oh! when he is gone from us—if he do but hide his face from us, how we cry, "My soul desires thee in the night"! We cannot be satisfied unless we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. But in heaven they have no such thing. There the shepherd is always with the Sheep, the King is ever near them, and because of his perpetual presence their hungering and their thirsting will be banished for ever. Thus much upon those evils, then, that would arise from within. As they are perfect, whatever comes from within is a source of pleasure to them, and never of pain.

And now, dear friends, *the evils that come from without*: let us think of them. We no doubt can appreciate in some measure, though not to the degree which we should if we were in Palestine in the middle of summer—we can appreciate the words, "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." This signifies that nothing external shall injure the blessed. Take it literally. There shall be nothing in the surroundings of heavenly saints that shall cause glorified spirits any inconvenience. I think we may take it mainly in relation to the entire man glorified; and so let us say that on earth the sun lights on us and many heats in the form of affliction. What *heats of affliction* some here have passed through! Why there are some here who are seldom free from physical pain. There are many of the best of God's children that, if they get an hour without pain, are joyful indeed. There are others that have had a great fight of affliction Through poverty they have fought hard. They have been industrious, but somehow or other God has marked them out for the scant tables and the

thread-worn garments. They are the children of poverty, and the furnace heat is very hot about them. With others it has been repeated deaths of those they have loved. Ah! how sad is the widow's case! How deep the grief of the fatherless! How great the sorrow of bereaved parents! Sometimes the arrows of God fly one after the other; first one falls and then another until we think we shall hardly have one left. These are the heats of the furnace of affliction. And at other times these take the form of ingratitude from children. I think we never ought to repine so much about the death of a child as about the ungodly life of a child. A dead cross is very heavy, but a living cross is heavier far. Many a mother has had a son of whom she might regret that he did not die even the very hour of his birth, for he has lived to be the grief of his parents, and a dishonour to their name. These are sharp trials—these heats—but you shall have done with them soon. "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." No poverty, no sickness, no bereavement, no ingratitude—nothing of the kind. They for ever rest from affliction. Heat sometimes comes in another form—in *the matter of temptation*. Oh! how some of God's people have been tried—tried by their flesh! Their constitution, perhaps, has been hot, impulsive, and they have been carried off their feet, or would have been but for the interposing grace of God, many and many a time. They have been tempted, too, in their position, and they of their own household have been their enemies. They have been tempted by their peculiar circumstances; their feet have almost gone many a time. And they have been tempted by the devil; and hard work it is to stand against Satanic insinuations. It is hot, indeed, when his fiery darts fly. Oh! when we shall have once crossed the river, how some of us who have been much tempted will look back upon that old dog of hell, and laugh him to scorn because he will not be able even to bark at us again! Then we shall be for ever free from him. He worries us now because he would devour us, but there, as he cannot devour, so shall he not even worry us. "Neither shall the sun " of temptation " light on them, nor any heat." Happy are the people that are in such a case. The *heats of persecution* have often, too, carried about the saints. It is the lot of God's people to be tried in this way. Through much tribulation of this sort they inherit the kingdom; but there are no Smithfields in heaven, and no Bonners to light up the faggots, no Inquisitions in heaven, no slanderers there to spoil the good man's name. They shall never have the heat of persecution to suffer again. And, once more, they shall not have *the heat of care*. I do not know that we need have it, even here; but there are a great many of God's people who allow care to get very hot about them. Even while sitting in this place to-night while the hymn was going up, "What must it be to be there!" the thoughts of some of you have been going away to your business, or your home. While we are trying to preach and draw your attention upwards, perhaps some housewife is thinking of something she has left out which ought to have been looked up before she came away, or wondering where she left the key. We make any excuses for care through the cares we continually invent, forgetting the words, "Cast all your care on him. for he careth for you." But they have no cares in heaven. "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Ah! good man, there shall be no ships at sea by-and-bye—no harvests—to trouble you as to whether the good weather will last! Ah! good woman, you shall have no more children that are sickly to fret over, for there you will have all you desire, and be in a family circle that is unbroken, for all the brothers and sisters of God's family shall by-and-bye be there, and so you shall be eternally blest.

We have thus opened up as well as we could the words of the text on the felicity of the saints. Now, very briefly:—

II. HOW DO THEY COME TO BE HAPPY?

Well, it is quite clear that they did not come to it because they were very fortunate people on earth, for if you read another passage of the Word of God you will find, "These are they that came out of great tribulation." Those that have had trial and suffering on earth are amongst those that have the bliss of heaven. Encourage yourselves, you poor and suffering ones. It is quite certain they did not come there from their own merit, for we read, they have "washed their robes"—they wanted washing. They did not keep them always undefiled. There had been spots upon them. They came there not because they deserved to be there, but because of the rich grace of God. How did they come there then? Well, first, they came there *through the lamb that was slain*. He bore the sun and the heat, and, therefore, the sun doth not light on them, nor any heat. The hot sun of Jehovah's justice shone full upon the Saviour—scorched, and burned, and consumed him with grief and anguish; and because the Saviour suffered, therefore we suffer it no more. All our hopes of heaven are found at the cross.

But they came there next *because the Saviour shed his blood*. They washed their robes in it. Faith linked them to the Saviour. The fountain would not have cleansed their robes if they had not washed in it. Oh! there shall be none come to heaven but such as have by faith embraced what God provides. Dear hearer, judge thyself whether thou art right, therefore. Hast thou washed thy robe and made it white in the Lamb's blood? Is Christ all in all to thee? If not, canst thou hope to be there? And they are there in perfect bliss, we are told. No sun lights on them, nor any heat, because the Lamb in the midst of the throne is with them. How could they be unhappy who see Christ? Is not this the secret of their bliss, that Jesus fully reveals himself to them?

And besides, *they have the love of God to enjoy*, for the last word of the chapter is, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The blood of Jesus applied, the presence of Jesus enjoyed, and the love of God fully revealed—these are the causes of the bliss of the saved in heaven. But we must close our meditation with the last point, which is:—

III. WHAT THIS TEACHES US.

First, the bliss of the saved in glory teaches us *to long for it*. It is legitimate to long for heaven—not to long to escape from doing our duty here. It is idleness to be always wanting to have done with this world—it is clear sloth—but to be longing to be where Jesus is, is only natural and gracious. Should not the child long to go home from the school? Should not the captive pine for liberty? Should not the traveller in foreign lands long to see his native country? Should not the bride, the married wife, when she has been long away from her husband, long to see his face? If you did not long for heaven, surely you might question whether heaven belonged to you. If you have ever tasted of the joys of the saints, as believers do on earth, you will sing with full soul:—

"My thirsty spirit faints
To reach the land I love
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above."

You may long for this.

And the next lesson is, be patient until you get there. As it will be such a blessed place when you arrive, don't trouble about the difficulties of the way. You know our hymn:—

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long."

So

"Let us fill it with hope, and cheer it with song."

You know how well your horse goes when you turn its head homewards. Perhaps you had to flog him a bit before, but when he begins to know he is going down the long lane which leads home he will soon lift up his ears, and away, away he will go. We ought to have as much sense as horses. Our heads are turned towards heaven We are steering towards that port—homeward bound. It may be rough weather but we shall soon be in the fair haven where not a wave of trouble shall ever disturb us again. Be patient, be patient. The husbandman has waited for the precious fruits of the earth; you can well wait for the precious things of heaven. You sow in tears, but you shall reap in joy. He has promised you a harvest. He who cannot lie has said the seed-time and harvest shall never cease They do not cease below; depend upon it, they won't cease above. There is a harvest for you who have been sowing here below.

Our first lesson, then, is, long for this, and then be patient in waiting. But our next lesson is to be, wait your appointed time. And now the next instruction is, *make much of faith*. They entered heaven because they had washed their robes in blood. Make much of the blood and much of the faith by which you have washed. Dear hearers, have you all got faith? It is, as it were, the key of blessedness. "But all men have not faith," says the Apostle. Hast thou faith? Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus? In other words, dost thou trust thyself alone with him' Can you sing with our poet:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die"
Make much of the faith that will admit you to heaven.

Once more, our text teaches us this lesson—Do any of us want to know what heaven is on earth? Most of us will say, "Aye" to that. Well then, the text tells you *how to find heaven on earth*. You find it in the same way as they find it in heaven. First, be thou washed in the blood of Christ, and that will be a great help towards happiness on earth. It will give thee peace now, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Some people think that heaven on earth is to be found in the theatre, and in the ballroom, and in the giddy haunts of fashion. Well, it may be heaven to some, but if God has any love to you, it won't be heaven to you. Wash your robe, therefore, in the Saviour's blood, and there will be the beginning of heaven on earth.

Then next, it appears, if you read the connection of our text, that those who enjoy heaven serve God day and night in his temple. If you want heaven on earth, serve God continually day and night. Having washed your robe first, then put it on, and go out to serve God. Idle Christians are often unhappy Christians I have met with many a spiritual dyspeptic always full of doubts and fears. Is there a young man here full of doubts and fears who has lost the light he once possessed, and the joy he once had? Dear brother, get to work. In cold weather the best way to be warm is not to get before a fire, but to work. Exercise gives a healthy glow, even amidst the frost. "I am doing something," says one. Yes, with one hand; use the other hand. "Perhaps I should have too many irons in the fire," says one. You cannot have too many. Put them all in, and blow the fire with all the bellows you can get. I do not believe any Christian man works too hard, and, as a rule, if those who kill themselves in Christ's service were buried in a cemetery by themselves, it would be a long while before it would get filled. Work hard for Christ. It makes happy those who are in heaven to serve God day and night, and it will make you happy on earth. Do all you can. Another way is to

have fellowship with Christ here. Read again this chapter. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them—he shall feed them." Oh! if you want to be happy, live near to Jesus. Poor men are not poor when Christ lives in their house. Truly, sick men have their beds made easy when Christ is there. Has he not said, "I will make his bed in all his sickness"? Only get fellowship with Jesus, and outward circumstances won't distress you. The sun will not light on you, nor any heat. You will be like the shepherd on Salisbury Plain, who said it was good weather, though it rained hard. "It is weather," said he, "that pleases me." "How so?" said a traveller to him. "Well, sir," he said, "it pleases God, and what pleases God pleases me." "Good day!" said one to a Christian man. "I never had a bad day since I was converted," said he. "They are all good now since Christ is my Saviour." Do you not see, then, that if your wishes are subdued, if you do not hunger any more, or thirst any more as you used to do, and if you always live near to Christ, you will begin to enjoy heaven on earth. Begin, then, the heavenly life here below. The Bible says, "For he hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The way to live on earth, according to many, is to live on earth, but to look upward to heaven. That is a good way of living, but I will tell you a better, and that is to live in heaven, and look down on earth. The Apostle had learned that when he said, "Our conversation is in heaven." It is good to be on earth, and look up to heaven; it is better for the mind to be in heaven, and to look down upon earth. May we learn that secret. The Lord lead us into it. Then when faith is strong, and love is ardent, and hope is bright, we shall sing, with Watts:—

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow."

The Lord grant you a participation in this bliss, beloved, and an abundant entrance into that bliss for ever, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Two Coverings and Two Consequences

A Sermon

(No. 3500)

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper."—Proverbs 38:13.

"Thou Hast covered all their sins."—Psalm 85:2.

IN THESE two texts we have *man's covering*, which is worthless and culpable, and *God's covering*, which is profitable, and worthy of all acceptance. No sooner had man disobeyed his Maker's will in the garden of Eden than he discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that he was naked, and he set about at once to make himself a covering. It was a poor attempt which our first parents made, and it proved a miserable failure. "They sewed fig-leaves together." After that God came in, revealed to them yet more fully their nakedness, made them confess their sin, brought their transgression home to them, and then it is written, the Lord God made them coats of skin. Probably the coats were made of the skins of animals which had been offered in sacrifice, and, if so, they were a fit type of him who has provided us with a sin-offering and a robe of perfect righteousness. Every man since the days of Adam has gone through much of the same experience, more or less relying on his own ingenuity to hide his own confusion of face. He has discovered that sin has made him naked, and he has set to work to clothe himself. As I shall have to show you presently, he has never succeeded. But God has been pleased to deal with his own people, according to the riches of his grace; he has covered their shame and put away their sins that they should not be remembered any more.

Let me now direct your attention, first, to man's covering, and its failure; and then to God's covering, and its perfection.

May the Holy Spirit be pleased to give you discernment, that you may see your destitute state in the presence of God, and understand the merciful relief that God himself has provided in the bounty of his grace!

I. MAN'S COVERING.

There are many ways in which men try to cover their sin. Some do so by denying that they have sinned, or, admitting the fact, they deny the guilt; or else, candidly acknowledging both the sin and the guilt, they excuse and exonerate themselves on the plea of certain circumstances which rendered it, according to their showing, almost inevitable that they should act as they have done. By pretext and presence, apology and self-vindication, they acquit themselves of all criminality, and put a fine gloss upon every foul delinquency. *Excuse-making* is the commonest trade under heaven. The slenderest materials are put to the greatest account. A man who has no valid argument in arrest of judgment, no feasible reason why he should not be condemned, will go about and bring a thousand excuses, and ten thousand circumstances of extenuation, the whole of them weak and attenuated as a spider's web. Someone here may be saying within himself, "It may be I have broken the law of God, but it was too severe. To keep so perfect a law was impossible. I have violated it, but then

I am a man, endowed with passions that involve propensities, and inflamed with desires that need gratification. How could I do otherwise than I have done? Placed in peculiar circumstances, I am borne along with the current. Subject to special temptations, I yield to the fascination; this is natural." So you think; so you essay to exculpate yourself. But, in truth, you are now committing a fresh sin; for you are abasing God, you are inculpating the Almighty. You are impugning the law to vindicate yourself for breaking it. There is no small degree of criminality about such an unrighteous defence. The law is holy, just, and good. You are throwing the onus of your sins upon God. You are trying to mane out that, after all, you are not to blame, but the fault lies with him who gave the commandment. Do you think that this will be tolerated? Shall the prisoner at the bar bring accusations against the Judge who tries him? Or shall he challenge the equity of the statute while he is arraigned for violating it? And as for the circumstances that you plead, what valid excuse can they furnish, Has it come to this—that it was not you, but your necessities, that did the wrong and are answerable for the consequence? Not you, indeed! you are a harmless innocent victim of circumstances! I suppose, instead of being censured, you ought almost to be pitied. What is this, again, but throwing the blame upon the arrangements of Providence, and saying to God, "It is the harshness of thy discipline, not the perverseness of my actions, that involves me in sin." What, I say, is this but a high impertinence, ay, veritable treason, against the Majesty of that thrice holy God, before whom even perfect angels veil their faces, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts"? I pray thee resort not to such a covering as this, because, while it is utterly useless, it adds sin to sin, and exposes thee to fresh shame.

In many cases persons violating the law of God have hoped to *cover their transgression by secrecy*. They have done the deed in darkness. They hope that no ear of man heard their footfall, or listened to their speech. Possibly they themselves held their tongue, and flattered themselves that no observer witnessed their movements or could divulge their action. So was it with Achan. I dare say he took the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, mid the confusion of the battle, and hid it when his comrades seemed too much engaged to notice so trivial an affair. While they were rushing over the fallen walls of Jericho, amidst the debris and the dust, he might be unmolested; and then, in the dead of night, while they slept, he turned the sod of his tent, dug into the earth, and buried there his coveted treasure. All looks right, to his heart's content. He has smoothed it down, and spread his carpet over the grave of his lust. Little did he reckon of the Omniscient eye. Little did he count on the unerring lot that would come home to the tribe of Judah, to the family of the Zarhites, to the house of Zabdir, and, at last, to the son of Carmi, so that Achan himself would have to stand out confessed as a traitor—a robber of his God. Men little know the ways in which the Almighty can find them out, and bring the evidence that convicts, out of the devices that were intended to cover their sin.

Do you not know that Providence is a wonderful detective? There are hounds upon the track of every thief, and murderer, and liar—in foot, upon every sinner of every kind. Each sin leaves a trail. The dogs of judgment will be sure to scent it out, and find their prey. There is no disentangling yourselves from the meshes of guilt; no possibility of evading the penalty of transgression. Very wonderful have been the ways in which persons who have committed crimes have been brought to judgment. A trifle becomes a tell-tale. The method of deceit gives a clue to the manner of discovery. Wretched the men who bury their secrets in their own bosom. Their conscience plays traitor to them. They have often been forged to betray themselves. We have read of men talking in their sleep to their fellows, and babbling out in their dreams the crime they had committed years

before. God would have the secret disclosed. No eye had seen, neither could other tongue have bold, but the man turned king's evidence against himself; he has thus brought himself to judgment. It has often happened, in some form or other, that conscience has thus been witness against men. Do I address anyone who is just now practicing a secret sin? You would not have me point you out for all the world, nor shall I do so. Believe me, however, the sin is known. Dexterous though you have been in the attempt to conceal it, it has been seen. As surely as you live, it has been seen. "By whom?" say you. Ah! by One who never forgets what he sees, and will be sure to tell of it. He may commission a little bird of the air to whisper it. Certainly he will one day proclaim it by the sound of trumpet to listening worlds. You are watched, sir; you are known. You have been narrowly observed, young girl; those things you have hidden away will be brought to light, for God is the great discoverer of sin. His eye has marked you; his providence will track you. It is vain to think that ye can conceal your transgressions. Before high heaven, disguise is futile. Yea, the darkness hideth not; the night shineth as the day. I have known persons who have harboured a sin in their breast till it has preyed upon their constitution. They have been like the Spartan boy who had stolen a fox, and was ashamed to have it known, so he kept it within his garment, till it ate through his flesh, and he fell dead. He suffered the fox to gnaw his heart ere he would betray himself. There are those who have got a sin, if not a lie in their right hand, yea, a lie in their heart, and it is eating into their very life. They dare not confess it. If they would confess it to their God, and make restitution to those whom they have offended, they would soon come to peace; but they vainly hope that they can cover the sin, and hide it from the eyes of God and man. He that covereth his sin in this fashion shall not prosper.

Again, full many a time sinners have tried to *cover their sin with falsehood*. Indeed, this is the usual habit—to lie—to cloak their guilt by denying it. Was not this the way with Gehazi? When the prophet said, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" he said, "Thy servant went no whither." Then the prophet told him that the leprosy of Naaman should cleave to him all the days of his life. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira, in lying in order to hide their sin, how quickly was it discovered, and how terrible was the retribution! I wonder that men and women can lie as they do after reading that story. "Hast thou sold the land for so much?" said Peter. And Ananias said, "Yea, for so much." At that instant he fell down and gave up the ghost. Three hours after, when his wife, Sapphire, said the same, the feet of the young men who had buried her husband were at the door, ready to carry out her corpse, and bury her by his side. Oh! sirs, ye must weave a tangled web, indeed, when once ye begin to deceive; and when you have woven it you will have to add lie to lie, and lie to lie, and yet all to no purpose, for you will be surely found out. There is something about a lie that always deludes the man who utters it. Liars have need of good memories. They are sure to leave a little corner uncovered through which the truth escapes. Their story does not hang together. Discrepancies excite suspicions, and evasions furnish a clue to discoveries, till the naked truth is unveiled. Then the deeper the plot the fouler is the shame. But to lie unto the God of truth, of what avail can that be? What advantageth it you to plead "not guilty," when he has witnessed your crime? That infallible Eye which never mistakes is never closed. He knows everything; from him no secret is hid. Why, therefore, dost thou imagine that thou canst deceive thy Maker?

There are some who try to *cover their sin by prevarication*. With cunning subtlety they strive to evade personal responsibility. Memorable is the instance of David. I will not dwell upon his flagrant crime; but I must remind you of his sorry subterfuge, when he tried to hide the baseness of his lust by conspiring to cause the death of Uriah. There have been those who have schemed

deep and long to throw the blame on others, even to the injury of their reputation, to escape the odium of their own malpractices. Who knows but in this congregation there may be someone who affects a high social position, supported by a deep mercantile immorality? Merchants there have been that have swollen before the public as men of wealth, while they were falsifying their accounts, abstracting money, yet making the books tally, rolling in luxury, and living in jeopardy. Have they prospered? Were they to be envied? The detection that long haunted them at length overtook them; could they look it in the face? We have heard of their blank despair, their insane suicide; at any rate, a miserable exposure has been their melancholy climax. "Be sure your sin will find you out." You may run the length of your tether. It is short. The hounds of justice, swift of scent and strong of limb, are on your trail. Rest assured, you will be discovered. Could you escape the due reward in this life, yet certainly your guilt is known in heaven, and you shall be judged and condemned in that great day which shall decide your eternal destiny. Seek not, then, to cover up sin with such transparent cobwebs as these.

Some people flatter themselves that their sin has already been *hidden away by the lapse of time*. "It was so very long ago," says one, "I had almost forgotten it; I was a lad at the time." "Aye," says another, "I am gray-headed now. It must have been twenty or thirty years ago. Surely you do not think that the sin of my far-off days will be brought out against me? The thing is gone by. Time must have obliterated it." Not so, my friend. It may be the lapse of time will only make the discovery the more clear. A boy once went into his father's orchard, and there in his rough play he broke a little tree which his father valued. But, rapidly putting it together again, he managed to conceal the fact, for the disunited parts of the tree took kindly to each other, and the tree stood as before. It so happened that more than forty years afterwards he went into that garden after a storm had blown across it in the night, and he found that the tree had been riven in two, and it had snapped precisely in the place where he had broken it when it was but a sapling. So there may come a crash to your character precisely in that place where you sinned when yet a lad. Ah! how often the transgressions of our youth remain within our bosoms! There lie the eggs of our young sin, and they hatch when men come into riper years. Don't be so sure that the lapse of time will consign your faults and follies to oblivion. You sowed your wild oats, sir; you have got to reap them. The time that has intervened has only operated to make that evil seed spring up, and you are so much the nearer to the harvest. Time does not change the hue of sin in the sight of God. If a man could live a thousand years, the sins of his first year would be as fresh in the memory of the Almighty as those of the last. Eternity itself will never wash out a sin. Flow on, ye ages; but the scarlet spots on the sand. Flow on still in mighty streams, but the damning spot is there still. Neither time nor eternity can cleanse it. Only one thing can remove sin. The lapse of time cannot. Let not any of you be so foolish as to hope it will.

When the trumpet of the resurrection sounds, there will be a resurrection of characters, as well as of men. The man who has been foully slandered will rejoice in the light that reflects his purity. But the man whose latent vices have been skilfully veneered will be brought to the light too. His acts and motives will be alike exposed. As he himself looks and sees the resurrection of his crimes, with what horror will he face that day of judgment! "Ah! ah!" says he, "Where am I? I had forgotten these. These are the sins of my childhood, the sins of my youth, the sins of my manhood, and the sins of my old age. I thought they were dead and buried, but they start from their tombs. My memory has been quickened. How my brain reels as I think of them all! But there they are, and, like so many wolves around me, they seem all thirsting for my destruction." Beware, oh! men. Ye have buried

your sins, but they will rise up from their graves and accuse you before God. Time cannot cover them.

Or do any of you imagine that your *tears can blot out transgressions*? That is a gross mistake. Could your tears for ever flow; could you be transformed into a Niobe, and do nothing else but weep for aye, the whole flood could not wash out a single sin. Some have supposed that there may be efficacy in baptismal water, or in sacramental emblems, or in priestly incantations, or in confession to a priest—one who asks them to disclose their secret wickedness to him, and betrays a morbid avidity to make his breast the sewer into which all kinds of uncleanness should be emptied. Be not deceived. There is nothing in these ordinances of man, or these tricks of Romish priestcraft (I had almost said of witchcraft, the two are so much alike) to excuse the folly of those who are beguiled by them. You need not catch at straws when the rope is thrown out to you. There is pardon to be had; remission is to be found; forgiveness can be procured. Turn your back on yonder shavelings; lend not your ear to them, neither be ye the victims of their snares. In the street each day it makes one's soul sad to see them. Like the Pharisees of old, they wear their long garments to deceive. You cannot mistake them. Their silly conceit publishes their naked shame. Confide not in them for a moment. Christ can forgive you. God can blot out your sin. But they cannot ease your conscience by their penances, or remove your transgressions by their celebrations.

Thus I have gone through a rough, not very accurate, list of the ways by which men hope to cover their sin, but they "shall not prosper." None of these shall succeed.

A more joyous task devolves on me now, while I draw your attention to my second text, "Thou hast covered all their sin."

II. GOD'S COVERING.

This fact is affirmed concerning the people of God. All who have trusted in the atoning sacrifice which was presented by the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary may accept this welcome assurance, "God. has covered all their sin." How this hath come to pass I will tell you. Before ever God covers a man's sins *he unveils them*. Did you ever see your sins unveiled? Did it ever seem as if the Lord put his hand upon you, and said, "Look, look at them"? Have you been led to see your sins as you never saw them before? Have you felt their aggravations fit to drive you to despair? As you have looked at them, has the finger of detection seemed to point out your blackness? Have you discovered in them a depth of guilt, and iniquity, and hell—desert which never struck your mind before? I recollect a time when that was a spectacle always before the eyes of my conscience. My sin was ever before me. If God thus makes you see your sin in the light of his countenance, depend upon it he has his purposes of mercy toward you. When you see and confess it, he will blot it out. So soon as God, in infinite loving-kindness, makes the sinner know in truth that he is a sinner, and strips him of the rags of his self-righteousness, he grants him pardon and clothes his nakedness. While he stands shivering before the gaze of the Almighty, condemned, the guilt is purged from his conscience. I do not know of a more terrible position in one's experience than to stand with an angry God gazing upon you, and to know that wherever God's eye falls upon you it sees nothing but sin; sees nothing in you but what he must hate and must abhor. Yet this is the experience through which God puts those to whom he grants forgiveness. He makes them know that he sees how sinful they are, and he makes them feel how vile and leprous they are. His justice withers their pride; his judgment appals their heart. They are humbled in the very dust, and made to cry out—each man trembling for his own soul—"God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Not till this gracious work of conviction is fully wrought does the Lord appear with *the glorious proclamation* that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall have his sins covered. That proclamation. I have now openly to publish and personally to deliver to you. With your outward ears you may have heard it hundreds of times. It is old, yet ever new. Whosoever among you, knowing himself to be guilty, will come and put his trust in Jesus Christ, shall have his sins covered. "Can God do that?" Yes, he can. *He alone can cover sin*: Against him the sin was committed. It is the offended person who must pardon the offender. No one else can. He is the King. He has the right to pardon. He is the Sovereign Lord, and he can blot out sin. Beside that, he can cover it lawfully, for the Lord Jesus Christ (though ye know the story, let me tell it again—the song of redemption always rings out a charming melody), Jesus Christ, the Father's dear Son, in order that the justice of God might be vindicated, bare his breast to its dreadful hurt, and suffered in our room, and place, and stead, what we ought to have suffered as the penalty of our sin. Now the sacrifice of God covers sin—covers it right over; and he more than covers it, he makes it cease to be. Moreover, the Lord Jesus kept the law of God, and his obedience stands, instead of our obedience; and God accepts him and his righteousness on our behalf, imputing his merits to our souls.

Oh! the virtue of that atoning blood! Oh! the blessedness of that perfect righteousness of the Son of God, by which he covers our sins!

There are two features of covering I should like to recall to your recollection. The one was the mercy-seat or propitiatory, over the golden ark, wherein were the tables of stone. Those tables of stone seemed, as it were, to reflect the sins of Israel. As in a mirror they reflected the transgression of God's people. God was above, as it were, looking down between the cherubic wings. Was he to look down upon the law defied and defiled by Israel? Ah! no; there was put over the top of the ark, as a lid which covered it all, a golden lid called the mercy-seat, and when the Lord looked down he looked upon that lid which covered sin. Beloved, such is Jesus Christ, the covering for all our sins. God sees no sin in those who are hidden beneath Jesus Christ.

There was another covering at the Red Sea. On that joyous day when the Egyptians went down into the midst of the sea pursuing the Israelites, at the motion of Moses' rod the waters that stood upright like a wall leapt back into their natural bed and swallowed up the Egyptians. Great was the victory when Miriam sang, "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." It is even so that Jesus Christ's atonement has covered up our sins. They are sunk in his sepulchre; they are buried in his tomb. His blood, like the Red Sea, has drowned them. "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." Against the believer there is not a sin in God's Book recorded. He that believeth in him is perfectly absolved. "Thou hast covered all their sin." I shall not have time to dwell upon the sweetness of this fact, but I invite you that believe to consider its preciousness; and I hope you who have not believed will feel your mouth watering after it; to know that every sin one has ever committed, known and unknown, is gone—covered by Christ. To be assured that when Jesus died he did not die for some of our sins, but for all the sins of his people; not for their sins up till now, but for all the sins they ever will commit! Well does Kent put it:—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black they're cast
And O, my soul, with wonder view
For sins to come here's pardon too."

The atonement was made before the sin was committed. The righteousness was presented even before we had lived. "Thou hast covered all their sin. It seems to me as if the Lamb of God, slain

from before the foundation of the world, had in the purpose of God, from the foundation of the world, covered all his people's sins. Therefore, we are accepted the Beloved, and dear to the Father's heart. Oh! what a joy it is to get a hold of something like this truth, especially when the truth gets a hold of you—when you can feel by the inwrought power and witness of the Holy Ghost that your sins are covered—that you dare stand up before a rein-trying, heart-searching God, and give thanks that every transgression you ever committed is hid from the view of those piercing eyes through Jesus Christ your Lord.

Some people think we ought not to talk thus, that it is presumptuous. But really there is more presumption in doubting than there is in believing. For a child to believe his father's word is never presumption. I like to credit my Father's word. "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Condemned I am not, for I know I do believe in him. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Beloved, the covering is as broad as the sin. The covering completely covers, and for ever covers; for as God sees to-day no sin in those who are washed in Jesus' blood, so will he never see any. You are accepted with an acceptance that nothing can change. Whom once he loves he never leaves, but loves them to the end. The reason of his love to them does not lie in their merits nor their charms; the cause of love is in himself. The ground of his acceptance of them is in the person and work of Christ. Whatever they may be, whatever their condition of heart may be, they are accepted, because Christ lived and died. It is not a precarious or a conditional, but an eternal acceptance.

Would you enjoy the blessedness of this complete covering? Cowering down beneath the tempest of Jehovah's wrath, which you feel in your conscience, would you obtain this full remission? Behold the gates of the City of Refuge which stand wide open. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed! to the thirsty, needy, labouring, weary soul. Not merely open are the gates, but the invitation to enter is given. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You are bidden to lay hold upon eternal life. The way of doing so is simple. No works of yours, no merits, no tears, no preparations are required, but trust—trust—that is all. Believe in Jesus. Rely upon him; depend upon him; depend upon him. I have heard of Homer's Iliad being enclosed in a nutshell, so small was it written; but here is the Plain Man's Guide to Heaven in a nutshell. Here is the essence of the whole gospel in one short sentence. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him; trust him. That is the meaning of that word believe. Depend upon him, and as surely as thou doest it, nor death, nor hell, nor sin shall ever separate thee from the love of him whom thou hast embraced, from the protection of him in whose power thou hast taken shelter. The Lord lead you to cower beneath his covering wings, and grant you to be found in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. So shall your present peace be the foretaste of your eternal felicity. Amen.

The Feast of the Lord

A Sermon

(No. 3501)

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's-day Evening, August 6th, 1871.

"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. 11:26.

I THINK we cannot too often explain the meaning of the two great Christian ordinances—baptism and the Supper of the Lord; for it is essential to our profiting by them that we understand them. If we do not know what they mean, they certainly cannot convey to us any blessing whatever. They are not mere channels of grace in themselves, apart from our understanding being exercised, and our hearts being moved by them. Very soon the best ordinance in the world will become a mere form, and will even degenerate into superstitious practice, unless it be understood; and we must not always take it for granted that the meaning of the simplest emblem is understood. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, must still be the motto of the Christian minister. We must explain, explain, and explain again, or else men will satisfy themselves with the outward form, and not reach to the teaching which the forms were intended to convey. Our text deals with the supper of our Lord, and we will read it again. "As often as eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

The first point of the text is *what we do*—we "show." Then, *what do we show, and how?* And then, *who show it*—"ye do show the Lord's death." And then, *when?*—"as often"—"till he come." First, then, when we come to the Lord's table:—

I. WHAT WE DO.

We "show." That word has two or three meanings. They all melt into one, but we shall get at it better by dividing it. It is meant here by showing Christ's death that *we declare it*. When the emblems are placed upon the table—bread and wine and we gather around it, we declare our firm belief that Jesus, the Son of God, descended into this world and died as a sacrifice for sin upon the arose. It has been found that if a great event is to be kept in mind in succeeding ages, there must be some memorial of it. Men by degrees forget it, and even come to be dubious as to whether such an event did occur. Sometimes a stone has been set up—a monument—but this has not always been most effective. God, when he would have the children of Israel remember that he brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, did not bid them set up a monument, but he ordained a ceremony which was to be practiced on a certain day. It was called "The Passover," and the slaughter of the lamb and the eating of it became a yearly declaration by the people of Israel that they believed that God brought their fathers up out of the house of bondage. So effective has this been that men have often used the same device. When the Jewish people escaped from the plot which was laid by Haman, through the wisdom of Mordecai and Esther, they ordained the keeping

of the feast of Purim, that they might have in perpetual memory the goodness of God towards his people.

And you know how, in our own English history and in the history of other countries, certain rites and ceremonies have been ordained in order that there might be a perpetual memorial, a declaration made that such and such a thing did occur. Now that more than eighteen hundred years ago Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, died upon Calvary by crucifixion, we do here protest and declare. We set forth again to a world that is skeptical and denies the fact which is its brightest hope—we set forth our confident belief that so it was; and as long as this ordinance shall be celebrated, there shall be a standing proof in the world that that was the case.

But to set forth means more than to declare. It signifies, in the next place *to represent*. There is in the Lord's Supper a representation of the death of Christ. Men, when they have found an event to be interesting and remarkable, have often devised ways of representing it to the people that they might understand it.

With regard to our Lord's death, there are some who hang up pictures on the wall; they think the use of the crucifix and so on to be proper. I find no teaching of that kind in the Word of God. I do find that too often such things lead to idolatry. And what shall we say of these miracle—plays which, even in these modern times, have been carried out, in which the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is travestied? They seem to be shocking to the Christian mind. But here, in a very simple manner, you have God's own appointed way of representing to ourselves and to onlookers the death of our Lord. This is the Christian's "show"—we *show* the death of Christ here by a divine appointment. I shall, farther on, show how it is so, and that the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of wine—the use of those two emblems—is a most telling, most suggestive, most instructive method of representing the death of Christ. There are two other ways of representing it—the one the pencil of the evangelist which has drawn the death of Christ in the Word of God; the other is the preaching of the gospel. It is the preacher's business to set forth Christ crucified—evidently crucified among you. The three ways that God has ordained of representing the death of Christ are the Word read, the Word preached, and this blessed ordinance of the Supper of the Lord.

To "show." This means to declare, to testify; and it means also to represent. But it has a third meaning: it means also *to hold forth*, to make manifest, to publish, to call attention to. Now it has been a matter of fact that when the Jesuit missionaries went to China and converted a great many to what they called the Christian faith, they never mentioned the fact that Christ died. For years they concealed it, lest the people should be shocked. Now we, on the other hand, put that first and foremost. We have no other Christianity than this, that Christ died and rose again, and we cannot come to the Lord's table without showing it. The Jesuit could, because it would puzzle the wisest man to see the death of Christ in the Mass. He might sit and look at a hundred Masses before he knew what it meant. But the moment we gather around this table and break bread, and pour out wine, whoever asks us, "What mean ye by this ordinance? the answer is prompt—the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in this—"We set forth to you that Jesus died." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are not ashamed of a crucified Saviour. We have heard of some in these days who are always preaching a glorified Christ. We wish them such success as their ministry is likely to bring; but for us we preach a crucified Christ—"Christ and him crucified"; for it is here, after all, that the salvation of the sinner lies. Christ glorified is precious enough—oh! how unspeakably precious to a soul that is saved!—but first and foremost to a dying world it is Christ upon the cross that we have to declare. And, therefore, when

we come to the Communion table we do three things. We assert the fact that Jesus died; we represent that fact in emblem, and then we thus press it upon the attention of men. We desire them to observe it; we ask them to mark it; we tell them that this is the sum and substance of all the gospel that we were sent to preach, "God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins."

Thus I have opened up the meaning of the word to "show." This is what we do. Now the second point is, my brethren:—

II. WHAT WE SHOW, AND HOW

It is said in the text, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." How do we show it? What do we show? Well, first of all, we show that *God has set forth Christ for men*. The table is spread; there is bread on it; there is the cup upon it. What for? Not for beasts. Here is the food of men. It is set there for men. It is intended that the bread should be eaten, that the wine should be drunk. Everybody who sees a table spread knows at once that there are preparations for a meal or a festival. Now God has set forth Christ for men. There is in Christ what man wants. As bread meets his hunger, as the cup meets his thirst, so Christ meets all the spiritual wants of mankind. And the soul that would live, and the soul that would rejoice, must come to God's provision for his living and his rejoicing, and that provision is to be found in Jesus Christ crucified. God set forth Christ of old. Even in the garden, he set him forth in the first promise. He continued to set him forth by all the prophets, and in this last day every veil has been taken away by an open Bible inviting all comers. God has set forth the bread of life to the sons of men. And you to-night will show that fact. When you see that table uncovered, you have a representation. God has made a feast of fat things for the sons of men in the person of Jesus Christ. The feast consists of bread and wine. Now in this we represent Christ's human person, Christ's humanity. That he is no myth, but real flesh, is taught by the bread being on the table—that he was no phantom, but that real blood coursed through his veins as through ours—that the Lord of life and glory was, like ourselves, a real man, in humanity in all respects like to ourselves, sin alone excepted. There shall be no phantom feast upon the table, and the materialism that is there is meant to show that he was a man, a real man

"Who once on Calvary died,
When streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side."

But the next thing we show forth is *his death*. We have his person; then we have his death—observe how. Recording to the Romish Church, the most of the people are only to participate in the bread—the wafer. Now such persons never show Christ's death at all, for the text says, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye show Christ's death." It is only by the two that you show his death at all. The bread represents the body, but the cup must represent the blood, or else you have no token of his suffering—no emblem of his death. Cannot the two be mixed together? No, for if the blood and flesh be together, you have the living man. It is when the blood flows—when the lifeblood ebbs from the body, and the body is bloodless, that then you have the wine as a token of death; and the separation of the two—the use of the two emblems—is absolutely needful to set forth death. The more you think this the more you see in it. The emblem is the simplest in the world, but yet the most instructive. Take either one of the elements—the bread, how it typifies Christ's suffering! Here was the corn bruised beneath the thresher's flail; then was it cast into the ground. It sprung up and ripened, and had to be cut down with the sickle; then it had to be threshed; then ground in the mill; then was it baked in the oven. A whole series of sufferings, if I may use the

term, it had to pass through before it became proper food for us. And so must our Saviour pass through sufferings innumerable before he could become food for our souls, and redeemer of our spirits. As for that which is in the cup, it was trodden beneath the foot in the wine-press—its juice was pressed forth. So in the wine-press of Jehovah's wrath was Christ pressed before he could become the wine that maketh glad both God and man. Both emblems represent suffering, each one separately, but put together they bring forth the idea of death, "and as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death."

But more than this; we show that God set forth Christ; we show his person as a real man; we show his sufferings and his death; but next we show *our participation in the same*, for it is not "as often as ye *look* at this bread," or "as ye *gaze* upon this cup," but "as often as ye *eat* this bread and drink this cup." Christ saves us not until we do receive him by an act of faith. The bread satisfies no hunger while it rests upon the table, and a draught from the cup quenches no thirst until it really is drunk. So the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour must be received by our faith. We must believe in him to the saving of our souls. Now how simple a matter is eating! It matters not, unless a man be dead—he wants little teaching to know how to eat. It is as simple as a natural act—he puts food into his mouth. It is just so here. There is the Saviour, and I take him—that is all. It seems to me to be even a more complex act to eat than simply to trust in Jesus, yet is it a very simple thing. The idiot can eat. No matter how guilty a man, he can eat; no matter how dark and despairing his fears, he can eat; and O poor soul, whoever thou mayest be, there shall be no want of wit or merit that shall keep thee back from Christ. If thou art willing to have him, thou mayest have him. The act of trusting Christ makes Christ as much thy own as the eating of the bread. Suppose some difficulty were raised about whether a piece of bread was mine. Well, the legal question would take a long time to decide. I cannot produce the document, nor find the witnesses to prove it is mine. But there is one little fact, I think, which will settle it—I have eaten it. So if the devil himself were to say that Christ is not mine, I have believed on him; and if I have believed on him, he is mine just as surely as when I have eaten a piece of bread there can be no question about its being mine. Now we set forth to-night, by eating bread and drinking of the cup, the fact that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and we take him by simple faith to be our all in all.

But there is more teaching still. The bread and wine, are being eaten and drunk, are assimilated into the system; they minister strength to bone, sinew, muscle; they build up the man. And herein is teaching. *Christ believed in is one with us*—"Christ in us the hope of glory. "We have heard persons talk of believers falling from grace and losing Christ. No, sir, a man has eaten bread—he ate it yesterday. Will you separate that bread from the man? Will you trace the drops that came from the cup, and fetch them out of the man's system? You shall more easily do that than you shall take Christ away from the soul that has once fed upon him. "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" He is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. See then how large a letter Christ has written to us with these pens—how in this bread and this wine, eaten and drunk, he has taught us wondrous mysteries—in fact, the whole Christian faith is, in brief, summed up here upon this table.

And now we must remark upon what it is we show forth, and how we do it. *We do this very simply*. Certain churches must go about this business in a very mysterious manner—a great deal of machinery is wanted—a plate becomes a paten, and a cup becomes a chalice, and a table, ah! that has vanished and turned into an altar. The whole thing is turned topsy-turvy until it is very questionable in the Church of Rome whether there is any supper at all; for if you introduce the

altar, you have put away the table and done away with the whole thing. It is another ordinance, and not the ordinance which Christ established. One would suppose that when the Apostles first went out to preach, if the religion of the Romish Church be that of the Scripture, they would have needed, each of them, a wagon to carry with them the various paraphernalia necessary for the celebration of their services. But here, wherever there is a piece of bread, and wherever there is a cup, we have the plain, but instructive emblems which our Saviour bade us use. "He took bread and break it. "He did drink of the cup, and passed it to his disciples, and said, "Drink ye all of it."

Let us keep this ordinance in its pure simplicity. Let us never add anything to it by our own devising by way of fancying that we are honouring God by garnishing his table. Let us plainly show Christ's death, and as we do it plainly *we should also do it festively*. Is it not delightful to reflect that our Lord has not ordained a mournful ceremony in which to celebrate his death: it is a feast. You would suppose by the way that some come that it is a funeral, but it is a feast, and joy becomes a feast; and when, according to the example of Christ, we recline at our ease in the nearest approach to the posture in which the Oriental lay along at the table, and when we come with joyful heart, blessing the Lord Jesus that though our sins put him to death, yet his death has put to death our sins, then it is that we celebrate his death as he would have us celebrate it—not as an awful tragedy, in which we try to provoke our indignation against the Romans or the Jews, but as a hallowed festival, in which the King himself comes to the table, and his spikenard gives forth a sweet smell, and our spirit is refreshed.

And once more, this way of showing Christ's death is *one of communion*. Now one person cannot do it; many must come together. Ye must eat and drink together to celebrate this, your Lord's death. And is not this delightful, for in this cup we have fellowship with him and with one another? We, being many, have one bread; we, being many, have one cup—one family at one table with one common head, the Lord Jesus, who is all in all to us. Oh! I bless his name that whereas he might have ordained a way of our showing his death which would have been mournful, or a way which would have been solitary, he has selected that which is joyful, and that which is full of good fellowship, so that saints below and himself can meet together in the festival of love and show his death until he come, in the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of wine. Thus I have tried to show what it is we show, and how we show it. Now thirdly:—

III. WHO ARE TO SHOW IT?

Who show it? "As often as *ye* eat this bread and drink this cup, *ye* do show the Lord's death." The "*ye*," then includes all the saints of God—all who come to the table, who eat this bread and drink this cup; and truly a very pleasing thought arises from this. Here is a way of showing Christ's death in which all who love Christ have a share. You cannot all show it from the pulpit; gifts are not equally distributed; but you all alike share in this showing of his death—in this special way, which he himself celebrated for our example, and which he delivered to his servant Paul, expressly that it might stand on record. Now if Paul himself were here, he could not show Christ's death alone at the Lord's Supper. He must ask some of his poorer brethren to come with him. If the minister of a church should be full of the Holy Ghost, yet could he not show forth Christ's death here in this peculiar way. He must say to his brethren, "Come, brethren and sisters; it says '*ye*,' as often as *ye* eat this bread and drink this cup." Here we are to-night, as we sit here, all brought into a blessed equality in the act of using the same outward sign, and of performing the Master's will in the same way.

"But," says ones "doth every man who comes to the table, and eats and drinks, show Christ's death? Notice how the verse which follows my text puts a bar to that. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread." It must be taken for granted that the man has examined himself—that he comes there as a true believer in Jesus—that he comes there with the full intent to show Christ's death; and if he does that, such a man is showing Christ's death. I am very earnest, dear brethren and sisters, as it has been a long time since I have met with you—having been kept away so long by sickness, though I have been with my brethren below stairs—I am anxious that we should indeed show Christ's death to-night. Let us do it to ourselves. I find that the text may either be read in the indicative or in the imperative mood. It is either "ye show Christ's death," as our version has it, or it may be "show ye Christ's death"—it is an exhortation. Oh! let us take care that we show it to ourselves. "Show it to ourselves?" says one. Yes, it is meant for you. This is a primary meaning of the text. When you take that bread, don't think of the bread, and stay there, but say to your own soul, "My soul, think thou of Jesus. My heart, go away now to Gethsemane. Come, ye stray thoughts; Come, ye passing vanities, begone! I must away to where my Saviour bled and died.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing
Which, before his cross, I spend."

I have come here to show his death; let me see him. I will ask him to permit me in spirit to put my finger into the print of the nails, and to put my hand into his side. Oh! go not from this table satisfied with the outward emblem; press into the inner court—pray the Master to manifest himself to you as he does not unto the world. For here is the main business—show his death to your own heart till your heart bleeds for sin; show it to your own faith till your faith feels it is all sufficient—show it to others. You will be sure to show it to others if you show it to yourself for as others look on and mark your reverent behaviour; if they cannot enter into your joy, they will be reminded of what they have so long forgotten. Oh! brethren and sisters, let me urge each one of you that no one should be content without sharing this honour. I feel we all have an honour to participate in showing forth the death of Christ. Let us not, in sharing the honour, bring condemnation on ourselves. But I must hasten on. The fourth point is:—

IV. WHEN ARE WE TO DO IT?

The text says "often"—"as often as ye eat this bread." The Holy Spirit might have used the words "when ye eat," but he did not. He teaches us by implication that we ought to do it often. I do not think there is any positive law about it, but it looks to me as if the first Christians broke bread almost every day—"breaking bread from house to house." I am not sure that that refers to Communion, but in all probability it does. This much is certain, that in the early Church the custom was to break bread in memory of Christ's passion on the first day of every week, and it was always a part of the Sabbath's service when they came together to remember their Lord in this way. How it can be thought right to leave the celebrating of this ordinance to once a year or once a quarter I cannot understand, and it seems to me that if brethren knew the great joy there is in often setting forth Christ's death they would not be content with even once a month. But I leave that.

The other mark of time in the text is "till he come." Then this service is to end. There will be no more Lord's Suppers when Christ appears, because they will be needless. Put out the candle—the sun has risen. Put away the emblem—here comes Christ himself. But until he does come, this will always be a most fitting ordinance. I pleased myself with a thought I met with the other day. Our Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table and ate with his disciples, and he took the cup and he sipped it,

and he passed it round. It is being passed round still. It has not got round the table yet, it is being passed on. For 1,800 years it has been passed from hand to hand. They have not all drunk yet; and you remember he, said, "Drink ye all of it"—all of you. Did he speak to all his elect that were to be born—to all the countless companies yet to come? I think he did, and it is going round: and by-and-bye, when all the people of God have participated in Christ, it will cease. The cup will never be emptied till then.

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

When the last has drunk of it, what then? It will come back into the Master's hands, and then will be fulfilled that word of his, "I say unto you I will not henceforth drink of the juice of the vine till I drink it new in my heavenly Father's kingdom." And it is going round, brethren—that cup of glorious Christian fellowship of love to Christ, the cup that is filled with Jesus' blood—it is passing round, and when it has reached his hand then we shall need no more the outward ordinance. But until then it is clear from the text that it is to be kept up. And I have a little dispute with some of you here present. You love the Lord, but you have never been baptized; you love Jesus, but you have never come to his table. Now let me say you are in opposition to Christ. He says, "Do this till I come", you don't do it. "Oh! but I am only one," say you. To your measure of ability you have helped to make the lord's Supper obsolete. Can you see that? If you have a right to neglect it, so have I—if I, so have all my brethren. Then there is an end to it. My dear brother, you are doing the best you can to make Christ forgotten in the world. I pray you by his own dying example and his express command, "This do ye in remembrance of me"—if ye have believed him, keep this, his commandment. If ye have not believed in him, then far hence! Ye have no right to take it. But if you have believed, I beseech you stand not back for shame or fear, but eat and drink at his table till he come.

Time has gone too fast for me, and I must close. There is one lesson, however, that I cannot leave out. Until Christ come. We are taught our interim employment—what is to occupy us until Jesus comes. Beloved brethren, until Jesus comes we have nothing left but to think of him. Till Jesus comes the main thing we have to do is to think of and set him forth a crucified Saviour. There is no food for the Church but Jesus; there is no testimony to the world but Jesus crucified. They have sometimes told us that in this growing age we may expect to have developed a higher form of Christianity. Well, they shall have it that like it; but Christ himself has left us nothing but just this, "Show my death till I come." The preacher is to go on preaching a dying Saviour; the saint is to go on trusting that dying Saviour, feeding on him and letting his soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. There is nothing left us to occupy our thoughts, or to be the subject of our joy, as our dear dying Lord. Oh! let us feed on him. Each one, personally, as a believer—let him feed on his Saviour. If he has come once, come again. Keep on coming till Christ himself shall appear. As long as the invitation stands let us not slight it, but constantly come to Christ himself and feed on him.

In conclusion, let every ungodly person here know that he has no part nor lot in this matter. Thy first business, sinner, is with Christ himself. Go thou and put thy trust in him. Oh! go this night. Thou mayest never have another night to go in. And then when thou best believed, then obey his command in baptism, and then also come to his table and show his death until he come. The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

Powerful Persuasives

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matthew 11:27-28.

I HAVE preached to you, dear friends, several times from the words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is such sweetness in the precept, such solace in the promise, that I could fain hope to preach from it many times more. But I have no intention just now to repeat what I have said in any former discourse, or to follow the same vein of thought that we have previously explored. This kindly and gracious invitation needs only to be held up in different lights to give us different subjects for admiration. That it flowed like an anthem from our Saviour's lips we perceive, in what connection it was spoken we may properly enquire. He had just made some important disclosures as to the covenant relations that existed between himself and God the Father. This interesting revelation of heavenly truth becomes the basis upon which he offers an invitation to the toiling and oppressed children of men, and assigns it as a reason why they should immediately avail themselves of his succour. Such is the line of discourse I propose now to follow. Kindly understand me that I want to deal with the hearts and consciences of the unconverted, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to plead with them that they may at once go to Jesus and find rest unto their souls. I shall require no stories or anecdotes, no figures or metaphors, to illustrate the urgent necessity of the sinner and the generous bounty of the Saviour. We will make it as plain as a pikestaff, and as sharp as a sword, with the intention of driving straight at our point. Time is precious, your time especially, for you may not have many days in which to seek the Lord. The matter is urgent. Oh! that every labouring, weary sinner here might at once come to Jesus and find that rest which the Saviour expresses himself as so willing to give! With all simplicity, then, let me explain to you the way of salvation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden."

The way to be saved is to come to Jesus. To come, to Jesus means to pray to him, to trust in him, to rely upon him. Each man who trusts in another may be said to come to that other for help. Thus to trust in Jesus is to come to him. In order to do this I must give up all reliance upon myself, or anything I could do or have done, or anything I do feel or can feel. Nor must I feel the slightest dependence upon anything that anyone else can do for me. I must cease from creature helps and carnal rites, to rest myself upon Jesus. That is what my Saviour means when he says, "Come unto me." The exhortation is very personal. "Come unto me," says he. He saith not, come to my ministers to consult them. nor come to my sacraments to observe them, nor come to my Bible to study its teaching—interesting and advantageous as under some circumstances any or all of these counsels might be; but he invites us in the sweetest tune of friendship, saying, "Come to me." For a poor sinner this is the truest means of succour. Let him resort to the blessed Lord himself. To trust in a

crucified Saviour is the way of salvation. Let him leave everything else and fly away to Christ, and look at his dear wounds as he hangs upon the cross. I am afraid many people are detained from Christ by becoming entangled in the meshes of doctrine. Some with heterodox doctrine, others with orthodox doctrine, content themselves. They think that they have advanced far enough. They flatter their souls that they have ascertained the truth! But the fact is, it is not the truth as a letter which, saves anybody. It is the truth as a person—it is Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life, whom we need to apprehend.

Our confidences must rest entirely upon him. "Come unto me," saith Jesus; Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The exhortation is in the present tense. "Come" now; do not wait; do not tarry; do not lie at the pool of ordinances but come unto me; come now at once, immediately, just where you are, just as you are. Wherever the summons finds you, rise without parley, without an instant's delay. "Come." I know that the human mind is very ingenious, and it is especially perverse when its own destruction is threatened. By some means or other it will evade this simple call. "Surely," says one, "there must be something to do besides that." Nay, nothing else is to be done. No preliminaries are requisite. The whole way of salvation is to trust in Jesus. Trust him now. That done, you are saved. Rely upon his finished work. know that he has meditated on your behalf. Commit thy sinful self to his saving grace. A change of heart shall be yours. All that you need he will supply.

"There is life in a look at the crucified One;

There is life at this moment for thee."

So sweet an invitation *demands a spontaneous acceptance.* Come just as you are. "Come unto me," saith Christ. He does not say, "Come when you have washed and cleansed yourself." Rather should you come *to be* cleansed. He does not say, "Come when you have clothed yourself and made yourself beautiful with good works." Come *to be made* beautiful in a better righteousness than you can wear. Come naked, and let him gird thee with fine linen, cover thee with silk, and deck thee with jewels. He does not say, "Come when your conscience is tender, come when your heart is penitent, when your soul is full of loathing for sin, and your mind is enlightened with knowledge and enlivened with joy. But ye that labour, ye that are heavy laden, he bids you to come as you are. Come oppressed with your burdens, begrimed with your labours, dispirited with your toils. If the load that bends you double to the earth be upon your shoulders? just come as you are. Take no plea in your mouth but this—he bids you come. That shall suffice as a warrant for your coming, and a security for your welcome. If Jesus Christ bids you, who shall say you nay?"

He puts the matter very exclusively. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Do nothing else but come to him. Do you want rest? Come to him for it. The old proverb hath it that betwixt two stools we come to the ground." Certainly, if we trust partly in Christ and partly in ourselves, we shall fall lower than the ground. We shall sink into hell. "Come unto me" is the whole gospel. "Come unto me." Mix nothing with it. Acknowledge no other obedience. Obey Christ, and him alone. Come unto me. You cannot go in two opposite directions. Let your tottering footsteps bend their way to him alone. Mix anything with him, and the possibility of your salvation is gone. Yours be the happy resolve:—

"Nothing in my hands I bring;

Simply to thy cross I cling."

This must be your cry if you are to be accepted at all. Come, then, ye that labour, ye horny-handed sons of toil. Come ye to Jesus. He invites you. Ye that stew and toil for wealth, ye

merchants, with your many cares, labourers ye are. He bids you come. Ye students, anxious for knowledge, chary of sleep, burning out the midnight oil. Ye labour with exhausted brains; therefore, come. Come from struggling after fame. Ye pleasure—seekers, come; perhaps there is no harder toil than the toil of the man who courts recreation and thinks he is taking his ease. Come, ye that labour in any form or fashion; come to Jesus—to Jesus alone. And ye that are heavy laden; ye whose official duties are a burden; ye whose domestic cares are a burden; ye whose daily toils are a burden; ye whose shame and degradation are a burden, all ye that are heavy laden, come and welcome. If I attach no exclusive spiritual signification to these terms, it is because there is nothing in the chapter that would warrant such a restriction. Had Christ said, "*Some* of you that labour and are heavy laden may come," I would have said "*some*" too. Howbeit he has not said "some," but "all" "that labour and are heavy laden." It is wonderful how people twist this text about. They alter the sense by misquoting the words. They say, "Come ye that are weary and heavy laden." After this manner some have even intended to define a character rather than to describe condition, so they shut out some of those who labour from the kind invitation. But let the passage stand in its own simplicity. Let any sinner here, who can say, "I labour," though he cannot say spiritually labour, come on the bare warrant of the word as he finds it written here; he will not be disappointed of the mercy promised. Christ will not reject him. Himself hath said it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And any man that is heavy laden, even though it may not be a spiritual burden that oppresses him, yet if he comes heavy laden to Christ, he certainly shall find relief. That were a wonder without precedent or parallel, such as was never witnessed on earth throughout all the generations of men, that a soul should come to Jesus, be rebuffed, and told by him, "I never called you, I never meant you; you are not the character; you may not come." Hear, O heaven! witness, O earth! such thing was never heard of. No, nor ever shall it be heard of in time or in eternity. That any sinner should come to the Saviour by mistake is preposterous. That Jesus should say to him, "Go your way; I never called for you," is incredible. How can ye thus libel the sinner's friend? Come, ye needy—come, ye helpless—come, ye simple—come, ye penitent—come, ye impenitent—come, ye who are the very vilest of the vile. If you do but come, Jesus Christ will receive you, welcome you, rejoice over you, and verify to you his thrice blessed promise, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

Now to the tug of war. It shall be my main endeavour to press the invitation upon you, my good friends, by the arguments which the Saviour used.

Kindly look at the text. Read the words for yourselves. Do you not see that the reason why you are solemnly bidden to come to Christ is because:—

I. HE IS THE APPOINTED MEDIATOR.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father." God, even the Father, your Creator, against whom you have transgressed, has appointed our Lord Jesus Christ to be the way of access for a sinner to himself. He is no amateur Saviour. He has not thrust himself into the place officiously. He is officially delegated. In times of distress, every man is at liberty to do his best for the public welfare; but the officer commissioned by his Sovereign is armed with a supreme right to give counsel or to exercise command. Away there in Bengal, if there are any dying of famine, and I have rice, I may distribute it of my own will at my own charge. But the commissioner of the district has a special warranty which I do not possess; he has a function to discharge; it is his business, his vocation; he is authorised by the Government, and responsible to the Government to do it. So the Lord Jesus Christ has not only a deep compassion of heart for the necessities of men, but he has

God's authority to support him. The Father delivered all things into his hands, and appointed him to be a Saviour. All that Christ teaches has this superlative sanction. He teaches you nothing of his own conjecture. "What I have heard of the Father," he saith, "that reveal I unto you." The gospel is not a scheme of his suggestion. He reveals it fresh from the heart of God. Remember that the promises Christ makes are not merely his surmises, but they are promises with the stamp of the court of heaven upon them. Their truth is guaranteed by God. It is not possible they should fail. Sooner might heaven and earth pass away than one word of his fall flat to the ground. Your Saviour, O sinner—your only Saviour—is one whose teachings, whose invitations, and whose promises have the seal royal of the King of kings upon them. What more do you want? Moreover, the Father has given all things into his hands in the sense of government. Christ is king everywhere. God has appointed Christ to be a mediatorial prince over all of us—I say over us all—not merely over those who accept his sovereignty, but even over the ungodly. He hath given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as he has given him. It is of no use your rebelling against Christ, and saying, "We will not have him"—the old cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." How read ye in the second Psalm "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. "Christ is supreme. You will have either to submit to his sceptre willingly, or else to be broken by his iron rod like a potter's vessel. Which shall it be? Thou must either bow or be broken; make your choice. You must bend or break. God help you wisely to resolve and gratefully relent. Has the Father appointed Christ to stand between him and his sinful creatures? Has he put the government upon his shoulders, and given him a name called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty, the everlasting King? Is he Emmanuel, God with us, in God's stead? With what reverence are we bound to receive him!

Moreover, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of mercy and goodness, are laid up in Christ. You recollect when Pharaoh had corn to sell in Egypt, what reply he made to all who applied to him, "Go to Joseph." It would have been no use saying, "Go to Joseph," if Joseph had not the keys of the garner; but he had, and there was no garner that could be opened in Egypt unless Joseph lent the key. In like manner, all the garners of mercy are under the lock and key of Jesus Christ, "who openeth, and no man shutteth; who shutteth, and no man openeth." When you require any bounty or benefit of God, you must repair to Jesus for it. The Father has put all power into his hands. He has committed the entire work of mercy to his Son, that through him as the appointed mediator, all blessings should be dispensed to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. "Now, sirs, do you want to be saved? I charge you to say whether you do or not; for if you care not for salvation, why should I labour among you? If you choose your own ruin, you need no counsel; you will make sure of it by your own neglect. But if you want salvation, Christ is the only authorized person in heaven and earth who can save you. "There is no other name, given among men whereby we must be saved." The Father hath delivered all things into his keeping. He is the authorised Saviour. "Come unto me, then, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." This argument is further developed by another consideration: Christ is:—

II. A WELL-FURNISHED MEDIATOR,

"*All things* are delivered unto me," he said, "of my Father. "Sum up all that the sinner wants, and you will find him able to supply you with all. You want pardon; it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You want change of heart; it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You want righteousness in which you may be accepted; Christ has it. You want to be purged from the love

of sin; Christ can do it. You want wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is all in Christ. You are afraid that if you start on the road to heaven, you cannot hold on. Persevering grace is in Christ. You think you will never be perfect; but perfection is in Christ, for all believers, being saints of God and servants of Christ, are complete in him. Between hell-gate and heaven-gate there is nothing a sinner can need that is not treasured up in his blessed person. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is "*full* of grace and truth." Oh! sinner, I wish I could constrain you to feel as I do now, that had I never come to Christ before, I must come to him now, just now. Directly I understand that:—

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find."

Why, then, should I not come? Is it because I want something before I come? Make the question your own. Where are you going to seek it? All things are delivered unto Christ. To whom should you go for ought you crave? Is there another who can aid you when Christ is in possession of all? Do you want a tender conscience? Come to Christ for it. Do you want to feel the guilt of your sin? Come to Christ to be made sensitive to its shame. Are you just what you ought not to be? Come to Christ to be made what you ought to be, for everything is in Christ. Is there any, thing that can be obtained elsewhere and brought to him? The invitation to you is founded upon the explanation that accompanies it. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father"; therefore, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The argument is so exclusive, that it only wants a willing mind to make it welcome. Only let God the Holy Spirit bless the word, and sinners will come to Christ, for unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Now note the next argument. Come to Christ, ye labouring ones, because:—

III. HE IS AN INCONCEIVABLY GREAT MEDIATOR.

Where do I get that? Why, from this—that no man knows him but the Father. So great is he, so good, so full of all manner of precious store for needy sinners. No man knows him but the Father. He is too excellent for our puny understanding to estimate his worth. None but the infinite God can comprehend his value as a Saviour. Has anyone here been saying, "Christ cannot save me; I am such a big sinner"? You don't know him, my friend you don't know him. You are measuring him according to your little insignificant notions. High as the heavens are above the earth so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. You don't know him, sinner, and no one does know him but his Father. Why, some of us who have been saved by him, thought when we saw the blessed mystery of his substitutionary sacrifice, that we knew all about him; but we have found that he grows upon our view the nearer we approach, and the more we contemplate him. Some of you have now been Christians for thirty or forty years, and you know much more of him than you used to do; but you do not know him yet; your eyes are dazzled by his brightness; you do not know him. And the happy spirits before the throne who have been there, some of them, three or four thousand years, have hardly begun to spell the first letter of his name. He is too grand and too good for them to comprehend. I believe that it will be, the growing wonder in eternity to find out how precious a Christ, how powerful, how immutable—in a word, how divine a Christ he is. in whom we have trusted. Only the infinite can understand the infinite. "God only knows the love of God," and only the Father understands the Son. Oh! I wish I had a week in which to talk on this, instead of a few minutes! You want a great Saviour? Well, here he is. Nobody can depict him, or describe him, or even imagine him, except the infinite God himself. Come, then, poor sinner, sunken up to your neck in crime, black as hell—come unto him. Come, all ye that labour and are

heavy laden, and prove him to be your Saviour. The fact that no one knows how great a Saviour he is except his Father may encourage you. Now for another argument. Come to him because:—

IV. HE IS AN INFINITELY WISE MEDIATOR.

He is a mediator who understands both persons on whose behalf he mediates. He understands you. He has summed and reckoned you up, and he has made you out to be a heap sin and misery, and nothing else. The glory of it is that he understands God, whom you have offended, for it is written, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son," and he knows the Father. Oh! what a mercy that is to have one to go before God for me who knows him intimately. He knows his Father's will; he knows his Father's wrath. No man knows it but himself. He has suffered it. He knows his Father's love. He alone can feel it—such love as God felt for sinners. He knows how his Father's wrath has been turned away by his precious blood; he knows the Father as a Judge whose anger no longer burns against those for whom the Atonement has been made. He knows the Father's heart. He knows the Father's secret purposes. He knows the Father's will is that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him shall have everlasting life. He knows the decrees of God, and yet he says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give, you rest." There is nothing in that contrary to the decrees of God; for Jesus knows what the decrees are, and he would not speak in contradiction to them. He knows God's requirements. Sinner, whatever it is God requires of you, Christ knows what they are, and he is ready to meet them. "The law is holy, and just, and good," and Jesus knows it, for the law is in his heart. Justice is very stern, and Jesus knows it, for Jesus has felt the edge of the sword of justice, and knows all about it. He is fully equipped for the discharge of his mediatorial office, and those that put their trust in him shall find that he will bear them through. Often, when a prisoner at the bar has a barrister who understands his work, and is perfectly competent for the defense, his friends say to him, "Your case is safe, for if there is a man in England who can get you through, it is that man." But my Master is an advocate who never lost a case. He has a plea at the throne of God that never failed yet. Give him—oh! give him your cause to plead, nor doubt the Father's grace. Poor sinner, he is so wise an advocate that you may well come to him, and he will give you rest. But I must not weary you, although there is a fulness of matter on which I might enlarge. With one other argument I conclude:—

V. HE IS AN INDISPENSABLE MEDIATOR.

The only mediator, so the text says. "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." Christ knows the Father; no one else knows him, save the Son. There is none other that can approach unto God. It is Christ for your Saviour, or no Saviour at all. Salvation is in no other; and if you will not have Christ, neither can you have salvation. Observe how that is. It is certain that no man knows God except Christ. It is equally certain that no man can come, to God except by Christ. He says it peremptorily; "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Not less certain is it that no man can please the Father except through Christ, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." No faith is worth having except the grace that is founded and based upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and him only. Oh! then, souls, since you are shut up to it by a blessed necessity, say at once, "I will to the gracious Prince approach, and take Jesus to be my all in all." "If I might hope you would do this early, I could go back to my home and retire to my bed, praising God for the work that was done, and the result that was achieved. Let us reiterate again and again the gospel we have to declare, the very essence of the gospel it is which we proclaim. Trust your souls with Jesus, and your souls are saved. He suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all that trust him. If you rely upon him by an act of simple faith, the simplest act in all the world, immediately you so rely you are forgiven,

your transgressions are blotted out for his name's sake. He stands in spirit among us at this good hour, and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"; and he gives you these arguments, which ought to convince you. I pray they may. He is an authorized Saviour, and a well-furnished Saviour. He is the friend of God, and the friend of man. God grant you may accept him, and find the boon which he alone can bestow. Amen.

Joy in Salvation

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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"I will rejoice in thy salvation."—Psalm 9:4.

I DESIRE to continue the topic of the morning, only we will look at another side of the same important matter.

We spoke this morning, as you have not forgotten, upon these words, "Your own salvation." I trust most of us—would God I could hope all of us—were earnest about our own personal salvation. To those who are earnest this second text will be the complement of the first. They desire that their own salvation shall be secure; it is their own salvation when they obtain it; but here is the guide as to what is the right salvation—what our own salvation ought to be. It is not our own in another sense; it is God's. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." While it becomes our own by an act of faith, it is not our own so that we can claim any merit or take any part of the glorying to ourselves. The only salvation that is worth being our own is that which is God's. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Having this morning somewhat at length explained what salvation is, showing that it was not a mere deliverance from wrath to come, but from the present wrath of God, and yet more essentially from sin, from the power of evil within us, there is no need that we should go over that again, I trust; but we shall begin by noticing the speciality which is in the text, dwelling upon the divine salvation. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." So, then, we look at once at:—

I. A DIVINE SALVATION.

The salvation we have already spoken of is God's, and it is God's salvation in many ways. *It was his in the planning.* None but himself could have planned it. In his infinite wisdom he devised it. The salvation which is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, in the gospel is every part of it in all its architecture the fruit of divine skill. We may say, "Or with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and who taught him knowledge?" In every part the divine hand may be seen; it is of God's planning and ordaining, or ever the earth was. *So is it of God's providing.* You have salvation wrapped up in the gift of the person of Jesus Christ. All of it lies in Christ. Because he died, our sin is put away. Because he lives, we shall live also. And Christ is the pure gift of God. All salvation is in him, and, therefore, all salvation is thus procured by God. It is God's salvation. And what is more, God not only plans and procures, but *he also applies salvation.* I believe in free agency, but I never yet met with a Christian man who was able to say that he came to Christ of his own free will without being drawn by the Spirit of God. Whatever our doctrinal view may be, the experimental fact is the same in every case. All believers will confess that they are God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." There is a want of power. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." There is a want of will, and the Spirit of God, therefore, applies the salvation which God has

planned, and which God has provided. And as the first application of this salvation is of God, *so is it all the way through*. I do not believe, dear brethren, that our religion is like the action of a clock wound up at first by a superior hand, and then left to go alone. No! every day the Holy Ghost must continue to work upon us, and in us, to will and to do according to God's good pleasure. And if you and I should ever get right up to the gate of pearl, and should hear the songs of the blessed within that gate, we should not be able to take the last step, but should turn back to our sin and folly even, if he that began a good work in us should cease to carry it on. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. "Salvation is of the Lord," from first to last. He makes the rough draft of it, in conviction, upon our conscience; he goes on to complete the picture; and if there be one touch in the picture that is not of God, it is a blot upon it. If there be anything of the flesh, it will have to be wiped out; it is not consistent with the work of God. Of God is it in all respects. Now we know that this salvation is of God, not only because we are told that he planned it, and provided it, and applies it, but because *it has the marks of God upon it*. There is a certain line of poetry; I know it is Shakespeare's. Well, you know, I cannot quite tell you why, but yet I am sure no one ever wrote exactly in that way. I am reading the Psalms through, and I read and I say, "That is David's." I observe certain critics who say, "No, this belongs to the time of the captivity." I am certain it does not. And why? Because there is a Davidic ring about it, you know. The son, of Jesse, and he alone, could have said such things. Now in salvation there are the marks of divine authorship. I once saw a painting by Titan at Venice, and he had written, "Fecit, fecit Titian." He claimed it twice over, as if to make sure that someone else should not claim it. And God has put it three times over that there should be no doubt whatever that salvation is of God, and he must have the glory of it. Now observe the marks of God—what I may call the broad arrow of the King—set on salvation. It is full of mercy. Here is salvation for the blackest of sinners—salvation for all manner of sin—forgiveness for all manner of sin—salvation so full of grace that only God could have conceived it. "Who is a pardoning God like thee?" But this salvation is equally congenial with justice, for God never absolutely forgives a sin. There is always punishment for sin in every case. Jesus Christ, the Substitute, comes in and satisfies Justice before the word is spoken to the sinner, "Thy transgression is blotted out." In the salvation which God has provided on the cross by the death of his dear Son there is as much justice as there is mercy; and there is an infinity of both. Now this is God-like. Man, if he brings out one quality, usually clouds another with it; but God exhibits his character in harmonious completeness—as merciful as if he were not just, and as just as if he were not gracious. In the gospel, on this account, five see also divine wisdom. Whatever some may say about the doctrine of substitution, Christ is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. The way, so simple, yet so sublime, by which God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth, exhibits the infinite wisdom of the Most High.

But I won't keep you by mentioning all the divine attributes. It is certain they all shine in the gospel, nor can any tell which of the letters best is writ—the power, the wisdom, or the grace. They are all there, proving the salvation to be of God.

And there is one other matter. True salvation is of God because *it draws toward God*. If thou hast God's salvation, thou art being drawn towards thy heavenly Father, nearer and nearer every day. The ungodly forget God; the awakened seek God; but the saved rejoice in God. Ask thyself this question, Couldst thou live without God? The ungodly man would be happier without God than he is with. It would be the best piece of news in the newspaper to thousands, if we could publish it to-morrow, that God was dead. To ungodly men it would be like ringing the bells of

universal Joy; they would run riot after their own will. And where would the believer be? He would be an orphan. His sun would be blotted out; his hopes would be dead and buried. Judge by this whether thou art saved. If thou art saved, thou art drawn to God, thou seekest to be like God, thou desirest to honour God. If there be none of these things in thee, then I charge thee see to it, for thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. God have mercy upon thee! I need not further say that the salvation is of God, and *God must have all the glory of it*. All on earth who are saved, and all in heaven who are saved, will ascribe their salvation entirely to the ever blessed God, and join with Jonah, who in the very depths of the sea made this, his confession of faith, "Salvation is of the Lord." But now, secondly, our text (having noticed the divine salvation in it) has:—

II. AN OUTSPOKEN AVOWAL.

"I will rejoice in thy salvation." Here is someone springing out from the common crowd and saying, "I have heard of God's salvation; I will rejoice in it! I will rejoice in it! *Some despise it*. They hear it, and they turn a deaf ear. When they have listened to it longest, they are most weary of it. But *I will rejoice* in thy salvation." Here is a distinguished character, who is made so, doubtless, by distinguishing grace. Oh! I hope there are many of us here who could stand up and say—if this were the time and place—"Let others say what they will, and count the cross a thing to mock at, and Jesus Christ to be forgotten, I am his servant; I will rejoice in his salvation." There are *some that rest in another salvation*. We all did so once. But he who speaks in the text throws aside self-righteousness as filthy rags. He puts it all aside, and says, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." If I were righteous, I would not say so. Had I a perfect holiness, I would not mention it in comparison with the righteousness of Christ; but being an unworthy sinner, without a single merit of my own, I will not be so foolish as to patch up a fictitious righteousness, but I will rejoice in thy salvation. You see them there!—those worshippers of the scarlet woman—they are resting in their priest! He puts on millinery, blue, pink, scarlet, white, and I know not what—all kinds of little toys to please fools with. And there be some that rejoice in that salvation that comes from an "infallible" sinner—that comes from a sham priest of God. But we are looking to Christ, who stands before the eternal throne and pleads the merits of his own blood. We say:—

"Let all the forms that men devise
Assault our faith with treacherous art,
We'll Can them vanity and lies
And bind the gospel to our heart."

"I will rejoice in thy salvation." There may be some tonight to whom I shall speak who are rejoicing in God's salvation through his abundant grace who have very little else to rejoice in. You are very poor. Ah! how welcome you are to this house! How glad I am that you have come. I feel it always a joy that the people have the gospel preached to them. Well, you have no broad acres, you have no gold rings on your fingers; you come in the garb of toil. Never mind, my brother, lay hold on eternal life and say, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Perhaps you are sick to-night—your poor weak body could scarcely drag itself up to the assembly of God's people. Well, well, it is a heavy thing to have to suffer so, but if you cannot rejoice in a hale body, yet rejoice in his salvation. Look to-night to Jesus; put your trust in him alone, and you will have a sufficient well-spring of joy, if you have nothing else. Possibly some of you who lay hold on Christ and rejoice in him will have hard times of it at home your father will mock at you, your mother will not sympathise with you; your workmates to-morrow, if they hear that you are converted, will laugh, and jest, and jeer at you. What say you? Are you a coward? Will you back out of it because it demands a sacrifice?

Oh! if it be so, then you are indeed unworthy of the name, and you count yourself so; but if you are what you should be, you will say, "Let them; laugh at me as they will, and spit upon me as they please, I will rejoice in thy salvation."

"If on my face for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach may be;
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For thou'lt remember me."

It takes some pluck, but we ought to have it in the cause of Christ. Your mean, miserable wretches that will only go out to follow Christ in sunny weather, and get them gone again when a cloud darkens the sky, deserve well the wrath that comes upon them. They are like the Nautilus, very well on the placid sea, but the first billow that arises they furl their sails and drop into the deep, and are seen no more. Oh! beware, beware, beware of a sunny-weather religion; beware of a religion that will not stand the fire; but be you such that, if all the world forsook Christ, you would say, "I will rejoice in his salvation"; and if you were turned out of doors, if you were turned out of the world itself, and thought not fit, to live, you would yet be content to have it so, if you might be numbered with the people of God, and be permitted to rejoice in his salvation. Does this, as I try to speak it, awaken a holy emotion in any soul here? Is there someone who has been a stranger to my Lord who to-night can say, "I desire to rejoice in his salvation"? I cannot forget, when I sat as a young lad under the gallery of a little place of worship, hearing the gospel simply preached—the blessed moment when I was led to resolve to follow Christ. I have never been ashamed of having done so. I have never had to regret it. He is a blessed Master. He has handled me roughly lately, but he is a blessed Master. I would follow at his heels if only like a dog, for it is better to be his dog than to be the devil's darling. He is a blessed Master. Let him say what he will, and do what he will. Oh! is there no young man here, no youth, no child, no girl; is there no gray-headed one who will say, "I will rejoice in thy salvation" O eternal Spirit, come and touch some heart, and make this, their spiritual birthright, that they may say, "I—I—I will rejoice in thy salvation."

But we must pass on, for time presses. We have, in the third place, to consider in the text:—

III. A DELIGHTFUL EMOTION.

We have noticed the divine salvation, and the outspoken avowal; now we will notice the delightful emotion. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." It is an unfortunate thing that Christianity gets associated with melancholy. I will not forbid the banns, for they are not very near of kin, but I wish they were further apart every day. It is a good thing for the melancholy to become a Christian; it is an unfortunate thing for the Christian to become melancholy. If there is any man in the world that has a right to have a bright, clear face and a flashing eye, it is the man whose sins are forgiven him, and who is saved with God's salvation. In order for any man, however, to rejoice in God's salvation, *he must, first of all, know it*. There must be an intelligent apprehension of what it is. Next, he must grasp it by an act of faith as his own. Then, having grasped it, he must study it to know the price at which it was bought, and all the qualities—the divine qualities that follow from it. Then *he must hold it fast*, and seek to get out the sweetness from it. What is there in God's salvation that should make us rejoice? I do not know what to select, for it is all joy and all rejoicing. It is enough to make our heart to ring with joy to think that there should be a salvation at all for such poor souls as we are. We may well hang out all the streamers of our spirits, and strew the streets of our soul with flowers, for King Jesus has come to dwell there. Ring every bell; give him a glorious welcome. Let all the soul be glad when Jesus enters and brings salvation with him, for the salvation of Christ

is so suitable that we may well rejoice in it. Dear brother, if you are saved, I know the salvation of Christ suited you. It did me—exactly—it was made on purpose for me. I am as sure of it as if there were no other sinner to be saved. It was the gospel that brought power to the weak, nay, it brought life to the dead; it brought everything to those that had nothing; it is just the sort of gospel for a penniless, bankrupt sinner like myself. We rejoice *in the suitability of the gospel*; we rejoice in the freeness of it. We have nothing to pay; we have no price to pay, neither of promise, nor of anything that was our own. Salvation was freely given to us in Christ Jesus. Let us rejoice in it, then. Oh! rejoice in the richness of that salvation. When the Lord pardoned our sins, he did not pardon half of them, and leave some of them on the book, but with one stroke of the pen he gave a full receipt for all our debts. When we went down into the fountain filled with blood, and washed, we did not come up half-clean, but there was no spot nor wrinkle upon us—we were white as driven snow. Glory be to God for such a rich salvation as this. And he did not in that day save us with a perhaps and a chance salvation that set us on a rock, and say, "Keep yourself there—you must depend upon yourselves", but this was the covenant he made with us, "A new heart also will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee." *It was a complete salvation*, which would not permit a failure. The salvation, which is given to the soul that believes is on this wise, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." I believe the perseverance of the saints to be the very gem of the gospel. I could not hold the truth of Scripture if this could be disproved to me, for every page seems to have this upon it, if nothing else, that "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." In this my soul rejoices, that I have a salvation to preach to you which, if you receive it, will effectually save you if your hearts are given to Christ, and will keep you, and preserve you, and bring you into the eternal kingdom of his glory. I will rejoice in the certain and abiding character of that salvation. Oh! there is enough in the salvation of Christ to make heaven full of bliss; there is enough to make us full of praise. Let us take up the theme; let us talk by the way to one another about it; let us talk to sinners about it; let us recommend religion by our cheerfulness. Levity be far from us, but happiness let it be the happiest sphere in which we live if we have little else to rejoice in, we have enough here. Whatever may be our condition or prospects, we may still rejoice in God's salvation, and let us not fail to be filled with this most blissful emotion.

And now I must close. The text has in it a word of the future which we must not quite overlook. Here is a joyful gospel, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." You may read it if you like, "I shall"—"I shall" or "I will"—it would be quite right. The Hebrew has no present. It seems to have given up all tenses—like God himself who was, and is, and is to come. I shall rejoice in thy salvation. Now here is:

IV. A BLESSED PROSPECT.

You may live to grow old; well, we shall never grow weary of Christ. If we are his people, we shall never have any cause to part from him; "I will rejoice in thy salvation." I could bring up to this platform an aged brother whom all of you would know, who has infirmities and has age creeping upon him, but there is not a happier soul in this house than he; and when I had made him speak to you, I could bring you many more aged women too, and I would ask them what they think of Christ, and I am sure they would say with greater emphasis than I can, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." I almost wish my grandfather were alive and behind me to-night, for on one occasion I preached with him in the pulpit, and when I came to speak of experience he pulled my coat-tail and came to

the front, and said, "My grandson can tell you that he believes it, but I can tell you experimentally," and on the old gentleman went with it. Well, many an aged Christian can tell you he has rejoiced in God's salvation. He does rejoice, and, instead of age making the joy of his youth to become dim, it has mellowed and sweetened the fruit, which was sweet even at the first. Oh! that we may, when these hairs grow hoar with years, and the snows of many winters lie white upon our head, may we still rejoice in God's salvation. But then, whether we reach old age or not, there is one thing that is certain—we shall assuredly die, and when we come to die, what shall we do? I know what you are thinking of. You say, "I should groan." Ay, sinner, you are thinking of the friend that is wiping away the clammy sweat from the brow and those closed eyes. Now those may never occur. We often hear them mentioned in reference to dying beds, but they are not so constantly there as to be necessary. And if they were there' if we did lose sight itself before life fails—what then? Why, the vision of the Christ, who is our salvation, and in whom we rejoice, shall then be more gloriously clear and radiantly beautiful, because the sights and sounds of earth have vanished from us.

Now, instead of looking at these outward parts of dying, think of this, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." When I parted from our dear brother, Cook, a few days ago, he could not say much. He was very, very weak, but what he did say was just this, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is all." Well, I talked, and read, and prayed, and so on, and when we had done, he simply said, "The blood—the blood, the blood—that is all my hope." Why, he looked as calm in prospect of dying as any of you do in sitting here, and was as delighted with the hope of being where Jesus is as ever bride was at the coming of the marriage day. It was delightful to see the blessed calm and peace that was upon that man of God. And when I come to die, whoever I may be, however little my standing in the Church of God is, if I am in Christ, I will rejoice in his salvation; I will make the dark valley ring with his praises; I will make the river of death itself to roll back as the Red Sea did of old, with my triumphant songs; I will enter heaven with this upon my heart and upon my lip, 'I will rejoice in thy salvation! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and power, and dominion, and glory for ever and ever!' And, brethren, if that is what we may do in dying, this is what we shall do for ever and ever, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Millions of ages, throughout all the cycles of years that interpose ere Christ delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and then onward, even through eternity, this always shall be our own ground of rejoicing, "I will rejoice in thy salvation."

Now I cannot come and stand at the door and speak to everyone as the congregation withdraws, but if it were possible I should like to stand there and shake the hand of everyone that has been in the house to-night, and say, "Well, friend, how fares it with you?" Can you say, 'I will rejoice in thy salvation?'" If I cannot do that, I wish it were possible to speak in the silent shades of night to you when you awoke, so that you might hear a voice ringing in your ears, "Do you rejoice in God's salvation?" Perhaps some of you may have come a long distance across the sea. You may be by-and-by on shipboard again. It may be that you will be in peril, or it may be that afterwards you shall be in sickness. Well, may this evening's congregation in this day of July rise up before your minds, and if you forget the preacher (and that will not matter), yet if you hear a voice that says, "Can you rejoice in God's salvation?" I hope that, even if it is twenty years to come, it may then be as the voice of God to your soul, and bring you to the Saviour. But better far would it be if you would come to him tonight and you may. May the Spirit of God bring you! Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life. The whole of the gospel is wrapped up in Christ's message, which he has sent by his apostles, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To

you each this—this—is the word, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." God add his own blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

*"Your Own Salvation," Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, 1,003.

Following Christ

A Sermon

(No. 3504)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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"And Ittai answered the king, and said, as the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."—2 Samuel 15:21.

SOME men have a very remarkable power of creating and sustaining friendship in others. David was a man brimming over with affection—a man, notwithstanding all his rough soldier-life, of an exceedingly tender heart—a man, I was about to say—the word was on my tongue—a man of vast humanity. I mean, there was a great deal of manhood about him. He was all that other men are, had suffered their sorrows, and had tasted their joys, and, there fore, I suppose it was that he had a large power of attraction about him, and brought others to himself.

But there is one Man more than man, whose attracting influence is greater than that of all men put together. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ we see gentleness, meekness, and tenderest affection, and we see the most hearty sympathy with everything that belongs to manhood. Such a vast heart has the Master, such boundless, disinterested affection, such human sympathy; so near is he to every one of us in his life, and in his experiences, that he attracts the sons of men to himself, and when he is lifted up he draws men unto him, and afterwards, by the cords of his love, he draws them unto himself. It is in the hope that some here may feel the sweet attractions of Christ that I have selected this text, anxiously praying that some here may so give themselves to Christ s never to leave him: and that others who have already done may be confirmed in their solemn resolution that, in whatsoever place their Master, the Son of David, the King, shall be, there also will they be as his servants, whether in life or in death.

Now this resolution, if any here have formed it, and I know many have—this resolution that surely in what place the Lord Jesus shall be, whether in death or in life, even there will we, his servants, be, in the first place, is:—

I. A GOOD RESOLUTION—one which can be supported by abundant reasons.

Let me say, in opening out this assertion, that *Jesus deserves* of all who have really tasted of his grace *such faithful service*, such unswerving following in all cases and under all circumstances. Who else has ever done for us what Jesus has? Our mother brought us forth, but he has given to us a second birth. Our mother candled us upon her knee, but he has borne us all the days of old, and even to hoar hairs will he carry his people. We have had many kindnesses from friends, but never such love as Jesus showed when, we being his enemies, he yet redeemed us with his most precious blood. Think of these three words, and try to measure what they mean—Gethsemane—Gabbatha—Golgotha. Let those three words awaken your adoring memories. Gethsemane—with its garden and bloody sweat for you. Gabbatha—with its scourging, its mocking,

its shame and spitting for you. Golgotha—with its cross and the five flowing wounds, and all the bitterness of the divine wrath, and the torment of death itself, for you. Men have been known to give away their lives cheerfully for some great military leader whose genius has commanded their admiration, but they were fools to throw their lives away, after all, for these men had done but little or nothing for them to make them their servants and slaves. But this Man, my brethren, if we had a thousand lives, and were to give them all, yet would deserve more of us, for he hath redeemed us from going down into the pit, saved us from flames that never shall be quenched, and from a pit that is darkness itself. By the eternal woe from which the blood of Christ hath uplifted us, let us, who believe that we have been redeemed from hell, consecrate ourselves for ever to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. His cross is despised; let us be despised with it, for he bore shame for us. His truth is counted a lie; let us be willing to be regarded as liars, for he had reproach cast on him. Sometimes to defend his cause has required the loss of all things; be it ours, if needs be, to lose all things for him who gave up all—and what an all that was!—the bliss of heaven, and a life itself for us, that he might redeem our souls. The deserts of Jesus are such that it would need an angel's tongue to tell them out, even though it were but in brief catalogue. Look at him in what he is himself as his Father's darling. Look at his character; was there ever such another? Survey the beauties of his person—were there ever such charms commingled before? Think of his life, and of his death, and of what he is doing still before the throne, and surely you will feel that it is but right and just that, with Jesus, You should enter into the ship and, with him, sail the ocean over, be it rough or be it smooth.

Moreover, brethren, *to keep close to Jesus Christ is right*. It is in itself to keep close to integrity, for the Lord Jesus never stepped out of the right path. He never asks any of his followers to do anything which be a breach of the right, or which will make them turn aside from uprightness. If we could put our feet down exactly where his feet went down, even though we had to walk up to Calvary itself, it would be our duty so to do, for his path was perfect rectitude, and in him was no sin. We challenge heaven, with its omniscience, to detect a flaw in him. We challenge hell, with its malice, to discover in him an aught that is amiss. Lovers of the right and of the true, ask grace that you may be as he was. You cannot be more eminent for virtue than he. You cannot serve your God better. You cannot do better than keep close to every step that he has taken, and, whether in life or in death, to follow him. It is right, then, because he deserves it; it is right, again because in itself it is according to the eternal rules of equity.

And, my brethren, there is another argument why we should cleave to Jesus, and it is this—*wherefore should we leave him?* Can anybody suggest a reason why the lover of Christ should turn from him? Polyearp was asked that he should curse Christ, and he replied, "Wherefore should I curse him?" The assembly in the amphitheatre could give no answer to that; all hell could never give a reply to that. What hath he done, what hath he done that we should leave him? What can he have done, and what is there that the world can offer that would ever repay us for leaving him? Could we so false, so traitorous prove as to turn away from Christ, what should we gain? A little pleasure, gone in a moment, like thorns that crackle beneath the pot. What should we lose, my brethren? We should lose the joy of life; we should lose our support in tribulation; we should lose our hope in death; we should lose heaven, to inherit nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever. I cannot conceive a bribe heavy enough to weigh against him; I cannot imagine an honour bright enough to compare with him. I cannot conceive a disgrace that can be black enough to compare with the disgrace of deserting him. The silver mine of Demas is a poor reward for selling his Master.

All the wealth of India, could it be poured into one's lap, were but a mockery of a soul that damned itself by casting away its confidence in Christ. To whom should we go, Master; to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. To leave Christ would be the meanest thing of which any could be capable. I suppose the devil himself, with all that he has ever done, has never been able to compass a wickedness that would equal the wickedness, if it were possible, of a truly gracious soul deliberately deserting Jesus for the world, for such a soul knows the hollowness of this world's joys; such a soul knows something of the sweetness of Jesus; such a spirit has been with him, and has learned of him, has had the enlightenments of his grace, has learned the faithfulness of his promise and the love of his heart. Oh! could such a thing be, could the Lord's grace so utterly leave a believer that he should turn out an apostate after all, there is need to dig another hell, as much lower than hell as hell is lower than the earth; there is need to kindle yet more furious flames; seven times hotter might the furnace be heated for such an apostate. Glory be to God, it shall not be.

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins
The work which wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy never forsakes."

But I speak thus to let you see how reasonable how abundantly necessary it is that we should cling close to Christ in life and death, and that where he is there we should be. There is no need to reason further, as the time is brief, and so let us notice now, in the second place, that:—

II. THIS RESOLUTION, THOUGH GOOD IN ITSELF, SHOULD BE MADE WITH GREAT DELIBERATION, SINCE IT WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE TRIED.

Ah! young brother, you to—day can sing, as others did:—
"Tis done, the great transactions done";
and you sang and felt a joy in singing that last verse:—
"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear"

but do you know your weakness? If there were no temptation from without, you are fickle enough in yourself. Ah! we might sooner trust the wind or rely upon the glassy waves of the ocean than trust our own frail resolutions. We are changeable, we are false; our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Let him that putteth on his harness take care not to boast as him that putteth it off. There are dangers ahead and many trials. All is not gold that glitters. Firm resolutions are not always kept; yea, let me add they are never kept if they are made, in your own strength; they will go most surely, and you that promised to stand fast will soon turn aside.

But, in addition to our own fickleness, we must expect many things to try this resolution. There will be, with some of you, the jeers and sneers of those you work with. They will call you ill names. Perhaps they have began it already. Well, but you do not know what they can invent. The Christian soldier has a gauntlet to run. The Christian worker in many a large factory has to endure a lifelong martyrdom. Men will invent all sorts of gibes and jeers against a believer in Christ, and it is fine sport to pelt a Christian. Can ye cleave to your Lord, then? Oh! if you cannot, you do not know him, for he is worth ten thousand times ten thousand sneers, and you should count it a joy to be permitted to bear a scoff for him. Now are you in your measure partakers with the noble host of martyrs. You cannot in these softer days earn the ruby crown of martyrdom, but you have, at least,

the trial of cruel mockings. Bear up manfully, and meet their mockery with your holy bravery and patient endurance.

And you will have, probably, a worse trial than that, and that is to see those who professed to go with you, as you thought, turn aside. Oh! to young Christians, this is very staggering. Those of us who are older feel this to be a very peculiar cross in church life, to be associated with those who are cold-hearted and dead while they profess to be Christians, who, after all, ere long betray their hypocrisy; but to young people it seems often almost staggering. If such a man is not a good man, who can be? Is there anything at all in religion if such a man, after all, should turn out to be a deceiver? Oh! but, dear brethren, if you love Christ, you will not turn aside because some of his friends have forsaken him, for a true friend sticks closer then. Like this good man Ittai, that we are speaking of, you will say, "I never thrust myself on David before; I kept in the background, but now that this rascally Ahithopel has left him, I will go now and offer him my kind and affectionate greetings." It ought always to make you who love Christ become bolder when these villains turn aside, for now you should say that it behaves every honest man to play the man and come to his friend. If these turn tail, then should the true-hearted lead the van for Christ and for his truth, and if it should even come to pass that a standard-bearer should desert his flag, spring forward, young man, and grasp it in the stead of him, but never because of that turn aside from your Lord.

Alas! brethren, you may expect, perhaps, to have sterner trials than these. If you resolve to cling to Jesus Christ with constancy, you must expect to have many trials. God loves to try his people that he may get glory out of their trials, and I am sorry to say I have known some who in the depths of poverty, when it has suddenly come upon them like an armed man, have felt as if religion itself could not support them, and they have actually given up their profession. It is poor Christianity that cannot bear the loss of all things. Now you may be poor yet, and you may be sore sick, but may you have such faith as that you may be able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It is no gold if it will not stand the fire, and it is no grace if it will not bear affliction.

You may expect to have great depression of spirit within. Some of us know what this is very, very frequently. There are times when the joy of religion is gone, and our soul is in the dark, and yet is feeling after God, blessed be his name; but this is the pinch, to believe in an angry Christ, to hold to his hand and never let him go, though that hand should seem to pull itself away; to lodge with Christ when he gives you no supper; to go and sleep in Christ's bed when he has not made it, but left it hard for you; to say, "With my desire have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit will I seek thee early." May you have faith like that faith, that will not, under any difficulties, turn aside from Christ.

Thus you see, then, that this resolution will be a tried one, and between here and heaven God knows what trials will befall us. But again:—

III. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE CARRIED OUT.

What I have said might tempt you to declare that you would not try it, but it may be carried out. There are thousands, tens of thousands upon earth who have been with Jesus wherever he has been throughout the whole of their lives, and will be with him in death, and after death; and there are millions—there they stand—wearing their white robes and waving their palms. Listen; you may almost hear their song. These are they that overcame; they endured unto the end; they came through great tribulation, and washed their robes in the Lamb's blood, and, therefore, are they before the throne of God. What was done, in them may be done in you.

But how was it, then, that they held on and kept close to their Lord? Answer—it was not in their own strength; it was the Holy Spirit, who day by day preserved them, led them in knowledge and true holiness, purged them from sin, and at last made them to enter upon the heritage of the perfect. There was not a single moment in which they persevered apart from the Spirit's strength. Poor human nature at its best must start aside like a broken bow. 'Tis only grace that holds a single Christian, and well and truly do we sing in that hymn:—

"'Tis grace that's kept me till this day,
And will not let me go."

Now, subject to the power of the Holy Spirit, the way to accomplish our resolve to be with Christ as his servants for ever, is, first of all, *to be much in prayer*. If you cannot persevere with God, you are not likely to persevere in contest with man. More prayer, beloved, many of you want. As your temptations grow, let your prayers become more intense and full of fire, and conquer hell by assaulting heaven. You shall prevail against all temptations if you can prevail with God.

Remember, too, that joined to that prayer *there must be much holy fear*. "Happy is the man," says Solomon, "that feareth always"—not the fear that is distrustful and suspicious of God, but the fear that is distrustful and more than suspicious of self; the fear that is conscious of inward weakness and depravity, that dares not into temptation go, but asks to have its eyes turned aside from beholding vanity, lest the look should lead to the desire, and the desire should engender the act.

With holy fear there must be *much careful walking*. He that would persevere to heaven must not hope to go there pell-mell helter-skelter, heedless, careless, thoughtless as to his daily life. There must be self-examination, self-inspection, watchfulness incessantly. An arrow may pierce thee between any joint of thy armour unless thou hold the shield of faith to catch its barbed shaft, and quench its barbarous flame. God grant thee grace to walk carefully and humbly with thy God.

To persevere in grace *we must seek to use all the means of grace that can assist us*—not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; not neglecting either private or public prayer; using what grace we have if we expect to get more; doing what we can for God, as we expect him to do all for us; in fine, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. If these things be in you and abound, they shall be the means of preserving you, and you shall be among the happy number that shall sing, "Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding joys unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." And now, fourthly and lastly:—

IV. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN AN EMPHATIC SENSE.

Understand me, for here it is that I wish to appeal to believers in Christ. This man Ittai said, "Surely in what place that my lord the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there also will thy servant be." You can follow Christ in a general way in the activities of Christian life, and so on, but there is a peculiar way of following him. You can get, by God's grace, very near your Master, and by still greater grace you can keep near to him, and keep near to him all your lives. I have never been able to hope for perfection in the flesh, but I believe that even Christian ought to strain after even perfection itself. I am afraid we have fixed the standard of what a Christian may be a deal too low; of what a Christian should be it would not be possible to fix the standard too high. It is not needful for a Christian to be sometimes with Christ, and sometimes to lose fellowship. It is not necessary for a Christian to be full of doubts and fears. I met an elderly Christian some years ago who is now in heaven, whose word certainly I could never dare to have doubted, who told me that

by the space of forty years he had never had a doubt of his own acceptance in the Beloved, and though he had had many troubles and trials, he did not know that his communion with Christ had once been interrupted. I marvelled at him, but I marvelled a great deal more at myself that I had not tried to get into the same place. Why not? If you are straitened, it certainly is not in your God; you are straitened in your own bowels. He never gave you legitimate cause to doubt him, nor did he ever give you a reasonable excuse for forsaking fellowship with him. Let us, oh! let us aim at keeping as near to Jesus as John did, and not, like Peter, follow afar off. Let it be the great prayer of our lives:

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live."

Let us ask that our communion may be kept up in business hours as well as in the private closet, that we may walk with Christ on the Exchange and in the street, as well as in the Tabernacle, or in the public engagements of worship. Why need we leave him, Certainly he will not leave us. Oh! that we may cling to him closely, cling to him and hold him fast. I like the saying of a dying negro boy, who was asked why he felt so happy in the thought of going to heaven. and he said, "I want to go to heaven principally because Jesus is there." "Well," said they, "but do you always want to be with Jesus, then, and with nobody else?" "Yes," said he, "I only care to be where Jesus is." "But suppose Jesus were to leave heaven?" Said he, "I would go with him." "But suppose Jesus went to hell, what then?" "Ah!" said the boy, "but there could not be any hell where Jesus was; I would go with Jesus wherever he might go." Oh! that we had that kind of spirit, and that desire ever more, not to be self-seeking, nor world-seeking, nor getting our joy out of common pleasures, nor hunting after comfort where it cannot be found in these low-land joys; but let us seek to be on the wing with our Master, up aloft, dwelling in the land of communion. where Jesus lets out his very heart to his people, and reveals himself to them as he cloth not unto the world. The Lord give to this church many of those favoured men and women, whose communion shall be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Oh! it is the happiest, holiest, safest, richest. most useful kind of life. God grant it to you.

But oh! dear friends, there are some here to whom all this talk is nothing for they have never taken up the cross of King Jesus at all. Do you know it is very seldom I come into this pulpit, very seldom indeed, without my seeing here and there that mournful colour which indicates that another person has departed this life? We are so numerous that there are two or three deaths every week, and sometimes five or six, and as I happen to know when each one is taken away I am continually reminded of the mortality of my congregation—never twice alike—never under any circumstances—always some here that will never be here again or were not here before; always some here who are just on the brink of the grave. Now I speak to you to-night who may, though you know it not, be on the brink of the grave, and I shall ask you to put to yourselves this question, How will it fare with you when you pass into the spirit-world, and stand before your God, when you are not reckoned as a friend of Christ, but have to take your stand among his enemies? You would not wish to take that place even to-night. You are halting between two opinions; but, my dear friend, that halting of yours must come to an end very soon, or otherwise death will decide it, and where death finds you judgment will leave you, and hell will continue you. Oh! I pray you lay hold on eternal life, and this night cast in your lot with Christ. Oh! he is the brightest leader ever soldier had. He is the fairest Prince under whom anyone could serve. His cause is such as will ennoble you. To fight under his banner makes each private soldier into a prince, ennobles each one

into a king. Before thou canst serve him, remember thou must be washed by him. There is a fountain filled with blood; if thou cost trust him, that blood will make thee white as snow. If thou cost trust him now, his Holy Spirit will give thee grace to enlist in his army, and to continue a faithful soldier until thou shalt lay down thy battle with thy life, and cease at once to fight and live, and enter into the victory for ever and ever. By the horror of Christ's defeated foes, among whom I would not have you numbered; by the glory of Christ's victorious friends, among whom I would fain see you muster, look unto Christ and live to-night, and may he help you to do so. Amen.

A Miracle of Grace

A Sermon

(No. 3505)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people; but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God."—2 Chron. 33:9-13.

MANASSEH was born three years after his father's memorable sickness. You will remember that Hezekiah was stricken with a mortal disease, and Isaiah, the prophet, come to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." He appears to have been startled and appalled at the tidings, and gave vent to his feelings with bitter tears. Evidently he was afraid at the time to face death. He had probably been indulging a worldly spirit; and besides this, it lay as a heavy burden upon his heart that he had no son whom he should leave as his successor in the kingdom. In deep distress of soul, accordingly, he turned to the wall and prayed to the Lord. With piteous weeping and earnest pleading he besought that his life might be spared. His prayer was heard, his tears were seen, and his petition was granted by God. His days were prolonged by fifteen years. In the third year of those fifteen years his son Manasseh was born to him. Had he known, methinks, what sort of a son would have risen up in his stead, he might have been content to die, rather than to be the father of such a persecutor of God's people, and such a setter up of idolatry in the land. Alas! full often we know not what we, pray for. We may be covetous of an apparent boon which would prove to be a real curse both to ourselves and to thousands of others. You prayed, mother—yea, prayed fervently—for the life of that dear babe whom God was pleased to take away from you. You cannot know what disposition the child would have shown, what temptations would have befallen it, or what consequences would have come of its life. Could some parents have read the history of their children from the day of their birth, they might rightly have wished that they had never been born. We had better leave such matters with God, and submit to his sovereign will. He knows better than we do, for he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Thank God, these affairs are not in our own hands. They are in far better and wiser keeping than ours.

Manasseh's mother was named Hephzi-bah, a beautiful name. I wonder whether Hezekiah gave her the name because she was his delight, or because his gratitude inspired it, as he was then himself delighting in his God. I can scarcely think that at such a time he would have chosen one who had not also chosen God; therefore, let us think of her as a godly woman. But in that case she could

have had little enough delight in her son; and sometimes, I should think, when she saw him pursuing the people of God with the sword, and sinning with a high hand, she must have been ready to say, "Call me no more Hephzi-bah, but call me Marah, for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me." It is not always that the thing which makes us glad to-day will make us glad to-morrow likewise. Let children be accounted a heritage of the Lord. They are the joy of our hearts and the flowers of our homes. But what will they be to us when the gay, guileless, sportive days of their childhood have run out? Unless God sends his blessing with them, the increase of our families may be the sorrow of our lives. Evil passions and propensities develop themselves in our children with their growth, and if the grace of God does not subdue their sinful disposition, we may have to rue the day that they were born. Manasseh's name signified "forgetfulness." I hope his father did not forget his training, and leave him to those young courtiers who always hang about kings' palaces, and are pretty sure to instil into a young prince's mind more vanity than virtue, and bespeak his favour and patronage for the popular party. There was a superstitious section in those days, cultivating idolatry and pouring contempt on the Evangelical brethren, whose cause his father, Hezekiah, had espoused so earnestly and defended all his days. That new religion, imported from among the heathen, had its meretricious attractions. Was there not a great deal to please the eye in its pageant, and much to charm the ear in its worship? The beautiful artistic work in the statuary of its idols, and the fine display of pomp in all the ceremonies—did not these appeal to a cultivated taste? The old-fashioned puritanical order of worshipping at one temple, where the service was bald, and where there was scarcely anything to be seen except by the priests themselves, was becoming effete. Would it not be better to go with the times, take up with Baalim and Ashtaroth, do homage to the sensuous proclivities of the common people, and make friendly alliances with nations holding other creeds? I should not wonder but they talked to the young man in that fashion, and he—oblivious of what God had done for his sire and forgetful that in the long history of the house of Judah the people had always been smitten when they turned aside to idols and that they only prospered when they clave to the living God fell into the snare, and sinned with a high hand.

I shall introduce him to you first as *a loathsome monster of guilt*; then, secondly, I shall show you how the hand of God followed him till he became *a piteous spectacle of misery*; after which—blessed be God!—we shall have to mount into a clearer atmosphere, when we point him out to you as he became afterwards, *a miracle of grace*; and in fine we shall have to admire him as *a delightful picture of genuine repentance*. We must begin by considering him as:

I. A LOATHSOME MONSTER OF GUILT.

I cannot imagine that any one of my hearers can have been so great a sinner as Manasseh. I shall not attempt to draw a parallel between him and anyone else. Still, I should not wonder if some of you may be led to draw some such parallel for yourselves. If you do so, I pray the Lord to give you such a sense of your own guilt as shall constrain you to seek pardon.

Deep was the crime, and daring was the impiety of Manasseh, in size that *he undid all the good work of his pious father*. What Hezekiah had painfully wrought at the web he began to unravel as fast as he could. That which the father built up for God the son pulled down; and that which the father had cast down because it was evil the son at once began to reconstruct. I must confess I have known sons do the like. Because, they have hated their father's piety, as it has been a restraint upon their sin, they have vowed that if it ever came into their power to do as they liked, there should be a change in the household. As I passed a certain house this week a friend said to me, "Many a prayer-meeting has been held in that farmhouse. People used to come for miles round there to meet

and pray." "Is that a thing of the past?" said I; "are no prayer meetings held there now?" "Oh! no," he replied; "the father died, and his reprobate son came into the property. A prayer meeting, indeed! No. He defied his mother to attempt such a thing; and after having stripped her, and stripped the little estate of all there was that was worth the having, he has gone away, and has not been heard of for many a year. As far as he could, he tore down everything that belonged to his father that reminded him of his God." Mr. Whitefield used to tell of a wicked son who said he would not live in the same house that his father had inhabited, for he said that every room in the house stunk of his father's religion, and he could not bear it. There are men who after such manner devise mischief. But ah! young man, you cannot sin in that atrocious way without incurring extraordinary guilt. It will be remembered that you sin against the light; it will be recollected at the last great day that you were prayed for—that you were instructed in the right way; nor will you sin so cheap as others—others, did I say? I means such as, when they transgress, only follow an evil example, and run in the path which their parents taught them. Oh! how I grieve over ungodly young men who treat their father's God with dishonour and despite.

Manasseh's sin was aggravated by the fact that *he chose to follow the very worst examples*. Though he had in his father one of the best patterns of purity, that would not do, but he must cast about him to see whom he could imitate. Upon whom think ye, did he light? Why, upon Ahab—the Ahab of whom God had said that he would cut off every one of his house, and not leave one remaining; a threat which had been executed, for the blood of Ahab had been licked by dogs in the field of Naboth, and Jezebel, his wife, had been devoured of dogs. Yet this young man must needs choose Ahab to be his pattern, so he set up Baalim, even as Ahab had done of old. The like folly I have known to be committed by young men in these days. It may be there are those here who have not found anybody that they could imitate, until at last they sought out some licentious individual, perhaps, of years gone by, whom they have elected to be their leader. Why, half the youth of England used, at one time, to be infatuated with Lord Byron. The glare of his genius blinded them as to the terrible hue of his character and the atrocity of his conduct, so they followed headlong in his track, because, forsooth, he was a great man and a poet. Affecting wit, they bid defiance to pure morals. Alas! for the men whose sentiments, whose language, and whose actions betray the hardihood and the daring of vicious characters they are prone to emulate! Though they know better, they deliberately choose the worst models that they can copy from. What extravagance man will perpetrate in sin!

But this Manasseh sought out for himself *unusual and outlandish sins*. Bad as Ahab was, he had not worshipped the host of heaven. That was an Assyrian worship, and this man must needs import from Assyria and Babylonia worship that was quite new. He set up the image Ashra, which you may, perhaps, have seen on the slabs that have been brought from Nineveh: a tree bearing souls, intended to represent all the host of heaven. He carved this in the house of God, and set it up for worship. We read in the prophets that the people used to stand in front of the temple and bow before the rising sun, worshipping the hosts of heaven. He was not satisfied with common sin. We have known sinners of this class; they are not content merely to sin as others do; they are ambitious to invent some fresh sin. Like Tiberius, who offered a prize if somebody would find him out a new pleasure, they want to discover a new species of impiety, which shall draw attention to themselves. They must be singular in whatever they attempt; even if it comes to being singularly wicked. Such was Manasseh. He could not be satisfied to run in the race with others, and mingle with the ill-fashion of his times; swiftly as they would fly, he must distance them all.

Beyond this, *he insulted God to his face*. Here, perhaps, his sin culminates. It was not enough to build idol temples for idol worship, but he must needs set up the idols and their altars in the Temple of Jehovah. Such arrogance, as we think of it, makes our blood chill. And ah! one trembles to tell it, not a few men have thus invoked upon their bodies and their souls the curse of the Almighty. So desperately have they been set on transgression, that they have lifted their hand and defied their Maker. Had he not been God—the God of all patience—he would have resented their defiance, and have suddenly smitten them down to hell; but being God, and not man, he has borne with them. He is too great to be stirred by their insults. He has put it by, and let it lie still, winking alike at their ignorance and their assumption. for a while, until their iniquity shall be full; and then, in his justice, will he visit it upon their head. There are not a few in our great city who continually do all that they can to provoke God, and to show how little they reverence him how utterly they ignore his claims on their homage. They will go out of their way to introduce blasphemies into their common conversation, and to express their disgust and contempt for everything chaste and comely, sacred and godly. Such was Manasseh. He set up the altars of the false gods in the house of the living God.

Is not his character black enough? Nay, we have not laid on the thickest touches yet. We are told *he made his children to pass through the fire*; that is to say, he passed them between the red-hot arms of Moloch, that they might belong for ever as long as they lived, to that fiendish deity. If we do not aver that men do this now-a-days, they fall little short of the same cruelty and crime. Many a man teaches his child to drink arduous spirits; trains him to habits which he knows will lead him to drunkenness; does his utmost to pass the child through the red-hot arms of the spirit-fiend, Else Moloch of the present time. Many a man has taught his child to blaspheme. If he has not deliberately purposed it, he has actually effected it, fully conscious that he was so doing. What was his example but a deliberate lesson? Ay; there are people who seem to take delight in the sins of their children, Laughing at the iniquities they have instructed their own sons to perpetrate. Do I address a father who, for many years, has never attended a place of worship on the Sabbath—who has often gone home reeling drunk, and, though somewhat reformed himself, sees his own son plunging into every vice that he was himself once habituated to? Let me ask you, Do you wonder at it? Do you wonder at it? You have passed your children through the flames; what marvel that they were singed, and that the smell of fire is upon them? Oh! it is a crying sin that men will not only go to hell themselves, but they must needs drag their children with them. Many a man has not been satisfied to be ruined but he must ruin some young woman who, perhaps, once had religious convictions. He becomes her husband, and forbids her to attend the house of God. As for his children, they may, perhaps, be sent to the Sunday School to get them out of the way in the afternoon, yet any goad they might learn there is Soon dissipated by the scenes and sounds they witness and hear under the roof of their home. Why, multitudes in this city—we know it, and they must know it themselves—are ruining their children, deliberately compassing their perdition. Is this a small sin, an insignificant mistake in their training? I trow not.

Moreover, Manasseh proceeded further, for *he made a league with devils*. There were, in his day, certain persons who professed to talk with departed spirits, supposing that the devil had the means of communicating with them about things to come. Now, whether this fellowship with familiar spirits is a delusion and a lie, as I suspect it is, or whether there may be a mystery of Satan involved in it, I do not know; but certain it was that Manasseh tried to get as near the devil as he could. If he could get him to be his friend he was well content to make a covenant with hell, so that

it might answer his purposes. Let him have good luck; little did he care for God. He would consult a wizard. Superstition led him to that, but the good Word of God he utterly despised. And there are some that have done this—some here, perhaps. I will not suppose they have lent themselves to those silly superstitions, or resorted to those deceitful or deceived *mediums* who perform in the dark. I should think, in these modern times of popular education, anyone is fit to be confined in a lunatic asylum who is beguiled by that snare. Intelligence should protect you from imposture. But there be those who, if the devil would help them, would be glad enough to shake hands with him, and say, "Hail, fellow; well met!" If they do not entertain the devil, it is no fault of theirs. They have set the table for him, and furnished the house, and made themselves quite ready for any evil spirit that chooses to come to them. Oh! what iniquity this is! They will not have God; they will have Satan. They cast off the great Father in heaven, but the archenemy of souls—with him they make a covenant, and contract a league. Could sin go much farther shall this? It could, and it did; *for this man led the whole nation astray*. Being a king, he had great power, and he used his authority and exerted his influence to induce his subjects to follow his pernicious course. I often wonder what will be the horror of a man that has lived in gross sin when, in the next world, he meets those that he betrayed and seduced into iniquity, when he begins to see, in the murky gloom of that intolerable pit, a pair of eyes which somehow or other seem to hold him fixed and fast. He recognises them; he has seen them somewhere before, and those eyes flash fire into the soul as though they would utterly consume him, and a voice says, "A thousand curses on thee! Thou art he that led me first into sin—enticed me from a virtuous home, and from godly associations, to become thy partner in iniquity. A blast be on thee evermore!" What company they have to keep in that place of torment! How they will gnash their teeth at one another in dreadful rage, each one charging the other with being his destroyer! Oh! there is remorse enough in store for a man who ruins himself, but who can tell the pangs that shall scourge his soul who betrays his fellow-creatures, and precipitates them into everlasting ruin? Verily, dear friends, we stand aghast at the picture of such a man as Manasseh, he set no bounds to his sin. He sinned with both hands greedily, and when the messengers came from God to tell him of it, he was angry with them. Tradition says that he sawed the prophet Isaiah in halves for daring to reprove him. But it is not from tradition, but from revelation, we learn that he made Jerusalem to swim with blood from one end to the other, putting to death all those that would not go in his ways and follow his devices. Persecution of the saints of God is a scarlet sin, that calls aloud to heaven for vengeance. Manasseh was guilty of this, among other crimes. I am sick at heart, and my tongue is weary of the story. Let me turn to another branch of the narrative. This terrible monster of iniquity presently became:—

II. A SINGULAR SPECTACLE OF MISERY.

A few words will suffice to describe it. The Assyrian king sent his captain, one Tartan, who besieged the city till it was devastated, and the king fled. It would appear that he hid himself in a thorn brake, and was dragged out from it, and fettered and manacled with heavy irons. There remains a representation at the present time of some Jewish king—we cannot be sure it was Manasseh—who was dragged before the King of Babylon. At any rate, it represents what was done to Manasseh, whether the like treatment befell any other Jewish king or not. He has two rings—a ring on each ankle, and a heavy bolt between them, and his hands are fastened in the same manner. He is brought before the king at Babylon. There he seems to have been cast into prison, and kept in confinement. The cruelties of the Assyrian monarchs are attested by the memorials upon their own palace walls; therefore, I can fully credit the story told; by Jerome, that this Manasseh was himself put into a

brazen vessel, and subjected to the most intense heat, the Assyrian king abusing him for having passed his own child through the fire in the same manner. That he was kept for many a long month in a dark and dreary dungeon, with only sufficient bread and vinegar given him to sustain his life, appears certain. He must have been wretched to the last degree: his crown gone, his kingdom devastated, his subjects put to unheard—of miseries, We are told that the judgment which God executed upon the land was such that it made the both ears of him that heard of it to tingle. The king must, therefore, have experienced some indescribable afflictions from the hands of the tyrant of Assyria. Ah! sinner, though thou harden thyself in thy transgressions, thou wilt not go unpunished. A bitter end awaits thee. Reckless as thou art, young man, thy father's God will not always be mocked. You have persecuted your wife and your friend, but their unhappiness will return ere long to your own bosom. There will come an end to your arrogance, and a beginning to your recompenses. Oh! I wish your iniquity would come to an end soon, and that it might end with your conversion. If it does not come to that end, your outlook is gloomy indeed, for your total destruction will complete the course you are running.

Perhaps I am addressing somebody who has been living in heartless sin until he has become entangled in helpless misery. In this crowd you seem as if you were pointed out, for your heart is ready to break with anguish. Your property is lost, your health is broken up, your character is blasted; you are a mere wreck, a waif, a stray upon the dark sea. There is none to have compassion upon you. You are a castaway. Even your old companions have forsaken you. The devil himself seems to have cast you adrift. You are abandoned, and you might cry out and sound your own death knell. "Lost! lost! lost!" Well, now, I have a message from God to you. I am come to speak to you, in the name of the Lord, about this man Manasseh, in the hope that it may be also concerning yourself true—that after having been a prodigy of sin, and a spectacle of misery, you may now become as, in the third place, Manasseh became:—

III. A MONUMENT OF GRACE.

Oh! I do not wonder at Manasseh's sin one half so much as I wonder at God's mercy. There was the man in the prison. He had never thought of his God except to despise his prerogative, and offend against his laws, till he was immured in that dungeon. Then his pride began to break; his haughty spirit had to yield at last. "Who is Jehovah, that I should serve him?" he had often said. But now he is in Jehovah's hand. Lying there half-starved in the prison, a crushed man, he begins to cry, "Jehovah, what a fool I have been! I have stood out against thee until at length thy sovereign power has arrested me. and thy infinite justice has begun to avenge my crimes. What shall I do? Where shall I hide from thy wrath? How can I escape? Is it possible to obtain thy pardon?" He began to humble himself; God's Spirit came and humbled him more and more; he saw how foolish he had been, how wicked his character, how cruel his conduct, how abominable. Thus he spent his days and nights, in weeping and in lamentation. It was not the prison he cared so much about. His soul had gone into iron bondage. Then it suddenly flashed across his mind that perhaps God might have mercy on him, so he began to pray. Oh! what a trembling prayer that first prayer was. Methinks Satan said to him, "It is no use your praying, Manasseh. Why, you have defied the living God to his face. He will tell you to go to the idol gods you have served, repair to the images you have set up, and bow before the hosts of heaven you have been wont to worship, and see what they can for you." Nay; but in this awful despair he felt he must pray; and surely the first prayer he breathed must have been, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And in his deep abasement, he continued still to pray and plead with God. And that dear Father of ours who is in heaven heard him. If ever you

can bring him a praying heart, he will bring you a forgiving message. As soon as he saw his poor child broken down, and confessing his wrong, he took pity on him, heard, and answered him, and blotted out his sins like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. I think I see Manasseh, with his morsel to eat, never enough to stay his hunger, and his little drops of vinegar, saying to himself, "Ah! I don't deserve this!" He would thank God even for that starving allowance in the depths of his cell, feeling that it was mercy that let him live. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" And so it came to pass that he was delivered.

The King of Assyria, for State reasons which I need not mention, determined to put this king on his throne again. He thought that he had broken him down, and humbled him enough; that he would make a good viceroy and a faithful lieutenant, and that he would be afraid to rebel again, so one bright day he opened wide Manasseh's dungeon, and told him he was going to send him back to Jerusalem. And when he told him that, then Manasseh knew that Jehovah, he was God. This conclusion was forced upon him by the mercy he obtained. "Who," he would say, "but the Most High God could have brought me out of this horrible pit, have released me from the power of this tyrant king, or moved his heart to relent, and have compassion on me?" As he rode back to Jerusalem, how his heart would be breaking with gratitude! I think I see him when he first got within sight of the walls of that temple which he had so recklessly profaned. Surely he threw himself upon his face, and wept sore, and then arose and blessed the name of the Lord that had forgiven all his trespasses. And when he entered Jerusalem, and the people gathered round him, what must the greetings have been? Where are those courtiers that had been his companions, that led him into sin? Do they come whining round him? What a rebuff they will get! How will he exclaim, "Get you gone. I am another man. I do not want your company or your counsel." Are there any of those poor people standing in the background—the people that used to meet to pray and worship Jehovah, faithful among the faithless found—such as had been wont to hide away their Bibles because they were hunted and harried from one retreat to another—a small remnant, that had escaped the fangs of the persecutors—did they come forward? How he could look at them, and say, "Ah! you servants of Jehovah, you are my brethren. Give me your hands; for I, too, have found from heaven, and I am, like you, a child of God." I warrant you there was singing in Jerusalem that night amongst the feeble band of the steadfast believers; and there must have been music in heaven too, for the fiery angels must have rejoiced in a conversion that seemed so unlikely, so incredible.

"What, Manasseh saved? Manasseh—that bloodhound—is he transformed, by the renewing of his mind, into a lamb of God's flock? What he, the red-handed persecutor—has he become a professor of the faith he once destroyed?" Ah! yes. Well might Bishop Hall say, "Who can complain that the way of heaven is blocked against him, when he sees such a sinner enter? Say the worst against thyself, O clamorous soul! Here is one that murdered men, defied God, and worshipped devils, yet he finds the way to repentance. If thou be vile as he, know that it is not thy sin, but thy impenitence, that bars heaven against thee. Who can now despair of thy mercy, O God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted?" I remember an old lady who would not travel by railway because she thought that some of the bridges were in bad repair, especially the Saltash bridge, near her own house. Over that bridge she could not be persuaded to pass, for fear her weight should break it down, although hundreds of tons weight were carried over it every day. At such folly everybody can smile. But when I hear any man say, "I have committed so much sin, that God cannot pardon it," I think his folly is far greater. Look at this huge train that went over that bridge. Behold Manasseh laden with ponderous crimes! Mark what a train of sin there was behind him! Then look at the

bridge, and see whether it starts by reason of the loaded team of wills which is rolling over it. Ah! no, it bears up, and so would it bear the weight if all the, Sins that men have done should roll across its arches. Christ is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." I do not know where to cast my eyes for the person to whom this message is directed. That he is somewhere in this assembly I entertain no doubt. So I speak to some sister who, in an unguarded hour, left the path of virtue, and since then has pursued a course of shame? I pray you accept the message. I deliver it to you. The greatest sin, the utmost guilt, the most incredible iniquity, the most abominable transgressions, can be forgiven, and shall be blotted out. The Redeemer lives; the sacrifice has been offered; the covenant is sealed. Turn now to the Lord with purpose of heart. Confess the sins. Abjure thyself. Trust in the infinite mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, his Son. "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." Our closing reflection is that Manasseh became:—

IV. A PICTURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

At once he ceased to do evil. He went straightway to the temple and *pulled down the idols*. How I would like to have been with him, and have had a hand in demolishing them. Down went the images; then over went the altars; every stone was dragged right out of the city, and flung away. God grant that every image in England may yet be pulled down, battered to pieces, and the small dust thereof flung into the common sewers. May that which is an utter abomination before heaven stir a righteous indignation on earth. Oh! that our land may be so godly that no respect for fine arts may suffer her to tolerate foul impieties! Manasseh made haste to undo the mischief he had done. This is what every converted man tries to do. All the evil he has ever caused he tries to stay; he takes vengeance on his former devices; against them he lifts both his hands, raises his voice, and exerts his influence.

Nor did this suffice; Manasseh *began forthwith to do good*. Right speedily he began to repair the altar of the Lord, and to restore the services of God and the ordinances of the Temple to their original purity, according to the divine statutes. So when a man is truly converted, he will be anxious to join himself to the Lord's people, and support the institutions of his house. Nor did Manasseh smother his gratitude, but he presented thank-offerings to God. He was not unmindful of the devout acknowledgments that were due for the great mercy he had received. Like that other great sinner, whose gratitude is recorded in the gospel—the woman who brought an alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and brake it—like her, methinks, he loved much because he had had much forgiven.

And, then, being established in his kingdom, *he proceeded to use his high influence for holy purposes*. He ruled his subjects in the fear of the Lord; and made the law of his God to be the law of the land, renouncing all strange gods, and adhering rigidly to the book by inspiration given. Oh! that God would incline the heart of some penitent sinner here at once to bring forth this fruit of conversion! What a change there would be in his house! What a difference his family would see! What an altered man he would appear in his daily avocation, whether he be employer or employed! He would be seeking the conversion of those whom he formerly led astray. Those he once scoffed at, and called by evil names, would become his choicest companions. "Can God do this?", says one. Oh! my dear hearers, the God that can forgive great sin can also change hard hearts. Cry to him. If you are unsaved, may his Spirit lead you to seek salvation now. Stay not for to-morrow's sun. If you are saved yourself, may that blessed Spirit lead you to pray for others, and seek their present and eternal welfare. Watch unto prayer. Let your own faith in God stimulate you to believe

that all things are possible. Never give them up, never give them up. Are you a mother—you do not know how prevalent your intercessions may prove. I wonder whether poor Hephzi-bah was alive when Manasseh was converted? She had grieved over him, doubtless, in his young days. Well, if she did not live to see the fruit of her prayers, yet her prayers lived, and her tears were repaid with rich interest. There is many a mother's son whose heart will be turned to God long after his mother's bones have been laid in the churchyard. The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it. Thy son will yet be brought to glory through thy prayers. Pray on, brethren and sisters, pray on for those whose sins and sorrows lay heavily on your heart. Pray on, and God will hear you. O poor sinners, the mercy of God is the antidote for man's despair. Believe in his mercy. Look for his mercy. Cast yourselves upon his mercy, and you shall find his mercy unto everlasting life. God grant it for Christ's sake. Amen.

What Self Deserves

A Sermon

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On Lord's-day Evening, 18th December, 1870.

"Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations."—Ezekiel 36:31.

IT HAS been the supposition of those who know not by experience that if a man be persuaded that he is pardoned, and that he is a child of God, he will necessarily become proud of the distinction which God has conferred upon him. Especially if he be a believer in predestination, when he finds that he is one of God's chosen, it is supposed that the necessary consequence will be that he will be exceedingly puffed up, and think very highly of himself. This however, is but theory; the fact lies quite another way; for if a man be truly subjected to the work of grace in the heart, and if he be then brought to trust in Jesus, and to see his sin put away by the great sacrifice, instead of being lifted up, he will be exceedingly cast down in his own sight, and as he goes on to perceive the singular mercy and peculiar privileges which God's grace has bestowed upon him, instead of being exalted, he will sink lower and lower in his own esteem, until, when he shall make a full discovery of divine love, he will become nothing, and Christ will be all in all. Mercy never makes us proud. As mercy is given to the humble, it has a humbling effect. Wherever it comes, it makes a man lie low before the throne of the heavenly grace, and leads him to ascribe all honour and glory to the God from whom the mercy comes.

It appears from our text that when Israel shall be forgiven her long years of departure from God, one of the effects of the mercy will be that she will loathe herself, and that same effect has already been produced in some of us, to whom God's abounding mercy has come. In fact, in every man here who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, there has been one uniform experience upon this matter—we have been led to loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the sin we have done before the Lord our God. I shall try to go into this matter, trusting to be rightly guided to say fitting and useful words at this time.

First, my brethren, *what is it that we have come to loathe in ourselves?*; secondly, *why do we loathe it?*; and thirdly, *what is the necessary result in us, or should be, of this self-loathing?* First, then:—

I. WHAT IS IT THAT THE PARDONED SINNER LOATHES?

You will perceive that he is a pardoned sinner. The verse is inserted here in a position where it plainly belongs to those whom God has renewed in heart, whose sins are forgiven, who are fully justified and accepted. It is consistent with the full enjoyment of salvation to loathe yourself. This is the strange paradox of the Christian faith. He who justifies himself is condemned, he who condemns himself is justified. He who magnifies himself, God breaks down and casts in pieces;

he who throws, himself prostrate before the throne of God's justice, he it is that God lifteth up in due time. What is it, then, that we loathe in ourselves to-day?

Our reply is, first of all, *we loathe every act of our past sin*. Look back, ye that have been brought to Jesus; look back upon the past. Your lives have differed. Some here have, by God's mercy, been kept from gross outward sin before their conversion; others have run wantonly into it to great excess of riot. Whichever may have been our pathway before conversion, we do now unfeignedly loathe all the sin of it, whether it were the open sin or the sin of the heart. Especially do we loathe to—night those sins which we excused at the time (which we did excuse afterwards). because we said, "Others did so," because we could not see we did any hurt to our fellow-men thereby. We loathe them because, if they did not relate to man, but only to God, it was the more vicious of us that we should rebel altogether against him. "Against thee thee only, have I sinned," is a part of the bitterness of our confession to-night. There were some sins that were sweet to us at the time: we rolled them under our tongue, poisonous though they were. and we called them sweet morsels. We would revolt against them to-night with abhorrence. Begone, ye damnable sins! By your very sweetness to me, I detect you. Fool that I must have been that such a thing as thou, could have been sweet to me. What eyes must I have had to have seen any beauty in thee! How estranged from God to love the things so foul and vile! We would recall to-night those greater sins of our life, sins perhaps which entangled others. sins which we perpetrated in the face of knowledge, after many warnings, desperate. atrocious sins. Oh! what mercy that we were not cut down while we were living in them! We turn them over and remember them, not, I trust, as some do, I am afraid, when they speak of their past lives, as if they were talking about their battles and they were old soldiers—never mention your sins without tears. Do not write much about them, if at all; it is best to do with them as Noah's sons did with their father's nakedness, go back and cast a mantle over all. God has forgiven them. Remember them only that you may repent, and that you may bless his name, but never mention them without loathing them—utterly loathing them as if they were disgusting to your spirit, and you could not speak of them without the blush mantling on your cheek.

My brethren, in addition to loathing every act of sin, I think I can hope, if our acts are right, we do, through God's mercy, *loathe all the sins of omission*. I will put them in this form. The time we wasted before our conversion. Perhaps some of you were not brought to Christ until you were thirty, or forty, or fifty years of age. It is a very, very happy circumstance to be saved while yet you are younger—a case for eternal thankfulness but let us think of the time we wasted, precious time, in which we might have served God, time in which we might have been learning more of him, studying his Word, and making ourselves more fit to be used by him in after years. How much of our time ran to waste! I would especially loathe wasted Sabbaths. Some of us wasted them at home in idleness; some wasted them abroad in company. others of us wasted them in God's house. I would loathe my elf for having wasted Sabbaths, under sermons, hearing as though I heard them not—joining in devotions in the posture, and not in the heart. And what is this but to break the Sabbath under the very garb of keeping it—thinking other thoughts and caring for other things while eternal matters were being proclaimed in my hearing. Oh! let us loathe ourselves to think that even twenty years should have gone to waste, much more thirty, or forty, or fifty years even sixty—should have been suffered to glide by, bearing nothing upon their bosom but a freight of sin, carrying nothing to the throne of God that we would wish to have remembered there. Those of us who have been converted to God would this night loathe every refusal which we gave to Christ. in those days of our unregeneracy. Dost thou remember, my brother in Christ, those early knockings

at the door of thy heart by a gentle mother's word, or was it a father, or was it perhaps a Sunday School teacher, or perhaps some dear one now in glory? Oh! that ever I should have refused the Saviour, had he but presented himself to me but once! Infatuation not to be excused, to close the heart against even one of these! But many times! Some of us were very favourably circumstanced. Our mother's tears fell thick and fast for us when we were children. She would pray with us; when we read the Scriptures with her' she talked to us. Her words were very faithful, very tender, and her child could not help feeling them, but waywardly he pushed aside the tears, and still forgot his mother's God. Then you know with many of us the entreaties of our youth melted into the instructions of our riper years. Do you not remember many sermons under which Christ has knocked with his pierced hand at the door of your heart? You that sit here from time to time, I know the Lord does not leave you without some strivings of heart; at least, I hope he does not I do pray the Master to help me to put the word so that it may disturb you, and not let you make a nest in your sins, but as yet you have said "No" to Christ, and given him the go-by, even until now. As for such as are now saved, I am sure they have among their most bitter pangs of regret this, that they should ever at any time, and that they should so often and so many times have said to the Saviour, "Depart from me; I will not know thee, neither do I desire thy salvation." And if, my brethren, in addition to having refused Christ, we have come into actual collision with him by setting up our own Pharisaic estimate of ourselves, we ought to loathe ourselves to-night. We did say in our heart, "I am good enough." The filthy rags of our own righteousness have had the impertinence to compare with the fair white linen of Christ's righteousness. We thought we could put away our own sins by some method of our own, and that cross, which is heaven's wonder and hell's terror, are despised so as to think we could do without it. We might well loathe ourselves for this, if we had never committed any other transgression than this. Oh! foul pride, oh! base and loathsome pride that can make a sinner think he can do without a Saviour, and so presumptuously imagine that Christ was more than was needful, and the cross was a work of supererogation.

Did any of us go further than this? And did we ever *commit persecuting acts against Christ and his people*? Perhaps some of you did, and now you are his servants. You laughed at that Christian woman; why, you would go down upon your knees now if you could find her, to beg a thousand pardons, now you know her to be a child of God. You did then act very harshly and severely towards one who was a true lover of the Saviour. Perhaps you spoke opprobrious words, or did worse. As Cranmer put his hand into the fire and said, "Oh! unworthy right hand," because it had written a recantation of Christ and his truth years before. I am sure you would say it now if you have written one unkind word, or said one ungenerous word concerning a believer in Christ. And oh! if you have ever openly blasphemed, I know you loathe yourself, standing here to-night, to think those lips once cursed God, and, joining in the prayer-meeting with your prayers, to think that those lips once imprecated curses upon your fellow-men. I know your feeling must be one of very deep prostration of spirit. And even if we have not gone so far, we feel, as you do, that we loathe ourselves for our iniquities and for our abominations. Thus might I continue to speak to your hearts, but I trust, my brethren, it will be needless to do so, for you do already loathe yourselves for your sins.

Let me close this first part of the subject by just remarking that there are some persons here who, if the Lord should ever convert them, would ever have a strong loathing for themselves. I mean, first, hypocrites. There are such in this church, there never was a church without them. They come to the communion table, and yet have no part nor lot in the matter. We know of some that have been here Sabbath after Sabbath, and they are habitual drunkards, undiscovered by us—who

intrude themselves into the assemblies of the faithful, and yet at the same time make much mock and sport of our holy religion. Oh! if you are ever saved, what heart-breakings you will have! How you will hate yourselves! I shall not say one hard word about you, but I do pray God's grace will make you feel a great many hard things about yourself, and while you look up into the dear face of the crucified, and find pardon there, may you afterwards cover your face with shame, and weep to think of the mercy you have found. So, too, those who once professed Christ and have gone away altogether—they may be here. I should not wonder but what in this throne there are some that used to be religious people—put on an appearance and did run well. Now for years they have neglected prayer. That woman, once a church member, married an ungodly husband, and many a bitter day she has had since then, and to-night she has strayed in here. Ah! woman, may God bring thee back and thou wilt loathe thyself for having given up Christ for the love of a poor dying man. And others that have gone into the world for Sunday trading, or for some sort of gain, given up Christ, like Judas, who betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver. Oh! if you are ever saved, you will hate yourselves. I am sure this will be your cry within yourself, "Saviour, thou hast forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself; thou hast blotted out my sins like a cloud, but I shall always remember them, and lay very low at thy feet all my praises while I think of what thou hast done for me." Yes, and you there have a dear one that is a persecutor, a blasphemer, an opposer of the gospel, an infidel; may you become one of those who shall abundantly loathe yourself when you shall taste of the rich, free mercy of God. Thus I have set forth what it is that a man loathes; but let me remark it is not merely his actions he loathes, but himself, to think that he could do such things. He loathes the fountain to think that it could yield such a stream; he loathes his own evil nature, the deep corruption and depravity of his heart, to think he should be so ungrateful and treat the Lord of mercy in so ungenerous a way. But now we must turn to the second part of the subject.

II. HOW IS IT, AND WHY, THAT PARDONED SOULS DO LOATHE THEMSELVES?

Reply first. *Their nature is changed.* God, in conversion, makes us new men. We are not altered, improved, or mended, but a *new* life is given us; we become new creations in Christ Jesus. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us to be born again, and as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and it hates the old corrupt nature, loathes it, and fights against it to the death. And further, the moving cause for loathing ourselves is the receipt of divine mercy. "Oh!" saith the soul when it finds itself forgiven, "did I rebel against such a God as this! What! has he struck out all my sins from the roll, cast them all behind his back, and does he declare that he loves me still? Then wretch that I am that I should have revolted and rebelled against such a God as this." It is just as John Bunyan puts it. There is a city besieged, and they determine that they will fight it out to the last. They will make every street to run with blood but what they will hold it out against the king who claims the city for himself; but when his troops march up and set their ranks around the city, and it is all surrounded, the trumpet sounds for a parley, and the messenger comes forward with the white flag, and they find to their surprise that the conditions offered are so honourable, so generous, so much to their own advantage, that the king appears not to be their enemy at all, but, in fact, to be their best friend. He will enlarge their liberties far above what they were. He will beautify their city—it was mean before. He will come and dwell in it; he will make it the metropolis of the country; he will give it markets; he will give it all it wanted. "Why," saith John Bunyan, "whereas before they were going to fortify the walls and die to a man, they fling open the gates, and they are ready to tumble over the walls to him, they are so glad to find that he treats them so generously." And it is, even so with us when we find that he blots out

our sin, that he is all love and all compassion, we yield to him at once, and then shame comes, to think that it should ever have been needful for us to yield, that we should ever have taken up arms against him at all. It is a beautiful incident in English history when one of our kings was carrying on war against his rebellious son. and they met in battle, and the son was, just about to kill the father, when the father's visor was lifted up and he saw that it was his father whom he was about to kill. So the sinner, fighting against his God, thinks he is his enemy, but on a sudden he beholds it is his own Father that he has been fighting against, and he drops the weapon of his rebellion, feeling ashamed that he should have rebelled against such mercy and such favour. That is why we are ashamed, and I do pray that some here may be ashamed in the same way, for I think I hear Jehovah bewailing himself to-night. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Your God is good, be ready to repent and be forgiven; rebel no more.

Now after the receipt of divine mercy has brought in this feeling, *the feeling is continued and promoted by everything that happens to us*. For instance, every doctrine a Christian man learns after he is converted makes him loathe himself. Suppose he learns the doctrine of election. "What!" saith he, "was I chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, and did go after filthiness and uncleanness with this body? Was I dishonest and a liar, and yet loved of God before the stars began to shine?" That doctrine makes a man loathe himself. Then he learns the doctrine of redemption, and he reads, "These are they that are redeemed from among men"—a special and particular redemption. Did Jesus then die for me, as he did not die for all? Had he a special eye to me in that sacrifice of himself upon the cross? Oh! then I will smite my breast to think there ever should have been such a hard heart towards a Saviour who loved me so. There is no doctrine but what, when the heart learns it, the spirit bows down with deep shame to think it ever should have rebelled. So it is with *every fresh mercy* the Christian enjoys. Surely he wakes up every morning with a fresh mercy, but especially at peculiar times when our prayers have been heard, when we have been rescued out of deep distress, we lift up our eyes to heaven, and as we bless God for all his favours to us we say, "And can it be that I was once a rebel, in arms against such a God as thee? My God, my Father, did I ever blaspheme thy name? Did I ever read thy Book as a common book? Did I ever neglect thy mercy, Saviour? Then shame on me when thou hast ever been so good, so kind to me." And as the Christian grows in grace and mounts to more elevated platforms of experience, this self-loathing gets deeper when the spirit bears witness with him that he is a child of God. When he rises as a child to feel that he is an heir, and that, being an heir, he claims his heritage to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, the more he sees of God's marvellous kindness to him, the more he looks back to his past life and to the depravity of the heart within, and he says, "Shame on thy head; cover thy face with confusion; silence me before thee, oh! thou Most High, to think that after such mercy as this I should have remained so ungrateful to thee." And I suppose that as long as the Christian lives, and *the further he goes in the grace of God*, the deeper he goes in a disestimate of himself; it will ever be so until, as he gets to the gates of heaven, among all his joys and the growing sense of divine favour, there will be a still deeper sense of repentance for all the transgressions of his heart.

And now I shall need your attention still a few moments longer while I dwell upon the third and last point. When a soul is thus made to loathe itself:—

III. WHAT FOLLOWS?

Well, there follows, first of all, *self-distrust*. A man who remembers what he has been, and has a due sense of what his sin was, will never trust himself again. He thought at one time that he could resist sin; he imagined that it would be possible for him to fight against iniquity, and by daily perseverance to make something of himself. Now he has fallen so often, he has proved his own weakness so thoroughly, that all he can do now is just to look up to God, and ask for strength from on high. He cannot by any possibility rest in himself; his own weakness is so thoroughly proved. A man who knows what he used to be is conscious of what his former estate was, and will by no sort of means rely upon his own strength for a single hour. "Lead us not into temptation" will be his constant prayer, and "Deliver us from evil" will follow close upon it. When I see a man going into sinful company, a Christian professor going on to the verge of sin and saying, "I shall not fall, I can take care of myself," I feel pretty certain that that man's experience is a very flimsy one, and that it is altogether a very grave question whether he ever was pardoned and has tasted of divine grace; for if he had, he would have known what it was to loathe himself a great deal more, and to distrust himself more.

The next result in a man will be that *he will not serve himself any longer*. Before, he could have lived for his own honour, but now he has such a disestimate of himself that he must have a different object. Spend my life for my own honour and glory? "No," saith he, "I am not worthy of it. I, who could blaspheme heaven, or could live so long an enemy to God—I serve such a monster as myself! No! By God's grace, I will serve him who has changed my nature, forgiven my sin, and made me to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Self-loathing is quite sure to make a man have a better object than that of seeking to honour myself."

And then a man who has once loathed himself *will never loathe his fellow-men*. He will be free from that pride which is found in many, which disqualifies them for Christian service, because they do not know the hearts of sinners, and do not enter into communion with them. I have known some who fancy there ought to be a great distance between themselves and what they call common people; who talk of sin as though it were a strange thing, in which they had no participation, they themselves having been highly elevated above ordinary folks. Oh! we know of some that would scorn the harlot, and look down upon a man whose character has been once destroyed, and think he never ought to be spoken to again. The Christian loathes himself for not having had pity on others. He knows how readily his feet might have gone in the same way; how easily, too, he might have fallen. even to the same extent, if circumstances had been the same with him as with them, and, as far as he can, he seeks to uplift them. The man who is once as he should be, thrusts his arm to the elbow in every mire to bring up one of God's precious jewels. He has put off the kid gloves of self-sufficiency, so he works like a true labourer. He knows what Christ has done for him—how Jesus poured out his very heart's blood for his redemption—and he feels he cannot do too much, if by any means he can pluck a single firebrand from the flame. Brethren, it is good to loathe ourselves. for it makes us have sympathy with others.

Yet, once again, this self-loathing in every case where it comes *makes Jesus Christ very precious*, and makes sin very hateful. Whoever bath loathed himself at all sees how Jesus Christ has been a great Saviour, and he admires and adores him. You know you measure the height of the Saviour's love by the depth of your own fall. If you don't know anything about your ruin, you won't be likely to prize much the remedy. A man that has got a desperate disease, and is dealt with by the physician, if he does not know what the disease is, is not able to feel the measure of gratitude, even if he is healed, that another man would, who knew how fatal the disease was in itself. If I think I am not

poor, if I be befriended, I shall not have that gratitude which a bankrupt would have had if he had nothing left, to whom someone had generously given a large estate. No! a sense of need helps us to glorify God. Amongst the saints, and when on earth, the sweetest voices are those that have been made sweet by repentance. Amongst those that sing in heaven, and sing with the most sweet and lofty praise to God, are those who bless the grace that lifted them up from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their feet on a rock and established their goings. This blessed shamefacedness, which Christ gives us, is not to be avoided; may we have it more and more, and it shall be a fit preparation for the service of God on earth and the enjoyment of his presence in heaven.

And now, dear friends, it will be a very suitable season for every Christian just to look back and let his shame for many things mantle on his cheeks. Oh! how little progress have we made in the divine life through all the years! We call each year a "year of grace," but we might call it a year of sorrow. "The year of our Lord," we call it! Too often we make it the Year of ourselves. God save us for not living to him, working more for him, and growing more like him! Let us close every year with repentance, not because the sin abides, for, blessed be God, it is all forgiven—we are saved. Before the sin was perpetrated, Christ carried it into the sepulchre where he was buried; he, cast it there; it cannot be laid against us to condemn us, yet do we hate it, and yet do we loathe ourselves to think we have fallen into it. But would not this also be an admirable opportunity to show how we hate sin by seeking to bring others to Christ? Do watch for other souls. As you prize your own, seek the conversion of others, and God grant that you may bring many to Jesus.

And you that are not saved, oh! suffer not this occasion to pass, let not the days go by without your seeking for that mercy which God so fully gives through his only-begotten Son. Then when you receive it you will be ashamed, and you, too, will magnify the grace that pardoned even you. God bless you, dear friends, very richly, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Our Lord's Solemn Enquiry

A Sermon

(No. 3507)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matthew 27:46.

IF any one of us, lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ had been anywhere near the cross when he uttered those words, I am sure our hearts would have burst with anguish, and one thing is certain—we should have heard the tones of that dying cry as long as ever we lived. There is no doubt that at certain times they would come to us again, ringing shrill and clear through the thick darkness. We should remember just how they were uttered, and the emphasis where it was placed, and I have no doubt we should turn that text over, and over, and over in our minds. But there is one thing, I think, we should never have done if we had heard it—therefore, I am not going to do it—we should never preach from it. It would have been too painful a recollection for us ever to have used it as a text. No; we should have said, "It is enough to hear it." Fully understand it, who can? And to expound it, since some measure of understanding might be necessary to the exposition—that surely were a futile attempt. We should have laid that by; we should have put those words away as too sacred, too solemn, except for silent reflection and quiet, reverent adoration. I felt when I read these words again, as I have often read them, that they seemed to say to me, "You cannot preach from us," and, on the other hand, felt as Moses did when he put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the burning bush, because the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Beloved, there is another reason why we should not venture to preach from this text, namely, that it is probably an expression out of the lowest depths of our Saviour's sufferings. With him into the seas of grief we can descend some part of the way; but when he comes where all God's waves and billows go over him, we cannot go there. We may, indeed, drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism, but never to the full extent; and, therefore, where our fellowship with Christ cannot conduct us to the full, though it may in a measure—we shall not venture; not beyond where our fellowship with him would lead us aright, lest we blunder by speculation, and "darken counsel by words without knowledge." Moreover, it comes forcibly upon my mind that though every word here is emphatic, we should be pretty sure to put the emphasis somewhere or other too little. I do not suppose we should be likely to put it anywhere too much. It has been well said that every word in this memorable cry deserves to have an emphasis laid upon it. If you read it, "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me? I marvel not that my disciples should, but why hast *thou* gone, my Father, God? Why couldst *thou* leave me?" there is a wondrous meaning there. Then take it thus, "My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me? I know why thou hast smitten me; I can understand why thou dost chasten me; but why hast thou *forsaken* me? Wilt thou allow me no ray of love from the brightness of thine eyes—no sense of thy presence whatsoever?" This was the wormwood and the gall of all the Saviour's bitter

cup. Then God forsook him in his direst need. Or if you take it thus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken *me*?" there comes another meaning. "Me, thy well beloved, thine eternal well beloved, shine innocent, thy harmless, thine afflicted Son—why hast thou forsaken *me*?" Then, indeed, it is a marvel of marvels not that God should forsake his saints, or appear to do so, or that he should forsake sinners utterly, but that he should forsake his only Son. Then, again, we might with great propriety throw the whole force of the verse upon the particle of interrogation, "Why." "My God, my God, *why*, ah! why hast thou forsaken me? What is thy reason? What thy motive? What compels thee to this, thou Lord of love? The sun is eclipsed, but why is the Son of thy love eclipsed? Thou hast taken away the lives of men for sin, but why takest thou away thy love, which is my life, from me who hath no sin? Why and wherefore actest thou thus?"

Now, as I have said, every word requires more emphasis than I can throw into it, and some part of the text would be quite sure to be left and not dealt with as it should be; therefore, we will not think of preaching upon it, but instead thereof we will sit down and commune with it.

You must know that the words of our text are not only the language of Christ, but they are the language of David. You who are acquainted with the Psalms know that the 22nd Psalm begins with just these words, so that David said what Jesus said; and I gather from this that many a child of God has had to say precisely what the Lord Jesus, the first-born of the family, uttered upon the cross. Now as God's children are brought into the same circumstances as Christ, and Christ is considered the exemplar, my object to-night will be simply this—not to expound the words, but to say to believers who come into a similar plight, Do as Jesus did. If you come into his condition, lift up your hearts to God, that you may act as he did in that condition. So we shall make the Saviour now not a study for our learning, but an example for reproduction. The first out of these points in which, I think, we should imitate him is this:—

I. UNDER DESERTION OF SOUL, THE LORD JESUS STILL TURNS TO GOD.

At that time when he uttered these words, God had left him to his enemies. No angel appeared to interpose and destroy the power of Roman or Jew. He seemed utterly given up. The people might mock at him, and they might put him to what pain they pleased; at the same time a sense of God's love to him as man was taken from him. The comfortable presence of God, which had all his life long sustained him, began to withdraw from him in the garden, and appeared to be quite gone when he was just in the article of death upon the cross; and meanwhile the waves of God's wrath on account of sin began to break over his spirit, and he was in the condition of a soul deserted by God. Now sometimes believers come into the same condition, not to the same extent, but in a measure. Yesterday they were full of joy, for the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, but to-day that sense of love is gone; they droop; they feel heavy. Now the temptation will be at such times for them to sit down and look into their own hearts; and if they do, they will grow more wretched every moment, until they will come well nigh to despair; for there is no comfort to be found within, when there is no light from above. Our signs and tokens within are like sundials. We can tell what is o'clock by the sundial when the sun shines, but if it does not what is the use of the sundial? And so marks of evidence may help us when God's love is shed abroad in the soul, but when that is done, marks of evidence stand us in very little stead. Now observe our Lord. He is deserted of God, but instead of looking in, and saying, "My soul, why art thou this? Why art thou that? Why art thou cast down? Why dost thou mourn?" he looks straight away from that dried-up well that is within, to those eternal waters that never can be stayed, and which are always full of refreshment. He cries, "My God." He knows which way to look, and I say to every Christian here, it is a temptation of

the devil, when you are desponding, and when you are not enjoying your religion as you did, to begin peering and searching about in the dunghill of your own corruptions, and stirring over all that you are feeling, and all you ought to feel, and all you do not feel, and all that. Instead of that look from within, look above, look to your God again, for the light will come there.

And you will notice that *our Lord did not at this time look to any of his friends*. In the beginning of his sufferings he appeared to seek consolation from his disciples, but he found them sleeping for sorrow; therefore, on this occasion he did not look to them in any measure. He had lost the light or God's countenance, but he does not look down in the darkness and say, "John, dear faithful John, art thou there? Hast thou not a word for him whose bosom was a pillow for thy head? Mother Mary, art thou there? Canst thou not say one soft word to thy dying son to let him know there is still a heart that does not forget him?" No, beloved; our Lord did not look to the creature. Man as he was, and we must regard him as such in uttering this cry, yet he does not look to friend or brother, helper or human arm. But though God be angry, as it were, yet he crieth, "My God." Oh! it is the only cry that befits a believer's lips. Even if God seems to forsake thee, keep on crying to him. Do not begin to look in a pet and a jealous humour to creatures, but still look to thy God. Depend upon it, he will come to thee sooner or later. He cannot fail thee. He must help thee. Like a child if its mother strike it, still if it be in pain it cries for its mother; it knows her love; it knows its deep need of her, and that she alone can supply its need. Oh! beloved, do the same. Is there one in this house who has lately lost his comforts, and Satan has said, "Don't pray"? Beloved, pray more than ever you did. If the devil says, "Why, God is angry; what is the use of praying to him?" he might have said the same to Christ—"Why dost thou pray to one who forsaketh thee?" But Christ did pray "My God" still, though he says, "Why dost thou forsake me?" Perhaps Satan tells you not to read the Bible again. It has not comforted you of late; the promises have not come to your soul. Dear brother, read and read more; read double as much as ever you did. Do not think that, because there is no light coming to you, the wisest way is to get away from the light. No; stay where the light is. And perhaps he even says to you, "Don't attend the house of God again; don't go to the communion table. Why, surely you won't wish to commune with God when he hides his face from you." I say the words of wisdom, for I speak according to the example of Christ; come still to your God in private and in public worship, and come still, dear brother, to the table of fellowship with Jesus, saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, for I have nowhere else to trust; and though he hide his face from me, yet will I cry after him, and my cry shall not be "My friends," but "My God"; and my eye shall not look to my soul, my friends, or my feelings, but I will look to my God. and even to him alone. That is the first lesson, not an easy one to learn, mark you—easier to hear than you will find it to practice. but "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." The second lesson is this—observe that:—

II. THOUGH UNDER A SENSE OF DESERTION, OUR MASTER DOES NOT RELAX HIS HOLD OF HIS GOD.

Observe it, "My God"—it is one hand he grips him with; "My God"—it is the other hand he grasps him with. Both united in the cry, "My God." He believes that God is still his God. He uses the possessive particle twice, "My God, my God."

Now it is easy to believe that God is ours when he smiles upon us, and when we have the sweet fellowship of his love in our hearts; but the point for faith to attend to, is to hold to God when he gives the hard words, when his providence frowns upon thee, and when even his Spirit seems to be withdrawn from thee. Oh! let go every thing, but let not go thy God. If the ship be tossed and ready to sink, and the tempest rages exceedingly, cast out the ingots, let the gold go, throw out the

wheat, as Paul's companions did. Let even necessities go, but oh! still hold to thy God; give not up thy God; say still, notwithstanding all, "In the teeth of all my feelings, doubts, and suspicions, I hold him yet; he is my God; I will not let him go."

You know that in the text our Lord calls God in the original his "strong one"—"Eli, Eli"—"my strong one, my mighty one." So let the Christian, when God turns away the brightness of his presence, still believe that all his strength lies in God, and that, moreover, God's power is on his side. Though it seemed to crush him, yet faith says, "It is a power that will not crush me. If he smite me, what will I do? I will lay hold upon his arm, and he will put strength in me. I will deal with God as Jacob did with the angel. If he wrestle with me, I will borrow strength from him, and I will wrestle still with him until I get the blessing from him." Beloved, we must neither let go God, nor let go our sense of his power to save us. We must hold to our possession of him, and hold to the belief that he is worth possessing, that he is God allsufficient, and that he is our God still.

Now I would like to put this personally to any tried child of God here. Are you going to let go your God because you have lost his smile? Then I ask you, Did you base your faith upon his smile? for if you did, you mistook the true ground of faith. The ground of a believer's confidence is not God's smile, but God's promise. It is not his temporary sunshine of his love, but his deep eternal love itself, as it reveals itself in the covenant and in the promises. Now the present smile of God may go, but God's promise does not go; and if you believe upon God's promise, that is just as true when God frowns as when he smiles. If you are resting upon the covenant, that covenant is as true in the dark as in the light. It stands as good when your soul is without a single gleam of consolation as when your heart is flooded with sacred bliss. Oh! Come then to this. The promise is as good as ever. Christ is the same as ever; his blood is as great a plea as ever; and the oath of God is as immutable as ever. We must get away from all building upon our apprehensions of God's love. It is the love itself we must build on—not on our enjoyment of his presence, but on his faithfulness and on his truth. Therefore, be not cast down, but still call him, "My God."

Moreover, I may put it to you, if, because God frowns, you give him up, what else do you mean to do? Why, is not it better to trust in an angry God than not to trust in God at all? Suppose thou leavest off the walk of faith, what wilt thou do? The carnal man never knew what faith was, and, therefore, gets on pretty fairly in his own blind, dead way; but you have been quickened and made alive, enlightened, and if you give up your faith, what is to become of you? Oh! hold to him then.

"For if shine eye oi faith be dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool bow the knee
And Israel's God thy strength shall be."
Don't give him up.

Moreover, if faith give up her God because he frowns, what sort of a faith was it? Canst thou not believe in a frowning God? What, hast thou a friend who did the other day but give thee a rough word, and thou saidst, "At one time I could die for that man," and because he gives you one rough word, are you going to give him up? Is this thy kindness to thy friends? Is this thy confidence in thy God? But how Job played the man! Did he turn against his God when he took away his comforts from him? No; he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord bath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." And do you not know how he put it best of all when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"? Yes, if thy faith be only a fair-weather faith, if thou canst only walk with God when he sandals thee in silver, and smooths the path beneath thy feet, what faith is this? Where

didst thou get it from? But the faith that can foot it with the Lord through Nebuchadnezzar's furnace of fire, and that can go walking with him through the valley of the shadow of death—this is the faith to be had and sought after, and God grant it to us, for that was the faith that was in the heart of Christ when forsaken of God. He yet says, "My God."

We have learnt two lessons. Now we have learnt them—(we have gone over them, but have we learnt them?)—may we practice them, and turn to God in ill times, and not relinquish our hold. The third lesson is this:—

III. ALTHOUGH OUR LORD UTTERED THIS DEEP AND BITTER CRY OF PAIN, YET LEARN FROM HIS SILENCE.

He never uttered a single syllable of murmuring, or brought any accusation against his God. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There! look at those words. Can you see any blots in them? I cannot. They are crystallised sorrow. but there is no defilement of sin. It was just (I was about to say) what an angel could have said, if he could have suffered; it is what the Son of God did say, who was purer than angels, when he was suffering. Listen to Job, and we must not condemn Job, for we should not have been half so good as he, I daresay; but he does let his spirit utter itself sometimes in bitterness. He curses the day of his birth and so on; but the Lord Jesus does not do that. There is not a syllable about "cursed be the day in which I was born in Bethlehem, and in which I came amongst such a rebellious race as this"—nor not a word, not a word. And even the best of men when in sorrow have at least wished that things were not just so. David, when he had lost Absalom, wished that he had died, instead of Absalom. But Christ does not appear to want things altered. He does not say, "Lord, this is a mistake. Would God I had died by the hands of Herod when he sought my life, or had perished when they tried to throw me down the hill of Capernaum." No; nothing of the kind. There is grief, but there is no complaining; there is sorrow, but there is no rebellion. Now this is the point, beloved, I want to bring to you. If you should suffer extremely, and it should ever come to that terrible pinch that even God's love and the enjoyment of it appears to be gone, put your finger to your lip and keep it there. "I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Believe that he is a good God still. Know that assuredly he is working for thy good, even now, and let not a syllable escape thee by way of murmuring, or if it does, repent of it and recall it. Thou hast a right to speak to God, but not to murmur against him, and if thou wouldst be like thy Lord, thou wouldst say just this, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" But thou wilt say no more, and there wilt thou leave him, and if there oome no answer to thy question thou wilt be content to be without an answer.

Now again, I say, this is a lesson I can teach, but I do not know if I can practice it, and I do not know that you can. Only, again, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," and he will enable us when we come to "lama sabachthani" to come so far, but not to go farther—to stop there with our Lord. The fourth lesson which, I think, we should learn is this:—

IV. OUR LORD, WHEN HE DOES CRY, CRIES WITH THE INQUIRING VOICE OF A LOVING CHILD.

"My God, *why*, ah! why hast thou forsaken me?" He asks a question not in curiosity, but in love. Loving, sorrowful complaints he brings. "Why, my God? Why? Why?" Now this is a lesson to us, because we ought to endeavour to find out why it is that God hides himself from us. No Christian ought to be content to live without full assurance of faith. No believer ought to be satisfied to live a moment without knowing to a certainty that Christ is his, and if he does not know it, and assurance is gone, what ought he to do? Why, he should never be content until he has gone to God

with the question, "Why have I not this assurance? Why have I not thy presence? Why is it that I cannot live once I did in the light of thy countenance" And, beloved, the answer to this question in our case will sometimes be, "I have forsaken thee, my child, because thou hast forsaken me. Thou hast grown cold of heart by slow degrees; grey hairs have come upon thee, and thou didst not know; and I have made thee know it to make thee see thy backsliding, and sorrowfully repent of it." Sometimes the answer will be, "My child, I have forsaken thee because thou hast set up an idol in thy heart. Thou lovest thy child too much, thy gold too much, thy trade too much; and I cannot come into thy soul unless I am thy Lord, thy love, thy bridegroom, and thy all." Oh! we shall be glad to know these answers, because the moment we know them our heart will say:—

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

Sometimes the Lord's answer will be, "My child, I have gone from thee for a little to try thee, to see if thou lovest me." A true lover will love on under frowns. It is only the superficial professor that wants sweetmeats every day, and only loves his God for what he gets out of him; but the genuine believer loves him when he smites him, when he bruises him with the bruises of a cruel one. Why, then we will say, "O God, if this is why thou dost forsake us, we will love thee still, and prove to thee that thy grace has made our souls to hunger and thirst for thee." Depend upon it, the best way to get away from trouble, or to get great help under it, is to run close in to God. In one of Quarles's poems he has the picture of a man striking another with a great nail. Now the further off the other is, the heavier it strikes him. So the man whom God is smiting runs close in, and he cannot be hurt at all. O my God, my God, when away from thee affliction stuns me, but I will close with thee, and then even my affliction I will take to be a cause of glory, and glory in tribulations also, so that thy blast shall not sorely wound my spirit.

Well, I leave this point with the very same remark I made before. To cry to God with the enquiry of a child is the fourth lesson of the text. Oh! learn it well. Do practice it when You are in trouble much. If you are in such a condition at this time, practice it now, and in the pew say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Now the fifth observation is one to be treasured up:—

V. THAT OUR LORD, THOUGH HE WAS FORSAKEN OF GOD, STILL PURSUED HIS FATHER'S WORK—the work he came to do. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But, mark you, he does not leave the cross; he does not unloose the nails as he might have done with a will; he did not leap down amidst the assembled mockers, and scorn them in return, and chase them far away. but he kept on bleeding, suffering, even until he could say, "It is finished," and he did not give up the ghost till it was finished. Now, beloved, I find it, and I daresay you do, a very easy and pleasant thing to go on serving God when I have got a full sense of his love, and Christ shining in my face, when every text brings joy to my heart, and when I see souls converted, and know that God is going with the Word to bless it. That is very easy, but to keep on serving God when you get nothing for it but blow—when there is no success, and when your own heart is in deep darkness of spirit—I know the temptation. Perhaps you are under it. Because you have not the joy you once had, you say, "I must give up preaching; I must give up that Sunday School. If I have not the light of God's countenance, how can I do it? I must give it up." Beloved, you must do no such thing. Suppose there were a loyal subject in a nation, and he had done something or other which grieved

the king, and the king on a certain day turned his face from him, do you think that loyal subject would go away and neglect his duty because the king frowned? No; methinks he would say to himself, "I do not know why the king seemed to deal hardly with me. He is a good king, and I know he is good, if he does not see any good in me, and I will work for him more than ever. I will prove to him that my loyalty does not depend upon his smiles. I am his loyal subject, and will stand to him still." What would you say to your child if you had to chasten him for doing wrong, if he were to go away and say, "I shall not attend to the errand that father has sent me upon, and I shall do no more in the house that father has commanded me to do, because father has beaten me this morning"? Ah! what a disobedient child! If the scourging had its fit effect upon him, he would say, "I will wrong thee no more, father, lest thou smite me again." So let it be with us.

Besides, should not our gratitude compel us to go on working for God? Has not he saved us from hell? Then we may say, with the old heathen, "Strike, so long as thou forgivest." Yes, if God forgives, he may strike if he will. Suppose a judge should forgive a malefactor condemned to die, but he should say to him, "Though you are not to be executed as you deserve, yet, for all that, you must be put in prison for some years," he would say, "Ah! my Lord, I will take this lesser chastisement, so long as my life is saved." And oh! if our God has saved us from going down to the pit by putting his own Son to death on our behalf, we will love him for that, if we never have anything more. If, between here and heaven, we should have to say, like the elder brother, "Thou never gayest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." we will love him still; and if he never does anything to us between here and glory, but lay us on a sick bed, and torture us there, yet still we will praise and bless him, for he has saved us from going down to the pit; therefore, we will love him as long as we live. Oh! if you think of God as you ought to do, you will not be at ups and downs with him, but you will serve him with all your heart, and soul, and might, whether you are enjoying the light of his countenance or not. Now to close. Our Lord is an example for us in one other matter. He is to us our type of what shall happen to us, for whereas he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?":—

VI. HE HAS RECEIVED A GLORIOUS ANSWER.

And so shall every man that, in the same spirit in the hour of darkness, asks the same question. Our Lord died. No answer had he got to the question, but the question went on ringing through earth, and heaven, and hell. Three days he slept in the grave, and after a while he went into heaven, and my imagination, I think, may be allowed if I say that as he entered there the echo of his words, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" just died away, and then the Father gave him the practical answer to the question; for there, all along the golden streets, stood white-robed bands, all of them singing their redeemer's praise, all of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb; and this was a part of the answer to his question. God had forsaken Christ that these chosen spirits might live through him; they were the reward for the travail of his soul; they were the answer to his question; and ever since then, between heaven and earth, there has been constant commerce. If your eyes were opened that you could see, you would perceive in the sky not falling stars, shooting downwards, but stars rising upward from England, many every hour from America, from all countries where the gospel is believed, and from heathen lands where the truth is preached and God is owned, for you would see every now and then down on earth a dying bed, but upwards through the skies, mounting among the stars, another spirit shot upward to complete the constellations of the glorified. And as these bright ones, all redeemed by his sufferings, enter heaven, they bring to Christ fresh answers to that question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" And if stooping from his throne in glory the Prince of life

takes view of the sons of men who are lingering here, even in this present assembly, he will see to-night a vast number of us met together around this table, I hope the most, if not all, of us redeemed by his blood and rejoicing in his salvation; and the Father points down to-night to this Tabernacle, and to thousands of similar scenes where believers cluster around the table of fellowship with their Lord, and he seems to say to the Saviour, "There is my answer to thy question, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'"

Now, beloved, we shall have an answer to our question something like that. When we get to heaven, perhaps not until then, God will tell us why he forsook us. When I tossed upon my bed three months ago in weary pain that robbed me of my night's rest, and my day's rest too, I asked why it was I was there, but I have realized since the reason, for God helped me afterwards so to preach that many souls were ingathered. Often you will find that God deserts you that he may be with you after a nobler sort—hides the light, that afterwards the light of seven suns at once may break in upon your spirit, and there you shall learn that it was for his glory that he left you, for his glory that he tried your faith. Only mind you stand to that. Still cry to him, and still call him God, and never complain, hut ask him why, and pursue his work still under all difficulties; so being like Christ on earth, you shall be like Christ above, as to the answer.

I cannot sit down without saying just this word. God will never forsake his people for ever. But as many of you as are not his people, if you have not believed in him, he will forsake you for ever, and for ever, and for ever; and if you ask, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" you will get, your answer in the echo of your words, "Thou hast forsaken me." "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"But if your ears refuse
 The language of his grace,
 And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
 That unbelieving race;
 The Lord in vengeance drest
 Shall lift his hand and swear,
 'You that despised my promised rest
 Shall have no portion there.'"

God grant it may never be so with you, for Christ's sake. Amen

Light at Evening Time

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."—Zechariah 14:6-7.

AS WE read the Scriptures, we are continually startled by fresh discoveries of the magnificence of God. Our attention is fixed upon a passage, and presently sparklets of fire and glory dart forth. It strikes us; we are struck by it. Hence these bright coruscations. Our admiration is excited. We could not have thought that so much light could possibly lie concealed within a few words. Our text thus reveals to us in a remarkable manner the penetration, the discernment, the clear-sightedness of God. To our weak vision the current of human affairs is like twilight. It is not altogether dark, for it is broken with some gleams of hope. Nor is it altogether bright, for heavy masses of darkness intervene. It is neither day nor night. There is a mingle-mangle of good and evil, a strange confused mixture, wherein the powers of darkness contend with the powers of light. But it is not so with God. With him, it is one clear day. What we think to be confusion, is order before his eye. Where we see advance and retrogression, he sees perpetual progress. We full often bemoan our circumstances as altogether disastrous, while God, who seeth the end from the beginning, is working out his ordained purpose. Our God maketh the clouds to be the dust of his feet, and the winds to be his chariot. He sees order in the tempest and the whirlwind. When the bosom of earth heaves with earthquake, he hears music in every throb and when earth and heaven seem mingled in one wild disorder and storm, his hand is in the midst of all, so marking, that every particle of matter should be obedient to his settled laws, and that all things should work together to produce one glorious result. "Things are not what they seem." Oh! how good it is for us to know that this world's history is not so black and bad as to our dim senses it would appear. God is writing it out, sometimes with a heavy pen; but when complete, it will read like one great poem, magnificent in its plan, and perfect in all its details. At the present hour there may be much in the condition of our country to cause anxiety or even to create alarm. And it is not hard to point certainly to many things that seem to augur no good. But there always were evil prophets. There always have been times and crises when dark portents favoured unwelcome predictions. But thus far the fury of every tempest has been mitigated; a sweet calm has followed each perilous swell of the ocean, and the good old ship has kept afloat England's flag—we fondly believe:—

"The flag that's braved a thousand years,

The battle and the breeze,"

will not be run down yet. We thank God that the history of our deliverances supplies us with fair omens of an ever-gracious Providence. Let us comfort ourselves with the belief that there is a future of peace and prosperity within her borders and of influence for good among the nations of

the world for Britain and British Christians. Then let each man brace up his sinews for the fight, and struggle for the right. Bright days are assuredly in store for those who lift the standard and unfurl the flag of righteousness and truth. "At evening time it shall be light." Even now it is "one day" which is known to the Lord.

As our time is brief, I mean to confine your attention to one clause of the text, "At evening time it shall be light." It seems to be a rule in God's dispensations that his light should break upon men gradually; and when it appears about to suffer an eclipse it will brighten up and shine with extraordinary lustre. "At evening time it shall be light." Of this mode of God's procedure we will take five illustrations.

I. LET REVELATION SUPPLY US WITH THE FIRST.

When God first revealed himself to the sons of men, he did not come to them in a blazing chariot of fire, manifesting all his glorious attributes. The sun in the Tropics, we are told, rises on a sudden. The inhabitants of those regions know none of our delightful twilight at dawn or evening, but the curtain rises and falls abruptly. This is not the way in which God has revealed himself to us by degrees, softly, slowly, he lifts the veil. Thus has God been pleased to make himself known. He took in his hand a flaming torch when the world was dark. Without a single ray of comfort, and he lit up the first star that ever shone over the wild waste of the world's wilderness. That star was the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In the light of that promise our first parents and their immediate descendants were cheered in their daily toil. Seth and Enoch walked with no other light that we know of but that. There is no record of any promise beside, which they had received from the Lord. By-and-bye, as years revolved, God lit up another star, and then another and another, till at last Holy Scripture became like our sky at midnight-studded all over with greater and lesser luminaries, all brightly manifesting the glory of God.

Still it was night. Though there was a little light, there was a prevalence of darkness. All through the Jewish dispensation, the sun did not shine. There was only cold, but beautiful in its season, silver moonlight. Heavenly truths were reflected in shadows; the substance was not visible. It was an economy of cloud and smoke, of type and symbol, but not of light and day of life, and immortality. For all the light that "o'er the dark her silver mantle threw," the saints of those times were glad and grateful; but how much more cause for joy and gratitude have we on whom the golden sun has shone! Star after star had been lit up in the heavens by the inspiration of Moses, and Samuel, and David, and all the prophets, till dark and deep the night began to fall, till sable clouds gathered dense with direful auguries. and at length a wild tempest was heard thundering in the sky. Isaiah had completed the long roll of his prophecy; Jeremiah had uttered all his lamentations. The eagle wing of Ezekiel soared no longer. Daniel had recorded his visions and entered into rest. Zechariah and Haggai had fulfilled their mission, and at last Malachi, foreseeing the day that should burn as an oven, and beyond it the day when the Sun of righteousness should arise with healing in his wings, closed that volume of testimony. That was midnight. The stars seemed to be dying out, like as withered fig-leaves fall from the tree. There was no open vision; the Word of God was scarce; there was a famine of the bread of life in those days. And what then? Why, you all know. At evening time it was light. He who had long been promised suddenly came into his temple, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. The world's darkest hour had come, when there was born in Bethlehem, of the house of David, Jesus, the King, of the Jews, and the Saviour of men. Then the day dawned, and the day-spring from on high visited us, precisely at that darkest hour, when men said, "God has forsaken the world, and left it to pine away in everlasting gloom".

Let that serve for a first illustration of light at evening time, notable as a fact, and worthy to be recollected. This, too, is precisely the way in which God acts:—

II. IN THE CONVERSION OF INDIVIDUALS.

God's laws on a great scale are always the same as his laws on little scale. A pretty little rhyme, that many of you are familiar with, endorses this statement.

"The very law that moulds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source
That law preserves the world a sphere,
And guides the planets in their course."

The same law which controls a planet affects a grain of dust. As God caused revelation to arise gradually, and, growing clearer and clearer, to become clearest when it seemed about to expire, so in the experience of each individual, the dawn precedes the day. When the light of divine grace first visits a man, it shines with feeble beam. Man by nature is, like a house shut up, the windows of which are all boarded over. Grace does not open every window jet once and bid the sun stream in upon weak eyes accustomed to darkness. It rather takes down a part of a shutter at a time, removes some obstruction, and so lets in, through chinks, a little light, that one may be able to bear it by degrees. The window of man's soul is so thickly encrusted with dirt, so thoroughly begrimed, that no light at all can penetrate it, till one layer is taken off, and a little yellow light is seen; and then another is removed, and then another, still admitting more light, and clearer. Was it not so with you who are now walking in the light of God's countenance, Did not your light come to you by little and little? Your experience, I know, confirms my statement, and as the light came, and you discovered your sin, and began to see the suitability of Christ to meet your case, you hoped that all was going on well. Then peradventure, on a sudden, the light seemed altogether to depart. You were cast into the thick darkness into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and you said, "Oh! now my lamp is put out for ever! I am cast out from God's presence! I am doomed beyond the hope of mercy! I shall be lost for ever and ever!" Well now, Christian, ask yourself what came of this? When you were thus broken, sore broken in the place of dragons, and your soul suffered the wreck of all its carnal confidence, what then? At that evening time the light shone clearer with you than it had ever before. When darkness veiled your mind, you looked to Christ, and were lightened with the true light. Despairing of yourself, you cast yourself into the arms of Christ, and you had that peace of God which passeth all understanding, and still keeps your heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

May be I am addressing some who have been for a long while the subjects of such humbling influences, breaking them down. You had hoped things were going pretty fairly with you, and you trusted that at the last you would come out into clear sunshine. But oh! how disappointed you feel! You never felt so wicked, never knew that you were so desperately rebellious. Your heart is hard and stubborn; you feel as if there was a mutiny in your breast. "Surely," you say, "such an one as I am never can be saved; it is a hopeless case." Oh! my brother, very hopeful to our view is that which appears so hopeless to you.

"Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."

Are you emptied of all merit, goodness, and hope in yourselves? Then your redemption draweth nigh. When you are cleared out and turned upside down, then eternal mercy greets you. Trust Christ. If you cannot swim, give yourselves up to the stream, and you shall float. If you cannot stand, give yourselves up to him, and he will bear you as on eagles' wings. Give up *yourself*. There, let it die; it is the worst enemy you ever had. Though you relied upon it, it has been a delusion and a snare to you. Now, therefore, throw the whole weight and burden of your life of sin and folly upon Jesus' Christ, the Sin-bearer, and this shall be the time of your deliverance, so the darkest hour you ever knew shall give place to the brightest you have ever experienced. You shall go your way rejoicing, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. A third illustration may be found in:—

III. THE DELIVERANCES WHICH A COVENANT GOD WORKS FOR AN AFFLICTED PEOPLE

The same rule which we have already observed will hold good here—at evening time it shall be light. No child of God can be very long without trouble of some kind or other, for sure it is that the road to heaven will always be rough. Some visionaries have been talking of making a railroad to the city. With this view, they would fill up the Slough of Despond, run a tramway right through the middle of it, and construct a tunnel through the hill Difficulty. I would not advise any of you to be shareholders in the company, for it will never answer. It will bring thousands to the river of Death, and swamp them there, but at the gates of the Celestial City not a passenger will ever arrive by that route. There is a pilgrimage, and a weary pilgrimage too, which must be taken before you can obtain entrance into those gates. Still, in all their trials, God's people always find it true that at evening time it shall be light. Are you suffering from temporal troubles. You cannot expect to be without these. They are hard to bear. This, however, should cheer you, that God is as much engaged to succour and support you in your temporal, as he is in your spiritual interests. Beloved, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Not a sparrow falls on the ground without your Father knowing it. Well, now, taking quite a *material view of the question*, you are of more value than many sparrows. You may be very poor, yet be very, very dear to your Father in heaven. Your poverty may reduce you to the utmost pinch, but that will be the time of your sweetest relief. The widow woman at the gates of Zarepta could hardly have been more wretched than when she had gone out to gather a few sticks—she says two—enough, I suppose, to cook the handful of meal and the few drops of oil, with which to make the last morsel for herself and for her son. Ay, poor soul! At that very moment the prophet of God came in—not while there was much meal or much oil, but just as they were all spent. He came to tell her that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain, and famine ceased in the land. God's people in Egypt were not brought out until the rigour of their bondage had become too bitter to bear. When it was intolerable, the Lord redeemed them with a strong arm and a high hand. You may, my dear hearer, be so tried that you think nobody ever had such a trial. Well, then, your faith may look out for such a deliverance as nobody else ever experienced. If you have an excess of grief, you shall have the more abundant relief. If you have been alone in sorrow, you shall, by-and-bye, have a joy unspeakable, with which no stranger can intermeddle. You shall lead the song of praise, as chief musicians, whose wailings were most bitter in the abodes of woe. Do cast your burden on God. Let me beseech those of you who love him, not to be shy of him. Disclose to him your temporal griefs. For you, young people, you remember I have just prayed that you might early in life learn to cast your burden upon God. Your trials and troubles, while you are at home under your father's roof, are not so heavy as those that will come when you begin to shift for yourselves. Still, you may think them heavier, because

your older friends make light of them. Well, while you yet remain at the home of your childhood, acquire the habit of carrying your daily troubles and griefs to God. Whisper them into your Heavenly Father's ear, and he will help you. And why should you men of business try to weather the storm without your God? 'Tis well to have *industry*, *shrewdness*, and what is called *self-reliance*—a disposition to meet difficulties with determination, not with despondency:—

"To take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them."

Still, the only safe, the only happy course for merchant or tradesman is to commit his way unto God, with a simple, child-like faith, taking counsel at the Scriptures, and seeking guidance in prayer. You will find it to be a blessed way of passing through the ordinary routine of daily anxieties, and the extraordinary pressure of occasional alarms and panics, if you can but realise your sacred privileges as disciples of Christ in the midst of all your secular duties.

Or are our trials of a *spiritual character*? Here full often our trials abound, and here, too, we may expect that at evening time it shall be light. Perhaps some of you pursue the road to heaven with very few soul-conflicts. Certainly there are some who do not often get through a week without being troubled on every side—fighting without, and fears within. Ah! brethren, when some of you tell me of your doubts and fears, I can well sympathise with you, if I cannot succour you. Is there anywhere a soul more vexed with doubts, and fears, and soul-conflicts than mine? I know not one. With heights of joy in serving my Master, I am happily familiar, but into very depths of despair—such an inward sinking as I cannot describe—I have likewise sunk. A more frequent, or a more fearful wretchedness of heart than I have suffered it is not likely any of you ever felt. Yet do I know that my Redeemer liveth, that the battle is sure, that the victory is safe. If my testimony be worth aught, I have always found that when I am most distressed about circumstances that I cannot control, when my hope seems to flicker where it ought to flare, when the worthlessness and wretchedness of my nature obscure the evident of any goodness and virtue imparted to me or wrought in me, just then it is that a sweet spring of cool consolation bubbles up to quench my thirst, and a sweet voice greets my ear, "It is I; be not afraid". My witness is for the Master, that, though he may leave us for a little, it is not for long. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy have I gathered thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting mercy will I have pity upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. "Oh! believer, stay yourself upon God when you have nothing else to stay upon. Do not rely upon appearances; above all, do not listen to the suggestions of a murmuring, hardened spirit; do not credit the insinuations of the infernal fiend who, when he finds you downhearted, be it from sickness of body or anxiety of mind, is sure then to whisper some disparaging thoughts of God. What though the suggestion strikes your heart that the Lord has forsaken you, that your sins cannot be forgiven, that you will fall by the hand of the enemy, hurl it back. You know whence it came. Depend upon it, though heaven and earth go to wreck, God's promise will stand. Should hell break loose, and demons innumerable invade this earth, they shall not go one inch beyond their tether. The chain that God has cast about them shall restrain them. Not an heir of heaven shall be left to the clutch of the destroyer. Nay, his head shall not lose a hair without divine permission. You shall come out of the furnace with not a smell of fire upon you. And being so eminently preserved, in such imminent peril, your salvation shall constrain you to bless God on earth, and bless him to all eternity, with the deepest self-humiliation and the highest strains of gratitude and adoration. So, then, both in our temporal and spiritual concerns, at evening time, when the worst has come to the worst, it shall be light. When the tide

has ebbed out the farthest, it will begin to flow in. When the winter has advanced to the shortest day, we shall then begin to return to spring. Be assured that it is so, it has been so, and it shall be so. To the very end of your days you may look for light at evening time. And now may I not appeal for a fourth illustration of the same truth to some of our friends who have come to:—

IV. THE EVENING TIME OF HUMAN LIFE?

This is often a delightful time, when the shadows are drawn out, and the air is still, and there is a season of preparation for the last undressing, and of anticipation for the appearing before the King in his beauty. I envy some of our brethren, the more advanced saints. Although old age brings its infirmities and its sorrows, yet they have found that brings with it the mellow joys of a matured experience, and a near prospect of the coming glory so near, so very near to their actual realisation. John Bunyan's picture of the Land Beulah was no dream, though he calls it so. Some of our aged brethren and sisters have come to a place of very peaceful repose, where they do hear the songs of angels from the other side of the stream, and the bundles of myrrh from the mountains of Bethen they bear in their bosoms. I know you find, my dear friends, that at evening time it is light to you, very light. You were called by grace when you were young. Bright was your day-dawn; a precious dew from the Lord fell upon you in the morning. You have borne the burden and heat of the day. You feel like a child that has grown tired. You are ready to say, "Let us go to sleep, mother; let us go to sleep." But meanwhile, before you close your eyes you are conscious of such divine refreshment, of such love and such joy shed abroad in your hearts, that you find the last stage of the journey to be blessed indeed, waiting and watching for the trumpet-call that shall bid you come up higher. Your light is brighter now than ever it was before. When you come at length to depart, though it will be "evening time" in very truth, it will be "light." You have watched the sun go down sometimes. How glorious he is at his setting! He looks twice as large as he did when he was high up in the sky, and if the clouds gather round him, how he tints them all with glory! Is there anything in all the world so magnificent as the setting sun, when all the colours of heaven seem poured out upon earth's sky? It does not fill you with gloom, for it is so radiant with glory. Such, now, shall your dying bed be. To those who watch you, you shall be an object of more sacred interest than ever you were before. If there be some pains that distress you, and some temptations that harass you, they shall be but the clouds which your Master's grace and your Saviour's presence shall gild with splendour. Oh! how light, how very light, it has been at evening time with some of our beloved friends! We have envied them as we have beheld the brightness gleaming from their brows in their last expiring moments. Oh! their songs! You cannot sing like them. Oh! their notes of ecstasy! You cannot understand the bliss unspeakable, as though the spray of the waves of heaven dashed into their faces, as though the light of the unclouded land had begun to stream upon their visage, and they were transfigured upon their Tabor before they passed into their rest!

Never fear dying, beloved. Dying is the last, but the least, matter that a Christian has to be anxious about. Fear living—that is a hard battle to fight; a stern discipline to endure; a rough voyage to undergo. You may well invoke God's omnipotence to your aid. But to die, that is to end the strife, to finish your course, to enter the calm heaven. Your Captain, your Leader, your Pilot is with you. One moment, and it is over: "A gentle wafting to immortal life." It is the lingering pulse of life that makes the pains and groans. Death ends them all. What a light, oh! what a transparent light it must be when the spirit immediately passes through the veil into the glory-land! In vain the fancy strives to paint the vision of angels and of disembodied spirits, and, above all, the brightness of the glory of Christ the Lamb in the midst of the throne! Oh! the joy of that first bowing before the Mercy-seat!

Oh! the rapture of that first casting the crown at his feet who loved us and redeemed us! Oh! the transport of that first folding in Immanuel's bosom, that first kiss with the kisses of his mouth, face to face! Do you not long for it? May you not say, "drop rapidly, ye sands of time! Fly round, ye axles of the running years, and let his chariot come, or let our soul soon pass, and leave her mortal frame behind, to be for ever with the Lord!" Yes, "at evening time it shall be light." Turning now from these personal reflections, we seek our last illustration in the mysterious unfolding of destiny, for it is our firm belief that:—

V. IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AT LARGE this saying shall be verified, and it shall come to pass that "at evening time it shall be light."

Darkness has prevailed for a long time, nor does the prospect grow much brighter at present. The noble enterprise of our great missionary societies is not altogether unrequited. The prayers and efforts of a long succession of godly men are not to be accounted vain and fruitless, but we commonly feel more cause to lament than to exult. How little is the world lit up with the light of God yet! Are there more saved souls in the world now than there were a hundred years after Christ's death? I do not know that there are. A greater surface is covered with the profession of Christianity now, but at that time the light was bright where it did shine. I am afraid to say what I think of the gloom that is hanging in thick folds of cloud and scud, over the nations of the earth. Still the oracle cheers my heart, "At evening time it shall be light." Some men prophesy that it will not be so. Long ages of delay make them grow impatient. This impatience provokes questioning. Those questions invariably tend to unbelief. But who shall make void the promises of God? Are not nations to be born in a day? Will the wild Arab never bow before the King of Zion? Shall not Ethiopia stretch out her arms to God? As children of the day, doth it not behove us to walk in the light of the Lord? Divine testimony has more weight with us than the conjectures of benighted men! Christ has bought this world, and he will have it in possession from the river even to the ends of the earth. He has redeemed it, and he will claim it for his own. You may rest assured that whatever is contained in the scroll of prophecy shall be fulfilled according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Notwithstanding any difficulties you may have in interpreting the seals or the trumpets of the Apocalypse, You have no room to doubt that Jesus Christ will be acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords over this whole world, and that in every corner and nook of it his name will be famous. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Do not be troubled by seers or soothsayers. Rest patiently. "Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." As for you, your business is to work for the spreading of his kingdom, to be continually scattering the light you have, and praying for more, to be waiting upon God for more of the tongue of fire, for more of the baptism of the Eternal Spirit, for more vital quickening power. When the whole Church shall be wakened up to a spirit of earnestness and enterprise, the conversion of this world will be speedily accomplished; the idols will then be cast to the moles and the bats; anti-Christ shall sink like a millstone in the flood, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Talking but the other day upon missionary affairs with one who understands them well, he said, "Sir, we have enough missionaries in India now, of all sorts, for the evangelisation of India, if no more were sent out, provided that they were the right men." Oh! God, call, qualify, send for the right men; baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and make them fit instruments to do,

to dare, to die, but withal to conquer. Bethink you, brethren, how, when Christ began with twelve men, he shook the earth, and now that Christians are numbered by tens of thousands, do ye tell me that the glory of God is not to be revealed, and the conquest of the world is not to be completed? I am afraid the Church is getting downhearted. She holds her banner low; she marches to the fight with bated breath and tremulous spirit. She will never win thus with craven heart. Oh! that she had more faith in her God! Then would she be "clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." If she would expect great things, she would see great things. Nations would be born in a day if we believed it and myriads would flock, like doves, to their windows if we did but look for it, work for it, and bless God for such a measure of encouragement as we have. "At evening time it shall be light." Accept this as a prophecy. Believe it on the highest warranty. Hope for it with the liveliest anticipation. So may ye live to see it. And unto God shall be the praise, world without end. Amen.

*"Reference is made here to a circumstance which caused the English public some passing anxiety; but a few days sufficed to disperse the cloud, and in a few months it was obliterated from people's memory."

Coming to Christ

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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"To whom coming."—1 Peter 2:4.

IN THESE three words you have, first of all, *a blessed person mentioned*, under the pronoun "whom"—"To whom coming." In the way of salvation we come alone to Jesus Christ. All comings to baptism, comings to confirmation, comings to sacrament are all null and void unless we come to Jesus Christ. That which saves the soul is not coming to a human priest, nor even attending the assemblies of God's saints; it is coming to Jesus Christ, the great exalted Saviour, once slain, but now enthroned in glory. You must get to him, or else you have virtually nothing upon which your soul can rely. "To whom coming." Peter speaks of all the saints as *coming to Jesus*, coming to him as unto a living stone, and being built upon him, and no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, and if any man say that coming anywhere but to Christ can bring salvation, he hath denied the faith and utterly departed from it. The coming mentioned in the text is a word which is sometimes explained in Scripture by hearing, at other times by trusting or believing, and quite as frequently by looking. "To whom coming." Coming to Christ does not mean coming with any natural motion of the body, for he is in heaven, and we cannot climb up to the place where he is; but it is a mental coming, a spiritual coming; it is, in one word, a trusting in and upon him. He who believes Jesus Christ to be God, and to be the appointed atonement for sin, and relies upon him as such, has come to him, and it is this coming which saves the soul. Whoever the wide world over has relied upon Jesus Christ, and is still relying upon him for the pardon of his iniquities, and for his complete salvation, is saved.

Notice one thing more in these three words, that *the participle is in the present*. "To whom coming," not "To whom having come," though I trust many of us have come, but the way of salvation is not to come to Christ and then forget it, but to continue coming, to be always coming. It is the very spirit of the believer to be always relying upon Christ, as much after a life of holiness as when he first commenced that life; as much when he has been blessed with much spiritual nearness of access to God, and a holy, heavenly frame of mind; as much then, I say, as when, a poor trembling penitent, he said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." To Christ we are to be, always coming; upon him always relying, to his precious blood always looking.

So I shall take the text, then, this evening thus:—These three words describe *our first salvation*, describe *the life of the Christian*, and then describe *his departure*, for what even is that but to be still coming to Christ, to be in his embrace for ever? First, then, these three words describe, and very accurately too:—

I. THE FIRST SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER.

It is coming to Christ. I shall not try to speak the experience of many present; I know if it were necessary you could rise and give your "Yea, yes" to it. In describing the work of grace at the first, I may say that *it was indeed a very simple thing for us to come to Christ*, but simple as it was, some of us were very long in finding it out. The simplest thing in all the world is just to look to Jesus and live, to drink of the life-giving stream, and find our thirst for ever assuaged. But though it is so plain that he who runs may read, and a man needs scarce any wit to comprehend the gospel, yet we went hither and thither, and searched for years before we discovered the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Most of us were like Penelope, who spun by day, and then unwound her work at night. It was even so we did. We thought we were getting up a little. We had some evidence. We said, "Yes, we are in a better state; are shall yet be saved." But ere long the night of sorrow came in. We had a sight of our own sinfulness, and what we had spun, I say, by day, we unwound again quite as quickly by night. Well, there are some of you much in the same way now. You are like a foolish builder who should build a wall, and then should begin to knock down all the stones at once. You build, and then pull down. Or, like the gardener who, having put into the ground his seeds and planted his flowers, is not satisfied with them, and thinks he will have something else, and so tries again. Ah! the methods and the shifts we will be at to try and save ourselves, while, after all, Christ has done it all. We will do anything rather than be saved by Christ's charity. We do not like to bow our necks to take the mercy of God, as poor undeserving sinners. Some will attend their church or their chapel with wonderful regularity, and think that that will ease their conscience, and when they get no ease of conscience from that, then they will! try sacraments, and when no salvation comes from them, then there will be good works, Popish ceremonies, and I know not what besides. All sorts of doings, good, bad, and indifferent, men will take to, if they may but have a finger in their own salvation, while all the while the blessed Saviour stands by, ready to save them altogether if they will but be quiet and take the salvation he has wrought. All attempts to save ourselves by our own works are but a base bargaining with God for eternal life, but he will never give eternal life at a price, nor sell it, for all that man could bring, though in each hand he should hold a star; he will give it freely to those who want it. He will dispense it without money and without price to all who come and ask for it, and, hungering and thirsting, are ready to receive it as his free gift, but:—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord,"

by bringing in anything that he can do as a Around of dependence, and putting that in the place of the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I said, dear friends, that it was very simple, and indeed it is so, a very simple thing to trust Jesus and be saved, but it cost some of us many a day to find it out. Shall I just mention some of the ways in which persons are, long before they find it out. Some ask, "What is the best way to act faith? What is the best way to get this precious believing that I hear so much spoken of?" Now the question reminds me of a madman who, standing at a table which is well spread, says to a person standing there, "Tell me what is the best way to eat. What is the philosophy of eating?" "Why," the man replies, "I cannot be long about that; I need not write a long treatise on it: the best way I know of is to eat." And when people say, "What is the best way to get faith?" I say, "Believe." "But what is the best way to believe?" Why, believe. I can tell you nothing else. Some may say to you, "Pray for faith." Well, but how can you pray without faith? Or if they tell you to read, or do, or feel, in order to get faith, that is a roundabout way. I find not such exhortations as these put down as the gospel, but our Master, when he went to heaven, bade us go into all the world and preach the gospel

to every creature; and what was that gospel to me? His own words are, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and we cannot say anything clearer than that. "Believe"—that is, trust—"and be baptized," and these two things are put before you as Christ's ordained way of salvation. Now you want to philosophise, do you? Well, but why should a hungry man philosophise about the bread that is before him? Eat, sir, and philosophise afterwards. Believe in Jesus Christ, and when you get the joy and peace which faith in him will be sure to bring, then philosophise as you will.

But some are asking the question, "How shall I make myself fit to be saved?" That is similar to, a man who, being very black and filthy, coming home from a coal mine or from a forge, says, seeing the bath before him: "How shall I make myself fit to be"? You tell him at once that there cannot be any fitness for washing, except filthiness, which is the reverse of a fitness. So there can be no fitness for believing in Christ, except sinfulness, which is, indeed, the reverse of fitness. If you are hungry, you are fit to eat; if you are thirsty, you are fit to drink; if you are naked, you are fitted to receive the garments which charity is giving to those who need them; if you are a sinner, you are fitted for Christ, and Christ for you; if you are guilty, you are fitted to be pardoned; if you are lost, you are fitted to be saved. This, is all the fitness Christ requireth, and cast every other thought of fitness far hence; yea, cast it to the winds. If thou be needy, Christ is ready to enrich thee. If thou wilt come and confess thine offences before God, the gracious Saviour is willing to pardon thee just as thou art. There is no other fitness wanted.

But then, if you have answered that, some will begin to say, "Yes, but the way of salvation is coming to Christ and I am afraid I do not come in the right way." Dear, dear, how unwise we are in the matter of salvation! We are much more foolish than little children are in common, everyday life. A mother says to her little child, "Come here, my dear, and I will give you this apple." Now I will tell you what the first thought of the child is about; it is about the apple; and the second thought off the child is about its mother; and the very last thought he has is about the way of coming. His mother told him to come, and he does not say, "Well, but I do not know whether I shall come right." He totters along as best he can, and that does not seem to occupy his thoughts at all. But when you say to a sinner, "Come to Christ, and you shall have eternal life," he thinks about nothing but his coming. He will not think about eternal life, nor yet about Jesus Christ, to whom he is bidden to come, but only about coming, when he need not think of that at all, but just do it—do what Jesus bids him—simply trust him." "What kind of coming is that," says John Bunyan, "which saves a soul?" and he answers, "Any coming in all the world if it does but come to Jesus." Some come running; at the very first sermon they hear they believe in him. Some come slowly; they are many years before they can trust him. Some come creeping; scarcely able to come, they have to be helped by others, but as long as they do but come, he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You may have come in the most awkward way in all the world, as that man did who was let down by ropes through the ceiling into the place where Jesus was, but Christ rejects no coming sinner, and you need not be looking to your coming, but looking to Christ. Look to him as God—he can save you; as the bleeding, dying Son of Man—he is willing to save you, and flat before his cross, with all your guilt upon you, cast yourself, and believe that he will save you. Trust him to do it, and he must save you, for that is his own word, and from it he cannot depart. Oh! cease, then, that care about the calling, and look to the Saviour.

We have met with others who have said, "I Well, I understand that, that if I trust in Christ, I shall be saved, but—but—but—I do not understand that passage in the Revelation: I cannot make out that great difficulty in Ezekiel; I am a great deal troubled about predestination and free will,

and I cannot believe that I shall be saved until I comprehend all this." Now, my dear friend, you are altogether on the wrong tack. When I was going from Cook's Haven to Heligoland to the North of Germany, I noticed when we were out at sea, far away from the sight of land, innumerable swarms of butterflies. I wondered whatever they could do there, and when I was at Heligoland I noticed that almost every wave that came up washed ashore large quantities of poor dead, drowned butterflies. Now do you know those butterflies were just like you? You want to go out on to the great sea of predestination, free will, and I do not know what. Now there is nothing for you there, and you have no more business there than the butterfly has out at sea. It will drown you. How much better for you just to come and fly to this Rose of Sharon—that is the thing for you. This Lily of the Valley—come and light here. There is something here for you, but out in that dread-sounding deep, without a bottom or a shore, you will be lost, seeking after the knowledge of difficulties, which God has hidden from man, and trying to pry into the thick darkness where God conceals truth which it were better not to reveal. Come you to Jesus. If you must have the knots untied, try to untie them after you get saved, but now your first business is with Jesus; your first business is coming unto him; for if you do not, your ruin is certain, and your destruction will be irretrievable. But I must not enlarge. Coming to Christ is very simple, yet how long it takes men to find it out!

Again, we, bear our witness to-night, that nothing but coming to Christ ever did give us any peace. In my own case I was distracted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted for some years, and I never could believe my sin forgiven or have any peace by day or night until I simply trusted Jesus, and from that time my peace has been like a river. I have rejoiced in the certainty of pardon, and sung with triumph in the Lord my God, and many of you are constantly doing the same, but until you looked to Christ, you had not any peace. You searched, and searched, and searched, but your search was fruitless until you looked into the five wounds of the expiring Saviour, and there you found life from the dead.

And once more, *when we did come to Christ, we came very tremblingly, but he did not cast us out.* We thought he never died for us, that he could not wash our sins away. We conceived that we were not of his elect; we dreamed that our prayers could only echo upon a brazen sky, and never bring us an answer. But still we came to Christ, because we dared not stop away. We were like a timid dove that is hunted by a hawk, and is afraid. We feared we should be destroyed, but he did not say to us, "You came to me tremblingly, and I will reject you." Nay, but into the bosom of his love he received us, and blotted out our sins. When we came to Jesus, we did not come bringing anything, but we came to him for everything. We came strictly empty-handed, and we got all we wanted in Christ. There is a piece of iron, and if it were to say, "Where am I to get the power from to cling to the loadstone?" the loadstone would say, "Let me get near you, and I will supply you with that." So we sometimes think, "How can I believe? How can I hope? How can I follow Christ?" Ay, but let Christ get near us, and he finds us with all that. We do not come to Christ to bring our repentance, but to get repentance. We do not come to him with a broken heart, but for a broken heart. We do not so much even come to him with faith, as come to him for faith.

"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

This is the first way of salvation—simply trusting and looking up to Christ for everything. But, then, we did trust. There is a difference between knowing about trust and trusting. By God's Holy

Spirit, we were not left merely to talk about faith, nor to think about it, but we did believe. If the Government were to announce that there would be ten thousand acres of land in New Zealand given to a settler, I can imagine two men believing it. One believes it and forgets it; the other believes it and takes his passage to go out and get the land. Now the first kind of faith saves nobody; but the second faith, the practical faith, is that which, for the sake of seeking Christ, gives up the sins of this life, the pleasures of it—I mean the wicked pleasures of it—gives up all confidence in everything else, and casts itself into the arms of the Saviour. There is the sea of divine love; he shall be saved who plunges boldly into it, and casts himself upon its waves, hoping to be upborne. Oh! my hearer, hast thou done this? If so, thou art certainly a saved one. If thou hast not, oh! may grace enable thee to do it ere yet that setting sun has hidden himself beneath the horizon. Hast thou known this before, that a simple trust in Christ will save thee? This is the one message of this inspired Volume. This is the gospel according to Paul, the one gospel which we preach continually. Try it, and if it save thee not, we will be bondsmen for God for thee. But it must save thee, for God is true, and cannot fail, and he has declared, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

Thus I have tried to explain as clearly as I can that coming to Jesus is the first business of salvation. Now, secondly, and with brevity. This is:—

II. A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Christian is always coming to Christ. He does not look upon faith as a matter of twenty years ago, and done with, but he comes today and he will come to-morrow. He will come to Jesus Christ afresh to-night before he goes to bed. We come to Jesus daily, for Christ is like the well outside the cottager's house. The man lets down the bucket and gets the cooling draught, but he goes again to-morrow, and he will have to go again at night if he is to leave a fresh supply. He must constantly go to the same place. Fishes do not live in the water they were in yesterday; they must be in it to-day. Men do not breathe the air which they breathed a week ago; they must have fresh air into the lungs moment by moment. Nobody thinks that he can be fed upon the fact that he did have a good meal six weeks ago; he has to eat continually. So "the just shall live by faith." We come to Jesus just as we came at first, and we say to him:—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

This is the daily and hourly life of the Christian.

But while we thus *come daily*, we *come more boldly than we used to do*. At first we came like cringing slaves; now we came as emancipated men. At first we came as strangers. Now we come as brethren. We still come to the cross, but it is not so much to find pardon for past sins, for these are forgiven, as to find fresh comfort from looking up to him who wrought out perfect righteousness for us.

We come, also, to Jesus Christ, *more closely than we used to do*. I hope, brethren and sisters, you can say that you are not at such a distance from Christ now as you once were. We ought to be always getting nearer to him. The old preachers used to illustrate nearness to Christ by the planets. They said there were Jupiter and Saturn far away, with very little light and very little heat from the

sun, and then they have their satellites, their rings, their moons, and their belts to make for that. Just so they said, with some Christians. They get worldly comforts—their moons, and their belts—but they have not got much of their Master; they have got enough to save them, but oh! such little light. But, said they, when you get to Mercury, there is a planet without moons. Why, the sun is its moon, and, therefore, what does it want with moons when it has the full blaze of the sun's light and heat continually pouring upon it? And what a nimble planet it is; how it spins along in its orbit, because it is near the sun! Oh! to be like that—not to be far away from Jesus Christ, even with all the comforts of this life, but to be near him, filled with life and sacred activity through the abundance of fellowship and communion with him. It is still coming, but it is coming after a nearer sort.

And I may say, too, that it is *coming of a dearer sort*, for there is more love in our coming now than there used to be. We did come at first, not so much loving Christ, as venturing to trust him, thinking him, perhaps, to be a hard Master; but now we know him to be the best of friends, the dearest of husbands. We come to his bosom, and we lean our heads upon it. We come in our private devotion; we tell him all our troubles; we unburden our hearts, and get his love shed abroad in our hearts in return, and we go away with a joy that makes our heart to leap within us and to bound like a young roe over the mountain-tops. Oh! happy is that man who gets right into the wounds of Jesus, and, with Thomas, cries, "My Lord and my God!" This is no, fanaticism, but a thing of sober, sound experience with some of us. We can rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh. It is still coming but it is coming after a dearer fashion.

Yet, mark you, it is *coming still to the same person*, coming still as poor humble ones to Christ. I have often told you, my dear brethren and sisters, that when you get a little above the ground, if it is only an inch, you get too high. When you begin to think that surely you are a saint, and that you have some good thing to trust to, that rotten stuff must all be pulled to pieces. Believe me, God will not let his people wear a rag of their own spinning; they must be clothed with Christ's righteousness from head to foot. The old heathen said he wrapped himself up in his integrity, but I should think he did not know what holes there were in it, or else he would have looked for something better. But we wrap ourselves in the righteousness of Christ, and there is not a cherub before the throne that wears a vestment so right royal as the poor sinner does when he wears the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Oh! child of God, always live upon your Lord. Hang upon him, as the pitcher hangs upon the nail. Lean on your Beloved; his arm will never weary of you. Stay yourselves upon him; wash in the precious fountain always; wear his righteousness continually; and be glad in the Lord, and your gladness need never fail while you simply and wholly lean upon him. And now, not to detain you longer, I come to the last point, upon which we will only say a word or two. The text is:—

III. A VERY CORRECT DESCRIPTION OF OUR DEPARTURE.

"To whom coming." We shall soon, very soon, quit this mortal frame. I hope you have learned to think of that without any kind of shudder. Can you not sing:—

"Ah! I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away;
But on my Lord relying
I hail the happy day."

What is there that we should wait here for? Those who have the most of this world's cods have found it paltry stuff. It perishes in the using. There is a satiety about it; it cannot satisfy the great heart of an immortal man. It is well for us that there is to be an end of this life, and especially for

us to whom that end is glowing with immortality. Well, the hour of death will be to us a coming to Christ, *a coming to sit upon his throne*. Did you ever think of that? "To him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne." Lord, Lord, we would be well content to, sit at thy feet. 'Twere all the heaven we would ask if we might but creep behind the door, or stand and be manual servants, or sit, like Mordecai, in the king's court.' No; but it must not be. We must sit on his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever. This is what death will bring you—a glorious participation in the royalties of your ascended Lord.

What is the next thing? "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." So that we, are to be going to Christ ere long *to behold his glory*, and what a sight that will be! Have you ever thought of that too? What must it be to behold his glory? Some of my brethren think that when they get to heaven they shall like to behold some of the works of God in nature and so on. I must confess myself more satisfied with the idea that I shall behold *his glory*, the glory of the Crucified, for it seems to me that no kind of heaven but that comes up to the description of the Apostle when he saith, "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But to see the stars, has entered into the heart of man, and to behold the works of God in nature, has been conceived of; but the joys we speak of are so spiritual that the Apostle says, "He has revealed them unto us by his Spirit," and this is what he has revealed, "That they may behold my glory." St. Augustine used to say there were two sights he would like to have seen—Rome in her splendour, and Paul preaching—the last the better sight of the two. But there is a third sight for which one might give up all, give up seeing Naples, or seeing anything, if we might but see the King his beauty. Why, even the distant glimpse which we catch of him through a glass or a telescope darkly ravishes the soul. Dr. Hawker was once waited upon by a friend, who asked him to go and see a naval review. He said, "No, thank you; I do not want to go." "You are a loyal man, doctor, and you would like to see the defences of your country." "Thank you, I do not wish to go." "But I have got a ticket for you, and you must go." "No," he said, "thank you," and after he had been pressed hard he said, "You have pressed me till I am ashamed, and now I must tell you—mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off, and I have not any taste now for all the pomps that this world could possibly show." And if such a distant sight of Jesus can do this, what must it be to behold his glory with what the old Scotch divines used to call "a face-to-face view"; when the veil is taken down, when the clouds are blown away, and you see him face to face? Oh! long-expected day begin, when we shall be to him coming to dwell with him.

Once more only. Recollect we shall come to Christ not only to behold his glory, *but to share in it*. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Whatever Christ shall be, his people shall be, in happiness, riches, and honour, and together they shall take their full share. The Church, his bride, shall sit on the same throne with him, and of all the splendours of that eternal triumph she will have her half, for Christ is no niggard to his imperial spouse, but she whom he chose before the world began, and bought with blood, and wrapped in his righteousness, and espoused to himself for ever, shall be a full partaker of all the gifts that he poses world without end. And this shall be, and this shall be, and this shall be for ever; for ever you shall be with Christ, for ever coming to him. When the miser's wealth has melted; when the honours of the conqueror have been blown away or consumed like chaff in the furnace; when sun and moon grow dim with age, and the hoary pillars of this earth begin to rock and reel with stern decay; when the angel shall have put one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and shall have sworn by him that liveth that time shall be no

more; when the ocean shall be licked up with tongues of fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up—then, then shall you be for ever with the Lord, eternally resting, eternally feasting, eternally magnifying him; being filled with all his fulness to the utmost capacity of your enlarged being, world without end.

So God grant it to us, that we may come to Christ now, that we may continue to come to Christ, that we may come to Christ then, lest rejecting him to-night we should be rejecting him for ever; lest refusing to trust him, we should be driven from his presence to abide in misery for ever! May we come now, for Christ's sake.

The Fainting Soul Revived

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord."—Jonah 2:7.

WHEN man was first made, there was no fear of his forgetting God for it was his highest privilege and delight to have communion with his Maker. "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day," and Adam was privileged to hold fellowship with God, closer, perhaps, than even the angels had in heaven. But the spell of that sacred harmony was rudely broken by man's disobedience and his dreadful fall. Ever since our first parent tasted of the forbidden fruit, which brought death into our world, and all its train of woes, his mortal race has been naturally prone to forget God. The evil propensities of flesh and blood have made it impossible to persuade man to remember his Creator. The complaint of God against the Jews is true as an indictment against the whole human family. "Hear, O heaven, and give ear. O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Man is foolish; he flies from the highest good. Man is wicked; he turns his back upon supreme holiness. Man is worldly: he forgets the kingdom of God and the world to come. Man is wilful; he follows his own vain imaginations, and, with head-strong rebellion, opposes himself to his God, that he may pursue his own wayward course, and gratify his wanton passions.

To convince a man of his error, to arrest him in his evil pursuits, to reclaim him to the paths of righteousness—this is seldom accomplished without dire trouble and deep affliction. Some men, it is true, are brought to God by gentle means; they are drawn by soft but mighty bonds; still, a much larger class of persons remains, upon whom these silken cords would exert no influence. They must not be handled softly, but must be dealt with heavily. The picklock will never open their hearts; there must be the crowbar, and even the battering ram, to give a furious cannonade. Some hearts can never be captured for God and for truth except by storm. Sword in hand, God's law must scale the ramparts. With thundering report, God's Word must dash down the walls of their confidence, and make breach after breach in the bastions of their pride, and even then they will fight it out, and never yield, until, driven to an awful extremity, they see that they must either yield at once, or else be lost for ever. It is with such persons that I now particularly want to deal. There are those who have forgotten God after having once known him, and they are not likely to be brought back without great trouble; and there are others who never did know God, and they never will enquire after him, unless they are driven to their wits' end by calamity, as when a great famine in the land where he dwelt compelled the prodigal for very lack of bread to seek his Father's house. So I have first to remonstrate:—

I. WITH THE BACKSLIDER.

Let me, however, before I go into the matter with you, describe a little more minutely the individuals I wish to address. There is no need to call out your names; it will suffice if we portray your character and describe your conduct. There are some of you who used to be members of Christian churches years ago, but you have gradually declined, and so reckless has your career at length become, that it is a wonder that you have not utterly perished in your sin. You seemed to run well on the outset, and for a time you held on in the way; but where are you now? Well, you happen at this present to be in God's house, and I do trust that God's own hour has come, when he will meet you and bring you back. What we have to say of Jonah, I do entreat you to apply to yourselves; if the cap seems to fit you, put it on and wear it, even though it should be a fool's cap: wear it till you are ashamed of yourselves, and are led to confess your folly before the God who is able to remove it, and to make you wise unto salvation.

Observe, dear friends, that though Jonah remembered the Lord, it was not till he got into the whale's belly, nor even then till his soul fainted within him. He did not remember the Lord all the time he was going down to Joppa to find a ship, nor yet when he got on board that ship. His Master had said to him, "Jonah, go to Nineveh," but Jonah was a strong-willed, head-strong fellow. Though a true servant of God, and a prophet, yet he fled from the presence of the Lord. To Nineveh, he resolved within himself, he would not go. He could foresee no honour to himself out of the journey, no increase of his own reputation, no deference that would come to him amongst those proud Assyrians, so, in direct defiance of the divine command, he set off to Joppa, to take a ship and to flee from God's presence. Into the ship he got, paid the fare, and went sallying down the sea to go to Tarshish; but all this while he never thought of God. Not unlikely in this assembly there may be a woman who used to be a member of a Christian church, but she married an ungodly man; after that there was no going to the house of God, much less anything like keeping up her church membership. The shop was kept open on Sunday, or there was a pleasure party to be entertained at home, or an excursion taken into the country. All this seemed very pleasant. The disquietude of conscience she might feel at first wore off as habit made it familiar, until, year after year, this woman, who once seemed to be a true servant of Christ, lives in carelessness and indifference, not to say profanity, with hardly any thoughts of God. Perhaps she has not quite given up prayer; she could not absolutely become an enemy of Christ, or entertain a dislike to his people. Still, God was forgotten. So long as the business prospered, the husband was in good health, and the world smiled, God was never thought of. Can I be mistaken in supposing that there is a man here who in his youth was a loud talker, a vehement professor of religion, and a companion of those that fear the Lord? But after a time there seemed to be a way of getting money rather faster than the ordinary methods of honest labour or simple merchandise; so he entered into, a speculation, which soon ate out the vitals of his piety. His new projects involved new companions; in their fellowship he stifled his old convictions, and, as he would not play the hypocrite, he ceased to make any profession at all. Perhaps months have passed since he has been in a place of worship; even now he would rather be unrecognised, for he has only come here because a friend from the country asked him company to me the place and to hear the preacher. Ah! my dear sir, it is strange indeed, if you be a child of God, that you could have walked so contrary to God as you have. Yet so did Jonah. Do I, then, hold up his case before your eyes to comfort you? Nay; but let me hope that you will apply the bitter rebuke to your own soul, and be led to do as Jonah did. All the while the ship sailed smoothly over the sea, Jonah forgot his God. You could not have distinguished him from the veriest heathen on board. He was just as bad as they were. Yet was there a spark of fire among the embers, which

God in due time fanned into a flame. Happy for you if this better part of his experience should tally with your own.

Such, too, was Jonah's blank forgetfulness, that he does not appear to have thought upon his God *all the while the storm raged*, the billows rolled, and the ship was tossed with tempest. The poor heathen sailors were all on their knees crying for mercy, but Jonah was asleep in the vessel, till the superstitious captain himself was amazed at his apathy: "What meanest thou, O sleeper; carest thou not that we all perish?" He went down and upbraided him, and asked him how it was that he could sleep while the passengers and crew were all crying. "Arise," said he, "and call upon thy God." He was stirred up to his danger and his duty, even by a heathen! Now maybe there are some here who have had a host of troubles. Is husband dead? Are you a lone woman with a family to provide for? Or are you a widower, looking on your children with pity, whom you once regarded with a homely pride? Possibly you may have another form of trial. Your business has gone to the bad; you expected to have realised large profits by it, but you encountered loss upon loss, till your little capital has been scattered. Still, all this while you have not thought about God. Mayhap that child after child has been taken from you, and yet you have not remembered God. Is it really so, that the Lord loves you, and, because he loves you, therefore chastens you? Mark my word, you will continue to suffer loss upon loss, till you have lost all you have and all you count dear, and you will be brought to death's door yourself, but he will save you at last. If you ever were his, he never will let you sink into hell; but, oh! it will be hard work for you to get to heaven. You will be saved, but it will be so as by fire. You will be saved as by the skin of your teeth—scarcely saved, and the way in which you are saved will be a most terrible one to you. Oh! friend, I wish you would turn while God is smiting you gently, for know of a certainty if rods will not do, he will come to scourges, and if the scourge will not do, he will take the knife, and if the knife will not do, he will take the sword, and you shall have to feel it, for, as sure as God is God, he will never lose his child, and he will cut that child, as it were, into pieces, but he will save his soul. He will undermine your constitution by disease, and make you toss upon the bed of anguish, but he will bring you back. Oh! that you had grace to come back by gentler means before these terrible actions are tried!

So, then, Jonah did not think of God all this time. Now at length the vessel begins to creak, and seems as if she must go to pieces. Then they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. He is about to be thrown into the sea. At that moment a pair of huge jaws open wide, shut again, and swallow him up. "Where am I now?" says Jonah, as he is taken down deep by the motions of this monstrous fish, till the weeds come into the fish and wrap about his head, and his life is only preserved by a miracle. Then, oh! then Jonah thinks upon his God. "When my soul fainted within me." Now why did his soul faint within him? Was it not because he thought, "Now I am in a hopeless case; I shall never come out of this; it is a wonder I am not drowned; it is a marvel I was not snapped in pieces by those huge jaws; what a hopeless case I am in! I will but linger a little while, then perish I must in this horrible prison of a whale's belly." I dare say he thought that never was man in such a plight before; never a person that was alive inside a fish; and how comfortless he must have felt with nothing but the cold deep round him. Instead of garments, weeds were wrapped about his head. How his heart throbbed, and his head ached, with no cheer, no light, no friendly voice, no succour, no help; faraway from dry land, out on the boundless deep, without a comrade to sympathise with his strange plight.

Now when a child of God goes astray, it is not at all unusual for God to bring him into just such a state as that, a condition in which he cannot help himself; forlorn and friendless, with no one that

can relieve or minister to him. This dreary thought will meanwhile ever haunt his mind, "I brought it all upon myself!" Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? Like a woman who has left her husband's house, deserted her home, and betrayed her kind and tender protector, what fruit can she expect to reap of her wickedness? When she is ready to starve, when the wind blows through her tattered raiment, when her face is swollen with weeping, and her soul is full of anguish, she has only herself to upbraid, as she cries, "I have brought this upon myself; would God I had never left my cheerful homestead, however humble the lodgings might have been; would God I had never deserted the husband who loved me, and spread his aegis over me, however roughly he sometimes spake! Oh! that I had been more scrupulously obedient, and less prone to discontent!" The afterthought of sin—I think they call it remorse. Thus it was that Jonah thought upon his God, when the shame of his transgressions overwhelmed him.

Oh! how merciful our God is to allow us to think about him, and turn to him when in so pitiable a plight! "Yes," said a tradesman once to a customer for whose favours he felt little cause to be grateful, "you come to me, I know why; you have been to every other shop in the town for the article you require, and you could not obtain it; and now you come back to me whom you had no good cause ever to leave, I shall not serve you." This is not how the Lord speaks to us. He does not resent our ingratitude. "My child, my poor child," says he, "though you have gone and spent your substance; though you have been feeding swine: though you are all black, and foul and filthy, yet you are my dear child still, and my heart yearns towards you." Without a word of rebuke, or even a taunting look, so soon as ever a poor sinner comes back to the Father's house, the Father's arms are round about his neck, and the kiss of pardon is pressed on his cheek. "I remember thee well," says he; "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities." Now if there be a backslider here—and I know there are several—I can only hope that God will bring you into Jonah's peril. You shall have no pity from me if he does; I will rather be thankful to God that he has brought you there, because I shall know then that he has some designs of love towards you. But when you get into the regions of despair, do as Jonah did—think upon your God. What, do any of you objects? Do you imagine that to think about God would make you worse? Well, think that you were once his child, and think again that he has found you out, and knows where you are. Jonah felt that God knew where he was, because he had sent the fish. God knows your whereabouts, my good woman; he knows what quarters you are now in, my fellow-sinner. Remember, too, that you are yet alive! what a wonder it is that you are still permitted to hear the voice which says, "Return, return; oh! backslider, return." God is immutable; he cannot change; his covenant is steadfast; he will not alter it. If he has loved you once, he loves you now. If I bought you, I will have you. Come back to him, then; he is your husband still. Return! return! he is your Father still—return! return! But, oh! my hearer, perhaps you have no pretensions to be a child of his! Perhaps you may have played the hypocrite and made a profession in your own strength. You turned back from the company of those who fear the Lord, because you never were truly converted. If it be so, let the mercy, which God shows to sinners, embolden you to cry to him. And may he break you to pieces now with the hammer of his Word. So may he save you, and so shall his praise be exceedingly great in your salvation.

Though I have tried thus to reach the backslider, it is likely enough that I have missed my mark, honest as my intention has been. Oh! it seems so dreadful that any of you should perish in your sins, who know the way of hope! Some of you were candled on the knees of piety. There are those now in heaven who look down upon you, and could they weep, you might feel their tears dropping

on your brow. You know very well that time was when the hope of a better world yielded you some kind of comfort and joy. You do not think, at any rate, that you were feigning piety then, but you did account yourself, a sinner. By the compassion of the Most High, by the love of God, I pray you stop! Do not drink the cup of devils after having drank the cup of the Lord, and give not that soul to damnation which once seemed to bid fair for salvation. Eternal life is too rich a prize to trifle with. May the Spirit of God do what I cannot. May he send home these things to the persons for whom they are intended.

And now we have, in the second place, to deal with the careless, the thoughtless, the profligate—with:—

II. THOSE WHO NEVER WERE AWAKENED—moral or immoral in the world's reckoning. Jonah did not remember God till his soul fainted within him; and the reckless sinner, as a rule, never does remember God till under the stress of law, or the distress of pain and penalty; *his* soul is ready to faint within him. Now I hope some of you will be brought to feel this faintness.

What kind of faintness do persons who are under the saved discipline of the Spirit of God generally feel?

There is faintness of *horror at their present condition*. I can imagine a person lying down on the edge of a cliff and falling asleep. On suddenly waking up, having moved during his sleep, he finds himself within an inch of the precipice, and looks down and sees, far beneath him, the jagged rocks and the boiling sea. How his nerves would quiver as he realized his position and his jeopardy! Many a sinner has thus opened his eyes to discern his terrible hazard. He has suddenly waked up to find that he is on the brink of eternal wrath, standing where an angry God is waving a dreadful sword, and certain to plunge it into his heart before long. Every unconverted person here is poisoning over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; he is hanging over the jaws of perdition by one rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping every moment. If a man does but apprehend this and feels it, I do not wonder that he faints.

Faintness, moreover, arises from *a dread of horrors yet to come*. Who can conceive the heart-sinking of those poor passengers on board that vessel which so lately foundered in the open sea, at the prospect of being swallowed up alive, and sinking they knew not whither! It would be no easy thing, one would think, to keep from fainting at a time when such a doom was imminent. So when God awakens the soul by the noise of the tempest, it looks out and sees the ocean of divine wrath about to engulf it. The cries of lost spirits appal it, and it says to itself, "I shall soon mingle with those shrieks; my voice will aid the wailings of their dolorous company ore long; I shall be driven from his presence with a fiery sword at my heels before many hours are over." Then the soul faints with alarm at the thought of judgment to come.

Faint, too, is the soul of the sinner through a sense of *weakness*. "I cannot do anything to avert the catastrophe" seems to be the leading idea of a person when he has fainted. Over the awakened sinner there comes this sense of weakness. When a sinner does not know himself, he thinks that being saved is the easiest thing in the world. He supposes that to come to Christ to get peace is a matter that can be done just as readily as one snaps his fingers. But when God begins to deal with him, he says, "I would believe, but I cannot"; and he cries out, "Oh! God, I find that faith is as impossible to me as keeping thy law, except thou help me!" Once he thought he could reform himself, and become as holy as an angel; but now he can do nothing, and he cries out for very faintness, "Oh! God, what a poor, helpless, shiftless creature I am!"

And then there will sometimes come over him faintness of such a kind as I must call *horrible*. Well do I remember when I was in that state! I thought I would give up prayer, because it seemed of no use to pray, and yet I could not help praying; I must pray, and yet I felt that I did not pray. I thought I would not go to hear the gospel any more; there was nothing in it for me, and yet there was a fascination about the preaching of the gospel that made me go and hear it. I heard that Christ was very gracious to sinners but I could not believe that he would be gracious to me. Little did it matter whether I heard a promise or a threatening. I liked the threatening best. Threatenings appeared to me to be just what I deserved, and they provoked some kind of emotion in my breast. But when I heard a promise I shuddered with a gloomy feeling that it was of no use to me; I felt condemned already. The pains of hell got hold upon me, so tortured was my soul with the forebodings of an endless doom. I heard, the other day, of a young minister becoming an infidel, and I prayed for him. What, think you, was the burden of my petition? I prayed *that God would make him feel the weight of his hand*; for I cannot imagine that a man who has once felt the weight of God's hand can ever afterwards doubt his being, his sovereignty, or his power. Believe me, brethren, there is such an unutterable anguish, as a man could not long endure without becoming absolutely insane, which God makes some people feel in order to crush their love of sin, to purge them of their self-righteousness, and bring them to a sense of their dependence on himself. Some men can never be brought in any other way. I may be addressing the patients I am describing. I sincerely hope I am. You are feeling God's hand. The whole weight of it rests upon you, and under it you are crushed, as a moth is crushed beneath one's finger. Now I have a message from God for you. When Jonah was in your case he remembered his God. Tell me, what sayest thou, poor heart—what sayest thou to remembering thy God?

The case I am going to describe is not exactly that of John Newton, but it is from his experience that I gather my picture. There is a young man with a very good father, a holy father. As the young man grows up he does not like his trade: he cannot bear it, no he says to his father, "While I succumb to your government I mean to have my own way; other people enjoy themselves, and so will I; and as I cannot do it under your roof. I will follow my fancy elsewhere." He goes to sea. When he is at sea he discovers that all is not quite to his taste; the work he has to do is very different from what he had been accustomed to; still, he doesn't flinch. At the first port he reaches he gives loose to his passions. "Ah!" says he, "this is a jolly life! This is far better than being at home with my father, and being kept tied to my mother's apron-strings all my days. I say a merry life is the thing to suit me, sir." He goes on board again, and wherever the vessel puts in, each port becomes an outlet for his vices. He is a rare boy to swear and drink, and when he comes back to England he has no words too bitter to utter against religion in general, and against his father's scruples of conscience in particular. It so happens that one day there comes on a dreadful storm. He has to take a long spell at the pumps, and when that is over he must begin to pump again, for the ship is ready to founder, and every man must keep hard at it hour after hour. There is a driving wind and a heavy tempest. At last they are told that nothing can save them; there are breakers ahead, and the vessel will be on shore! He lashes himself to the mast and floats about all night, and the next day, and the next, with faint hope of life. He has some twitches of conscience now; he cannot help thinking of his father and mother. However, he is not going to be broken down by a trifle. He has a hard heart, and he will not give way yet. He is crashed on shore, and finds himself among a barbarous people. He is taken care of by the barbarians; they give him food; albeit his meal is scant, and he is presently set to work as a slave. His master proves harsh to him, and his master's wife especially cruel. He

gets but little to eat, and he is often beaten. Still, he bears up, and hopes for better days. But, half-starved and hard worked, his bodily health and his mental energy are reduced to a low degree. No marvel that fever overtakes him. Who has he to nurse him? What friend to care for him? The people treat him as a dog, and take no notice of him. He can neither stir nor move. In vain he pines for a drop of water in the dead of the night; he feels that he must die of thirst. He lifts his voice, but there is nobody to hear him. To his piteous appeal there is no answer. Then it is he thinks, "Oh! God, if I might but get back to my father!" Then it is, when he is at the last extremity, that he thinks of home.

Now what did happen in the case of John Newton will happen, and has happened, in the case of many a sinner. He never would come back to God, but at last he felt that it was no use trying anywhere else. He was driven to utter desperation. In this dilemma his heart said, "Oh! that I might find the Lord." Hark, now: I will tell you a tale. A lot of sailors were going to sea. When about to start, the owner said, "There! I have bought a lifeboat; put it on board." They reply, "No, never! We don't believe in lifeboats; they are new-fangled things. We do not understand them, and we shall never use one." "Put it on board, and let it bide there," says the captain. "Well, captain," says the boatswain, "a tom fool of a boat— isn't it? I cannot think what the owner meant by putting such a thing as this on board." Old tars, as they walk along the deck say to themselves, "Ah! I never saw such a thing in all my life as that! Think of old Ben Bolt taking a lifeboat with him! Don't believe in such gimcracks!" Presently a stiff breeze springs up, it comes to a gale—a hurricane—a perfect tornado! Now let down the lifeboat, captain. "No, no, no; nonsense!" Let down the lifeboat! No; the other boats are got out, but they are stove in, one after another, and capsized. They bring out another; she cannot ride out the storm. There she goes, right up on the crest of the waves and she has gone over, bottom uppermost. It is all over with them! "What shall we do, captain?" "Try the lifeboat, boatswain." Just so; when every spar is gone, when every other boat is washed overboard, and when the ship is going down, they will take to the lifeboat. So be it. The Lord wash all your boats overboard. May it please God to wreck your vessel; may he shiver every timber, and make you take to the lifeboat. I fear me some of you will never take counsel till you reach the crisis. May there come, then, such a storm that you will be driven to take to Christ. That done there is no storm you need ever fear. That done, let the loudest tempest roar, you are safe; you have Christ in the vessel with you. Two or three more words, and I have done. God has been pleased to give his dear Son, his only-begotten Son, to die a most dreadful death, not for righteous ones, but for sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are a sinner, you are the sort of person Christ came to save. If you are a lost one, you are the sort of man that Jesus Christ came to seek. Let your present sorrow comfort you, because it is an indication that you are the kind of person that Christ will bless. Let your despair deliver you from despair, for when you despair there is hope for you. When you can do nothing, God will do everything. When you are empty of your own conceits, there is room for Christ to enter your heart. When you are stripped, Christ's garments are provided for you. When you are hungry, the bread that cometh down from heaven is provided for you. When you are thirsty, the water of life is yours. Let this broken-heartedness, this terror, this alarm, this faintness, this weakness of yours, only lead you to say, "I am such as Christ invited to himself. I will go to him, and if I perish, I will perish only there"; and if you trust Jesus, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hand. May you trust him here and now. Amen.

The Battle of Life

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?"—1 Cor. 9:7.

THIS question occurs in the course of an argument. The Apostle was proving that the minister who gives all his time to the preaching of the Word is entitled to a maintenance from those people amongst whom he labours. He gives divers illustrations, amongst them this—that the soldier who devotes himself to the service of his country is not expected to find his own equipment and his own rations, but he is provided for by his country. And so should it be, he teaches us, in the Church of God. The minister set apart to labour wholly in spiritual things should have temporal supplied found him. That isle topic, however, on which it would be superfluous for me to enlarge. Your convictions are so sound, and your practice so consistent, that you do not need to be exhorted, much less to be expostulated with on that matter.

But the same question may be asked when we have other morals to point. Is it ever expected that men who go on a warfare should pay their own charges? There is a warfare in which all of us are engaged. What is life but a great battle, lasting from our earliest days until we sheathe sword in death? This battle we hope to win, and yet if we succeed, it will be a distinct and definite response to the challenge before us, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" We may be quite sure that if ever we attempt the warfare of life at our own expense we shall soon find ourselves failing, and it will end in a miserable defeat. Going at once to the subject, we have here:—

I. AN INSPIRING METAPHOR.

When life is represented as a warfare, some peaceful minds may feel a little alarmed at the pictures; yet there are other minds with enough of gallantry in their constitutions to feel their blood pulsing the stronger at the thought that life is to be one continued contest. I do but borrow a reflection from the secular press when I say that it were ill for us if the love of peace, fostered among us as a nation, should degenerate into a fear of danger, a reluctance to bear hardships, or an indifference to the accomplishment of exploits. Craven spirits we may expect always to find, who conjure up gloomy anticipations, and to forbade horrible disasters. The untrodden path and the unaccustomed climate are dreadful bugbears. But is this the instinct of an Englishman? How else should he contemplate difficulties but as problems to be solved? capital out of which fame or fortune is to be won? And as for the British soldier, is he to be looked upon as a hot-house plant, who shrinks from exposure? Far rather would I respect him as a representative individual, the type of his race, always ready for any emergency. In the days of the old Gallic wars, when we had to fight with Napoleon in Egypt, there were just as many knotty points and critical situations to be grappled with; and certainly at headquarters the War Department was not more efficiently managed than it is now. Yet British soldiers pressed forward then to the conflict nor did they pant for fortune, what they did seek was a career, with some opportunity of distinguishing themselves. Moreover, those who stayed

at home scanned the despatches with eager interest, and full often lamented that they had not the chance given them of going forth to the fight. Well may the patriot ask, Has Anglo-Saxon courage all fled? if at every call to fresh deeds of heroism we listen to the crowing of those whose nature it is to look black, and utter dark portents. Our children's children may read how the haughty insolence of Theodore of Abyssinia was humbled, but I hope they will never hear the screeching of the ravens who warned us of the mountain fastnesses in which he was lodged. The Ashantee war is behind us now, and I suppose those who were once afraid of its perils are now amazed at its prowess. Yes, and that is how I would have Christians feel with regard to spiritual conflicts. Difficulties! well, they are things to be deciphered. Dangers! they are things to be met and encountered. Impossibilities! they are to be scouted as a nightmare, a delirious dream. The Christian wakes to find impossibility impossible. With a history behind him and a destiny before him, he can say, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Things that are impossible with man are possible with God. I like my text all the better, because it implies a hostile engagement, and speaks of warfare. For me the battlefield has no charms. With host encountering host, and carnage left behind, I have no sympathy, but spiritually my soul seems enamoured of the idea; I buckle on my armour at the very thought that life is to be a conflict and a strife, in which it behoves me to get the mastery.

Do I not address many young men just commencing life? If you have thought of life at all I hope you have thought that it is wise to *begin the battle of life early*. We have all so little time to live, and the first years of life are so evidently the best years we shall ever have, that it is a pity to waste them. Oh! how much more some of us might have done if we had begun betimes! Had the very flush of our boyhood been consecrated and the strength of our youth spent in our Master's service, what work we might have accomplished! Now, young men, as a comrade a little farther on the road than you, I take you to the brow of the hill for a moment, and point out to you the pathway we have to pursue, and as I point it out I tell you that you will have to fight along every inch of the road, if you are at the end to win the crown which I hope your ambition pants after. Are you ready for the conflict? Then let us talk awhile about it, for as we shall always have to be on the alert, it is well for us to study the map, and to acquaint ourselves with the tactics we must practice.

Be sure, then, my friend, that if you and I are ever to be conquerors at the last, we shall have to, fight with that trinity of enemies—*the world, the flesh, and the devil*. There is the world. Do you resolve to do the right and to love the true, depend upon it you will get no assistance from this world. Of its maxims, nine out of ten are false, and the other one selfish; and even that which is selfish has a lie at the bottom of it. As for its customs—well, live where you may, the customs of the world are not such as a citizen of heaven can endorse. Go into what company you please, and you will find that there is much of the prevailing habit that is no friend to grace, and no friend to virtue. In the upper circles, with much presence, there is little reality; there is a lack of sound honesty. Amongst the lower classes, go where you will, if you firmly resolve to be a Christian, to follow closely the footsteps of your Lord, you will have to breast the current. The most of men are going, down the hill. You will be like the solitary traveller when you are threading your way upwards. Do you enlist for Christ to-night? Then know that you enlist against the whole world. You will henceforth be an alien to your mother's children, and a stranger to your own household, unless happily that household should have been converted too. Young man, the young men in the shop will be against you. Alas, for the wickedness of the young men of London! Young woman, you will find in the workroom, aye perhaps you will find even in your father's house, influences at

work to impede, if not to thrust you back. Man of business, when you meet others on exchange, if perchance the conversation should turn upon religion, you will find it far from profitable, and far from genial. You will be like a speckled bird, and all the birds round about you will be against you. As a marked man, your motives will be mistrusted, your character impugned, your piety burlesqued. If you resolve to win the crown of immortality, you will only do it as by the skin of your teeth. It matters not where you are cast, this is sure to be your lot, unless, as here and there is the case, you may be a timid and shielded one, too weak for conflict and, therefore, God keeps you in retirement. And yet as for the world, I think we could easily overcome that were it not for a worse enemy.

Soldier of Christ, you have to struggle *with yourself*. My own experience is a daily struggle with myself. I wish I could find in me something friendly to grace, but hitherto I have searched my nature through, and have found everything in rebellion against God. At one time there comes the torpor of sloth, when one ought to be active every moment, having so much to do for God, and for the souls of men, and so little time to do it in. At another time there comes the quickness of passion. When we would be calm and cool, and play the Christian, bearing with patience, there come the unadvised word and the rash expression. Anon, we are troubled with conceit, the devilish whisper—I can call it no less—"How well thou hast done! How well hast thou played thy part!" This pride is the arch-enemy of our souls. Then will come distrust foul and faithless, suggesting that God does not regard the affairs of men, and will not interpose on our behalf. Fresh forms of evil are generated in our own breasts, and this chameleon heart of ours, which never seems of one colour but for a single moment, which is this and that by turns, and nothing long, challenges us on all occasions, and against it we shall have perpetually to struggle. Unless we deny ourselves and lay violent hands upon the impulses of our nature, we shall never come to the place where the crowns are distributed to the conquerors.

And then another foe comes up, though not the closest, the strongest of the three—*the devil*! If you have ever stood foot to foot with him, as some of us have, you will remember well that blandly day, for even he who beats Apollyon concludes the battle wounded in his own hand and in his own foot. Oh! that stern enemy! He knows how to attack us in our sore points. He discerns our weaknesses and he is at no loss for cunning devices. He understands how one moment to fawn upon us and flatter us, and how the next moment to cast his fiery darts, telling us that we are castaways, and shall never see the face of God with acceptance. He can quote Scripture for his purpose. He can hurl threatenings at the heads of the saints, which were only meant for sinners, and he can tear promises out of the saints' hands, and cast them in the mire, just when they are ready to feed upon them as fair fruits of Paradise. Believe me, it is no small thing to have had to fight with Apollyon, the Prince of Hell. Seest thou then, young soldier, what is before thee? There is a triple host of foes, and thou must overcome them all, or else there shall never be given to thee the white stone, and the crown of everlasting life.

Think not that this is an engagement to be quickly terminated. Unlike the laconic despatch of the ancient Roman, "Veni, vidi, vici," I came, saw, and conquered, this is a continuous fight. Wouldest thou fight thy way to heaven, not to-day, nor to-morrow; wilt thou win it with a deadly skirmish or a brilliant dash like a knight at a tournament, thou canst not come back a conqueror. In sober truth, every man and every woman who enlists for Christ will have to wrestle till their bones shall sleep in the tomb. There shall be no pause nor cessation for thee from this day until the laurel is upon thy brow. If thou art defeated one day, thou must overcome the next; if a conqueror to-day, thou must fight to-morrow. Like the old knights who, slept in their armour, you must be

prepared for reprisals—always watchful, always expecting temptation, and ready to resist it; never saying, "It is enough," for he who saith, "It is finished," until he breathes his last has not yet truly begun. We must have our swords drawn, even to the very last. I have sometimes thought that could we enter heaven by one sharp, quick, terrible encounter, such as the martyrs faced at the stake we might endure it heroically; but day after day of protracted martyrdom, and year after year of the wear and tear of pilgrimage and soldier-life is the more bitter trial of patience. I do but tell you in order that you may be convinced that it is not in our power to fight this warfare at our own charge; that if we have to endure in our own strength and with our own resources, it is most certain that disaster will befall us, and defeat will humble us. To fight, and fight on, is our vocation. But if thus you fight, you may hope to conquer, for *others have done so before you*. On the summit of the palace see you not those robed in white, who walk in light, with faces bright, and sparkling o'er with joy? Can you not hear their song? They have overcome, and they tell you:—

"To him that overcometh
A crown of life shall be;
He with his Lord and Master
Shall reign eternally."

They have overcome; then why should not you, Jesus Christ, who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, has passed through the sternest part of the battle, and he has overcome—a type and representative of all those who are cross-bearers, and who shall overcome as he has done.

Do I see some young man, eager, earnest, all of a glow, ready for the crown? Let me remind thee *that thou mayest be defeated*. Though it is well for thee to begin life with a resolute determination to fight through the battle, still I would have thee remember that thou mayest be led captive by thy foe. There is a most instructive little book, issued by the Religious Tract Society, called *The Mirage of life*, which I think all young men should read. It gives historical pictures of the different ways in which men have sought to be great, wherein the result of the greatness attained has proved to be in mirage, mocking the man, as the mirage in the desert mocks the traveller when it promises him water, and he finds none. That book contains the history of such men as Beckford, a man worth £200,000 a year, who spent the former part of his life in building Fonthill Abbey, with an enormous tower, enriching the place with all the treasures that he could rather from every country; making the grounds so splendid that crowned heads longed to look within, but, it is said, were refused; and at the end of his life you find him almost penniless—the house upon which he had spent all his time and money a dilapidated ruin, the tower fallen to the ground, and the name of Beckford forgotten. You have a sketch of William Pitt, the heaven-born minister. One of the greatest of statesmen, who could make war or peace at his will, and after years of the most brilliant success he dies with a broken heart through grief. The high ambition of men of art such as Haydon, is introduced to your notice. This great painter, after blazing with wondrous fame in his art, took away his life because he found himself a disappointed and forgotten man. As I read a series of such cases, each one seemed sadder than the other, and it was enough to make a man sit down and weep to think that our mortal race should be doomed to follow such phantoms, and to be mocked by such delusions. As I read them all I could not help feeling how necessary it was to say to young men, especially just as they are beginning life, and to young women too—aye, and the lesson is profitable for all of us—Take care how ye run in the race, lest after running, till ye think ye have won the prize, ye find that in truth ye have lost it. We must take care how we live, for this is the only lifetime we shall have in which to settle the life that lasts for ever. Make bankruptcy in your secular business;

why, you can start again; but once make bankruptcy in soul affairs, and there is no second life in which to start your career afresh. Are you a defeated soldier of life? Ah! then, you can never begin again, or turn the defeat into a victory. If you go down to your grave a captive of sin, the iron bands will be about you for ever. There is no retrieving your position. The priceless boon of freedom is beyond your reach. You may lament, you cannot attain it. See then, our life is a battle; we must constantly fight; haply we may win, or haply we may be defeated. I now proceed to mark a second point with:—

II. A KINDLY HINT.

Like a cool breath fanning our cheeks when too hot with ambition, this enquiry greets us, "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?" *So, then, charges there will be in this life-battle.* It is not to be won without pain and cost. Let us just glance at some of these charges. You will soon see how they mount up. If any man shall get up to heaven what a demand for *courage* he will have to meet! How many enemies he must face! How much ridicule he must endure! How frequently must he be misrepresented and maligned! How often must he be discreet enough to be silent, and anon, bold enough to speak and avow his convictions and his purpose!

If a man shall get to heaven, what a charge of *patience* he will be at! How he must bear and forbear! How he must put up with one sharp difficulty and another, making light of fatigue and fasting, restless days and sleepless nights; in fiery temptation unflinching, amidst cold contempt unabashed.

If any man will get to heaven, what an amount of *perseverance* he will require to hold on and to hold out! What hours of prayer, what wrestling with God for a blessing, what striving with himself to overcome sinful propensities! What a charge of *watchfulness* he will be at! How he must guard the avenues of his being! How he must track his actions to the springs of motives, and keep his thoughts pure from guile! There can be little ease and not much slumber for a man who would get the eternal crown. What fresh supplies of *zeal* he will need; for we shall not drift into heaven without a conflict or a care. We must cut, and hack and hew with intense energy, for the Saviour says, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm." What *strength* he will require, for he has to deal with potent foes! And oh! what a charge of wisdom he will be put to the expense of, for he has to stand against the craftiness of evil creatures, and to overcome one who is wiser than the ancients, even *Satan*, the arch-tempter.

It is possible that the difficulties of an expedition may be intensely aggravated by a lack of knowledge as to the country to be invaded. Under such circumstances it is hard to anticipate the contingencies that may arise. In the battle of life this is the rub. Who knows what lies next before him? How can we forestal the surprises that may await us? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." If I were aware of the temptations that would befall me a year hence, I think I could guard myself against them, but I do not even know what pinch or peril may befall me before the hour has passed. You cannot tell the provocations that to-night may occur before you close your eyes in slumber. You may have a trial or a temptation such as never crossed your path before. Hence I beseech you to consider the greatness of the charge of this warfare. You have to pass through an experience which no man before you has proved. All the path of life is new to you, unmapped, untrodden, unanticipated. Yet all you lack of clear statistics is made up for in dire prognostics. No doubt the climate is baneful, and will subject you to fever or ague. Our British soldiers, rank and file, must press forward though they are landed on a blazing beach, across which they have, to march; nor will it ever do for them to be dismayed by steep mountains, dismal

swamps, or savage tribes. Bent on victory, they brave the incidents of the campaign before they sight the adversaries they attack, while their heads and hearts are full of honour, promotion, stars, stripes, and Victoria crosses. But in our eventful battle of life the checks and bars to progress, the dangers and temptations that we shall all have to meet with in our natural constitution and our secular calling, the unnavigable currents and the impassable barriers that thwart us before we grapple with the main enterprise to enter heaven, are more than I can describe in one sermon. No marvel to me that Mr. Pliable should say, as he turned back, "You may have the, brave country yourselves for me." The Slough of Despond, as a first part, put him into a dudgeon and he said, "I do not like it; I will have no more of it."

Apart from divine strength, Pliable was a wise man, wise in his generation, to shrink from the adventure, for it is a hard journey to the skies. They spake the truth who said that there were giants, to fight with, dragons to be slain, mountains to be crossed, and black rivers to be forded. It is so, and I pray you count the cost. There is no "royal road" to heaven, except that the King's highway leads there. There is no easy road skilfully levelled or scientifically macadamised. The labour is too exhaustive, the obstructions are too numerous, the difficulties are too serious, unless God himself come to our help. I wittingly put these dilemmas before you that I may constrain you to say, "Who can go this warfare at his own Charges?" And now, in the third place, let us look at our text as:—

III. A GRACIOUS REMINDER.

Does any man at any time go a warfare at his own charge? I trow not. Young man! I have told you of difficulties and of dangers. I trust your bold spirit taught by God, has thereby been fired to greater ardour. Now I have somewhat to say unto thee which has cheered me, and cheered thy sires before me, and made them strong, even in their weakness. It is this. You see you cannot go this warfare in your own strength. Is not that clear to you? Then, I pray you, do not try it. Do not for a moment contemplate it. If you do, you will rue it. Your fall will be your first warning; the second time it will warn you more bitterly; if you continue in your own strength, you will, perhaps, have a warning too late. But you may rely on God to help you. The text implies it. If, by faith, you yield yourself to Christ, whoever you may be, with a desire and intent to live henceforth as a follower of Jesus, God will help you, and that right early. Though a warfare is before you, you are not to go at your own charges. Shall I tell you how God will help you? Certainly *you may reckon upon his watchful Providence*. You little know how easy the Almighty can make a path which otherwise would have been difficult and dangerous. Follow God's leading, and you shall never lack for his comfort. I have lived long enough to see many people carve for themselves very eagerly, and cut their fingers very severely. I have seen others who albeit they were great losers for a time by doing right, have had to bless God year after year for the abundant recompense they received afterwards. No man shall be a loser in the long run by loving and serving God. If thou be willing and obedient, trusting thyself with Christ, thou shalt find those awful wheels of Providence revolve for thy welfare. The beasts of the field shall be in league with thee, and the stones of the field shall be at peace with thee. All things shall work together for good to them that love God. Now I am not pretending that piety will procure wealth, or that if you espouse Christ's cause you shall grow rich. I should not wonder if you did. You are none the less likely to prosper in business for being a Christian. I am not going to, predict that you shall be without sickness, much less without temptation, for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth", but sure I am of this, that if you put your trust in God and do right, no temporal circumstances shall ever happen to you which shall not be for your eternal good. This is forestalling much more than any transient benefit.

In the short space you are to live here you may reckon upon the gigantic wheels of Providence as your helpers. The angels or God shall be swift to defend you. Your eyes shall not see them, but your heart shall wax confident. You shall perceive that by some means you have been rescued from a place of drought and led into a fruitful land.

More than this; as you go this warfare, looking to God to bear your charges, *you shall have the Lord Jesus Christ to help you*. Promise not yourself that you will be able to maintain henceforth a perfect life. Sin will harass you. Old corruptions, even when they are driven out from the throne (for sin shall not reign over you), will yet struggle at the foot thereof. But Jesus Christ will be your helper. He will be always present to revive you with his precious blood, to sprinkle your hearts from an evil conscience, to wash your bodies with pure water. Have you never admired that picture of Christ, with the basin and the towel washing his disciples' feet? This is what he will ever do for you at every eventide when you have defiled yourself through inadvertence or infirmity. Look into the face of the Crucified. Perhaps you have sometimes wished that he were now visible, and in body accessible to you. That sympathizing One who has suffered so much for you! You have said, "Oh! that I might go and tell him my griefs, and get his help!" He is alive. He is here. He is not far from any one that seeketh him. Whosoever trusteth shall surely find Christ to be his very present help in time of trouble. Believe this, and thou shalt prove it true.

And he that is a soldier of the cross shall have *the divine power Of God the Blessed Spirit* to help him. I have sometimes thought, when some strong passion has been raging within my soul—How can I ever overcome it? The will was good, but the flesh was weak. But as soon as the Spirit of God has moved on me the flesh has given way. The Holy Ghost can give the man that is prone to idleness such an intense apprehension of the value of time that he shall be more industrious than the naturally active man. I believe that if any of you who are subject to a bad temper will lay this besetting sin before God in prayer, and ask the Holy Spirit's help, you shall not only be able to curb it, but you will acquire a sweeter and gentler spirit than some of those whose temperament is naturally even, with no propensity to fitful change or sudden storm. Do not tell me that there is anything in human nature too obdurate for the Lord to overcome, for there is not. Whatever may be your temptation, you need not account it an effectual hindrance to your being a Christian. What though it be beyond your own power to grapple with it! When the Eternal arm comes to the rescue; when the right hand of Jehovah is made bare; when the Holy Spirit puts forth his irresistible power, he can smite through the loins of our kingly sins, and cut the Rahabs and dragons of our iniquities in pieces. Rest thou in the might of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He that brake Egypt in pieces with his plagues can vanquish our sins with his judgments or with his grace, and he can bring the new nature, like the children of Israel, up out of bondage into joyous liberty. Go thou to the blood, and thou shalt conquer sin. Go to the Eternal Spirit, and thy worst corruptions shall be overthrown. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" As the soldier draws from his paymaster, so let every Christian draw from his God and Saviour. Conduct your warfare trusting in the blessed God. My last words shall be to those who are beginning the great battle of life. Let me urge upon them these:—

IV. CAUTIONS AND COUNSELS.

Behold *the wisdom of diffidence*. I heard some time ago of a minister preaching on the dignity of self-reliance; and I thought to myself, Surely that is the dignity of a fool! The dignity of self-reliance! Taken in a certain sense, there is some kind of truth about it; or at least the folly of asking counsel of your neighbour in every strait is sufficiently obvious. But he that relies on his

own wits will soon pander to expediency and grovel in the mire. His actions will admit of no better defense than excuses and apologies. Nay, sirs; "but let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." A better subject, and one that no preacher need be ashamed of if the Master should come ere the sermon be done, is the dignity of reliance upon God, and the wisdom of diffidence of oneself. Begin life, young man, by finding out that the capital you thought you had, is much less than it looked before you counted it. Begin life, young man, by understanding that all in your nature that glitters is not gold, and that your strength is perfect weakness. Begin by being emptied, and you will soon be filled. Blessed are the poor in spirit." Begin by being poor. If you begin with lowliness, you will not need to be humiliated.

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

He will win the battle who knows how to begin on the low ground and to fight uphill by divine strength. Learn the wisdom, not of self-reliance, but of self-diffidence, for he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

Be thoroughly alive to *the importance of prayer*. If all our charges in the life-war are to be paid us by the Paymaster, let us go to the treasury. Amongst the strangest of human sins is a distaste for prayer. I open my eyes with wonder at myself whenever I find my own self slow to pray! Why, if your children want anything of you, they are not slow to speak. They need not be exhorted to ask for this or that; they speak at once. And here is the soul-enriching exercise of prayer. Is it not strange that you and I should be slack in it? Did you ever stand in a market and see the people coming in from the country with their goods? How diligent they are in their business; how eager to take home as much money as they can! How their eyes glitter; how sharp they are! But here is heaven's market; God's wares are given away to them that will ask for them. Yet we seem indifferent, as though we did not care to be enriched; we even leave the mercy-seat of God unvisited! Oh! young people, do understand the value of prayer; and you aged people, do continue in prayer and supplication; for if we are to win this battle of our life, it can only be by taking in our charge-bill to the great Paymaster, and asking him to discharge the charges of this war.

Consider, too, *the necessity of holiness*. If, in my life's warfare, I am entirely dependent upon God, let me not grieve him. Let me seek so to walk with him that I may expect to have him with me. Oh! let our consecration be unreserved and complete.

And in all these we must prove *the power of faith*. If we have never begun to trust in Jesus, let us begin now. Oh! may the Eternal Spirit breathe faith into our souls. The beginning of true spiritual life is here—trusting what Christ has wrought for us, relying upon his sufferings on our behalf. The continuation of spiritual life is here—trusting still in what Christ has done and is doing. The consummation of spiritual life on earth is still the same—trusting still, trusting ever; always repairing to Christ for the supply of all our needs; going to him with our blots to have them removed, with our failings to have them forgiven, with our wants and requirements to have them provided for, with our good works and our prayers to have them rendered acceptable, and with ourselves that we may still be preserved in him.

Sharpen your swords, soldiers of the cross, and be ready for the fray, but as ye march to the battle let it be with heads bowed down in adoration before him, who alone can cover your heads in the day of battle; and when you lift up those heads in the front of the foe, let this be your song,

"The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; the Lord has become my salvation!" And when the fight waxes hot, if your head grow weary, think of "him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," and still fight on until you win the day, and then as the fight draws to a close, and your sun is going down, and you can count your scars, and are ready to enter into your rest, be this your prayer "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, but seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." And be this your last word on earth, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of my salvation"; so shall this be your eternal song in heaven above, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Are You Mocked?

A Sermon

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"Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge."—Psalm 14:6.

GOD'S Word divides the whole human race into two portions. There is the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman—the children of God, and the children of the devil—those who are by nature still what they always were, and those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There are many distinctions among men, but they are not much more than surface-deep. This one distinction, however, goes right through, and it is very deep. I may say that between the two classes, the saved and the unsaved, there is a great gulf fixed. There is as wide a difference between the righteous and the wicked as there is between the living and the dead. The Psalmist, David, in this particular Psalm calls one class of men fools, and another class the poor. You will observe that he begins by describing the fool, by which he does not mean one particular man, but the whole race as it is by nature—the whole of that portion of the human race that remains unregenerate. In our text he describes another class as the poor, in which he comprehends all the saved, all the godly, all the righteous, of whom our Redeemer hath said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now from the very first, between the two seeds there has always been an enmity—an enmity which has never been mitigated, and never will. It displays itself in various ways, but it is always there. In some ages the enmity has burst forth into open persecution—Herod has sought the young child to destroy it; Haman has sought to destroy the whole generation of Israel; stakes have been erected, and the faithful have been burnt; racks and inhuman engines of cruelty have been fashioned by the art of man, through the malice of his heart, to exterminate, if it were possible, the children of the living God. For there is war—perpetually war to the knife—war ever between the two generations. At this particular time the warfare is not less bitter; but the restraints of Providence do not allow it to display itself as it once did, and it now generally takes the form of cruel mockings so that our text is as applicable to the present race as it was in David's time, "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge." The fool hath made a mock of the righteous man, called the poor man; and this has been the subject of his mockery, that the godly man has been fool enough as he calls him, to put his trust in God, and to make this the main point and purpose of his life. There may be some here who have done this; all of us do it to some extent until we are new-born. We ridicule, if not with the tongue, yet in our heart, those who have made God their refuge, for when we begin to value the people of God, it is a sign of some degree of grace in us: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; but until we come into that state of grace there is a hatred or contempt, more or less developed, against those who are resting in the living God.

Now I shall at this time first of all speak of *those who are mocked*; secondly, of *the mockers*; and thirdly, of *how those who are mocked might to behave* towards those who try to put them to shame. First, then, let us take the subject—the object—of the mockery of carnal minds.

I. WHO ARE MOCKED.

Here we have three points: "Ye have shamed the poor," that is, *the persons*; "the counsel of the poor," that is *the reasons* of their faith; then *their faith itself*, "because the Lord is his refuge."

To begin, it is very common for ungodly men to pour contempt upon God's people, the poor; and oftentimes they will do it by the use of these words. It so happens that many of God's people are poor in pocket, and how often do hear the observation, "Oh! these Methodists, these Presbyterians, these Baptists, they are a set of poor people, mechanics, and servant-girls and so on," and how often is that uttered with a sneer upon the lips! Well now, that is a fine thing to make fun of, isn't it, for, after all, what is there to be ashamed of in honest poverty? I will stand here and say that if I could stand to-morrow morning in Cheapside, and pick out a dozen poor men, and then if I were to pick out a dozen middle-class men, and then if I were to pick out a dozen rich men, I believe, as to character, they would be very much of a muchness. You shall go, if you will, and pick out at random twelve good princes, and *see if you could do it*; but I will pick you out twelve working men that shall be honest, and upright, and chaste—which great men are not always. The poor are no worse than the rich, and have no more right to be despised. And if it were true that all who fear God were poor, it might, perhaps, be rather to their credit than to their dishonour, for, at any rate, nobody would be able to say that their Dockets were lined with the result of fraud. If they were poor, they would, at any rate, be free from many of the accusations that might be brought against rich men. I care no more for one class than another, especially when I preach the gospel—you are all alike to me, one as the other—but this I will say, that of all jests and all sneers that is one of the most ridiculous and mean against godly people, because they are poor.

But the sneer then takes another form. It is not that they are poor in pocket, so much as that they are very poor in education. "Ah!" say they, "these people—well, what do they know? They are not philosophical; they are not amongst those who cultivate the higher walks of literature; they are mostly plain, simple-minded people, and, therefore, they believe their Bibles." Well, I don't believe that. Amongst Christian people there are many men of as high an education as among any class. The mind of Newton found root in Scripture, and discovered depths which it could not fathom. But even if you say that, what of it? If these men have the wisdom which cometh from above, they have something that will last when the wisdom which is merely of this earth will have perished. Go, take the skull of the wise man in your hand, and look at it. Is it not as brown, is it not as ghastly a sight as the skull of the peasant? And what matters it to him, now that he lies among the clods of the valley, that once he spent his nights, with the lamp, poring into ancient tomes, or walked with his staff to heaven to measure the distance of the stars, or bored into the depths of the earth? It in all one to him, and if he is a lost soul, ah! who would not give the preference to the man that was learned in the kingdom of heaven beyond the man that was only learned in the things of earth? I see no great reason for jest on the subject therefore. And the sneer is, to say the least, ungenerous; for if the ungodly be so much the wiser, let them show their wisdom by not sneering at those who do not happen to possess their gifts, but who possess what is much more precious.

And then it will take another shape—this shaming of the poor because of their poverty. They will say, "Ah! but they are poor in spirit; they have not good ideas of themselves. Hear them—they are always confessing sinfulness and weakness, and they appear to go through the world without

self-reliance, relying upon some unseen power, and always distrusting themselves, and they do not seem to have the pluck that the ungodly have. Why, we, we who know not God can drink, and they will stop where we can go. And we can let out an oath, but they are afraid. And there is many a song that we can sing that these fastidious folks would not dare to hear, and there is many an amusement which we can enjoy which they, poor creatures, are obliged to deny themselves." Ah! well, well, if they choose to be miserable, I do not know that you could do better than pity them. It would be a pity to be angry with them for not enjoying what you enjoy. Don't, therefore, sneer. But, after all, sir, you know very well that there is more manliness in refusing to sin than there is in sinning; that there is more pluck in saying, "No, I cannot," than there is in being led by the devil, first into one sin, and then into another. And these men of the world that have this high spirit, and are so bold and brave—what is it better than the high spirit of a lunatic, who dares to put his hand in the fire? I dare not do that which would dishonour God. I am thankful to be such a coward that I dare not venture it. But you shall not say that we are cowardly. Lived there ever a more earnest Christian than Havelock? Were there ever better soldiers than his Highlanders, who learned to bow the knee before Jehovah? But, O sirs, they could fight; they were men brave enough in the day of battle, though they could not be brave in the way in which the ungodly are. Talk to us Christians about want of courage! Do you ever wish to see the Ironsides again in England, with old Oliver Cromwell at their head? We hate war, but still we quote these instances to show that a man can bow before God like a sneaking Presbyterian, as you call him, and yet rise up and drive the Cavaliers, like chaff before the wind. It is not true that we are poor in spirit in the sense that is often attached to us. We have as much of courage of the right kind as the ungodly have. But, sir, we can afford to bear your jest. We *are* afraid to be damned; we *are* afraid to take a leap into the dark future, with wrath upon our heads; we *do* tremble before the living god, though we will tremble nowhere else. We count it no dim honour to fear him who is a consuming fire. But this is commonly the cry, "They're a poor set; they're a poor set of milksops." "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor."

But now the next point—a very common jest—is *the reasons that Christian men give* for being Christians. You notice the text says, "the counsel of the poor," for the Christian, when he becomes a believer in Christ, takes counsel about it. He does not believe his Bible because his grandmother did; he does not accept the Word of God because some priest has told him it is true; he takes counsel, and considers. This counsel, however, is generally sneered at, as though there were no reasonableness in it; therefore, let me just state it.

The Christian has taken counsel *with his own weakness*. He says, "I cannot trust myself; I am very apt to go wrong; therefore, will I put myself into the great Father's hands, and pray him to lead and guide me. I will not go to my business in the morning until I have asked for his protection, nor will I close the day without asking still that I may be under his care." His reason is because he feels himself to be a weak and fallible creature, and he wants protection. That looks to me to be very reasonable, but to some it seems to be the theme for laughter.

The Christian has next taken counsel *with his observations*. He has looked about in the world, and he could not see that ungodly men derive pleasure from their sins. He hears them shouting loudly enough sometimes, but he knows who hath woe, and who hath redness of the eyes?"they that tarry long at the wine," men of drink; "they that go to seek mixed wine." He has seen the ungodly in their quieter moments, and observed how unsatisfactory all their best things are, and, upon the whole, he considers that what the world offers to its devotees is not worth his seeking for. Moreover, the Christian man has sometimes seen the sinner die, and' having seen him die, he has

discovered that there is nothing in the principles of ungodliness to give a man comfort in his dying hour. Some of us have heard language from ungodly men in their deaths that we would hardly like to repeat, the very memory of which makes our blood chill. I remember once being at the bedside of a man who alternately cursed and asked me to pray. I could not pray as I would desire. I did what I could, and then he would tell me it was no good; his sins would never be forgiven him; and then he would turn again to blasphemy. It was a dread sight. I never saw—and I have seen many ungodly people did never see one die of whom I could say, "Let me die the death of this sinner, and let my last end be like his"; nor do I think such sights are ever or anywhere to be seen. The Christian man, therefore, having taken counsel of that, looks for something better that may be his stay in the time of trouble, and be his comfort in the time of his departure out of this life. That looks to me to be good reasoning. I think it is, and yet there are some who sneer at it.

The Christian man has also taken counsel *with the Bible*. Believing it to be God's Word, he feels that one word of God is worth a ton weight of human reason. He would sooner have a drachm of revelation than have all the weight of authority that could be brought to bear upon his mind. And assuredly, if God be true, he is not incorrect in his judgment.

Moreover, the Christian man has taken counsel *with his own conscience*, and he finds that when he walks near to God, he is most happy. He discovers that, in keeping God's commandments, there is great reward, and though he does not expect to be saved by his works, yet he finds himself most sustained when he walks most carefully and jealously before the world, and when most near to his heavenly Father. Taking such counsel as this, and finding it so much to his own inward advantage, I cannot blame him that he still puts his trust where he does.

Moreover, the Christian man takes counsel *with his own experience*. There are some of us who are as sure that God hears our prayers as we are sure that twice two make four. It is to us not a conjecture, no, nor even a belief, but a matter of fact. We are habitually in the custom of going to God and asking for what we want, and receiving it at his hands; and it is no use anybody telling us that prayer is useless. We find it constantly useful. It is of no avail for people to say these are happy coincidences. They are very strange indeed—strange coincidences when they occur again and again, and again, and God continually hears our prayers. The witness that the Christian has to the truth of his religion does not lie in the books of the learned. He is thankful for them, but his chief witness lies here—in his own heart, in his own inward experience. Now we always say that you must speak as You find. The Christian has found God faithful to him, has found him support him in the time of trial, has found him answer his prayers in the hour of distress; and this is the counsel that he has taken for himself, and he, therefore, for these reasons relies upon God. Well, sneer as some may, I think we will do with our trust in God, my brethren, as the natives of a certain American State are said to have done when they, instead of making a law-book, agreed that the State should be governed by the laws of God, until they had time to make better—we will continue to put our trust in God until somebody shall show us something better; we will still pray, and get answered; we will still bear our troubles before God, and get rid of them; we will still rely upon Christ and find comfort until somebody shall bring us something better, and it won't be just yet; and, until then, sneers and laughter shall not much affect us.

And now, once more, the great point at which the ungodly mostly aim their scoffs is *the actual faith of the believer*. He has made God to be his refuge. And what, what do they say, Why, "It's all canting talk." I do not particularly know what that means, but if ever Christian men are accused of being cants, they can make the retort by saying that the canting is quite as much on one side as the

other, for of all cants the cant against cant is the worst cant that ever was canted. But surely if a man shall speak the truth in other things, and you know he does, it is not fair to say he does not speak the truth when he says he puts his trust in God. The man is not insincere.

"Oh!" but they will say, "it is ridiculous—a man trusting in God." Yes, but you do not think it ridiculous to trust in yourselves. Many of you don't think it ridiculous to trust in some public man. Half of the world is trusting in its riches, and is there anything ridiculous in leaning upon that arm that bears the earth's huge pillars up? If so, ridicule on. To trust weakness seems to you to be sense. I say to trust Qmnipotence is infinitely superior wisdom, and we will continue to trust in God, for to us it seems to be no absurdity.

"But," they will say, "what does your God do for you? Some of you Christian people are very poor; some of you very sick—very much in trouble." Mark you, our God never said we should not be, but, on the contrary, told us it should be so. What he does for us is this—in six troubles he is with us, and in the seventh he does not forsake us. He never made us a promise that we should be rich; he never made us a promise of constant help; on the contrary, it is written, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But our God does this for us, that we look upon those troubles as being so much fire that shall purge our silver: so much of the winnowing fan that shall drive away the chaff and leave the corn clean. We glory in tribulation and rejoice in the afflictions which God has laid upon us. Still, that will always be a point of jest. But there is one remark I will make before I leave this. I should like any man who doubts the reality of faith in God to do go down to Bristol, and go to Kingsdown and see the orphan-houses there, which Mr. George Muller has built. Now there they stand—substantial brick and mortar, and inside there are 2,500 boys and girls. They eat a good deal, want a good deal of clothing, and so on. And how comes the money? All the world knows, and no man can gainsay it, that it comes in answer to prayer, and as the result of Mr. Muller's faith—that, that faith has often been tried, but has never failed. What God has done for Mr. Muller, he has done for scores of us after our own way, and in our own walk, and we glorify his name. Though that stands as a palpable witness, we are not less able to say than Mr. Muller, there is a God that heareth prayer, and whoever may jest at faith, we continue in it still, and glory in it, and rejoice. Now this is what is the matter of jest for the mockers. But my time flies, so I must now speak a few words only upon:—

II. WHO ARE THE MOCKERS?

Our text says they are fools. Well, that is my opinion; but it does not signify what my opinion may be. The point that does signify, however, is that it is God's opinion of every man who is not a believer or trusting in his God. In plain English, every such man is a fool. That is God's opinion of him—God that cannot err—who is never too severe, but who speaks the literal truth—that he is a fool. Let me add, it will be that man's opinion of himself one day. If he shall ever be converted—oh! that he may!—he will think himself a fool to have been so long an unbeliever; and if not, when the truth of Scripture shall be proved, and he shall be cast into hell, then will he see his folly, and own himself to be what God said before he was, namely, a fool. O sir, do not run the risk. There was an observation made by a countryman that is well worth quoting, when he said to the unbeliever. "I have two strings to my bow; you have not. Now," said he, "suppose there is no God, I am as well off as you are; but suppose there is, where are you?" So can we say, "Suppose, after all, our religion should be a delusion. It has made us very happy up till now; but as for you—suppose it should be true? Ah! where are you then, who have despised it and have turned away from God?" May each man who does not believe in his God know how foolish he is. Now as I gave you the reasons for

the poor man's faith, let me give you the reasons why the unbeliever usually is an unbeliever. It is principally because *he knows not God*; and none of us like to trust a person we don't know. He knows nothing of the Most High, has never communed with him, nor even seen him in his works; and, therefore, he cannot trust him. The unbeliever will also say that he cannot trust God because he cannot see him, as if everything that is real must, therefore, be the object of sight as if there were not forces in nature about which no doubts can be entertained that are far beyond the ken of sight. They will also say that they cannot trust God because *they cannot understand him*. If we could understand God, he would not be God, for it is a part of the nature of God that he should be infinitely greater than any created mind. I have heard of a man who went into a smith's smithy one day, and he began complaining of the wet weather. "Why," said he, "smith, you talk about Providence! There is too much wet by half. If there were any Providence, it would manage things a great deal better. There is the wheat nearly all spoilt, and the barley is going. I tell you," says he, "there is no Providence; things don't go right." The smith took no notice of his observations, but after a while walked across the smithy, and took down an odd-looking tool which he used in his craft, and said to him, "Do you know what that is used for?" "No," said he, "I don't." "Look at it; look at it, and find out." He did look, and then he said he did not know. The smith put up that tool, and took down another, an ugly-looking tool, and says he, "Do you know what I use that for?" "No," says the man, "I cannot conceive what you do with that." You can't! Look at it, and see; perhaps you will find out." He looked at the thing, and then he said, "No, I really do not know what is the use you put that to." The smith put it up, and then walked leisurely back and said, "You are a great dunce. You do not know the use of my tools, and I am only a smith; and you set up to judge of the use of God's tools, and say what is right and what is wrong. You don't even know about a smithy, and yet, you pretend to know about the whole world. It is a most unreasonable reason not to believe in God because I cannot understand him. The reason at the bottom is this—the ungodly man does not trust God, because he is God's enemy. He knows there is a quarrel between the two. He has broken the law, he has become an enemy to his Maker; and how shall a man trust his enemy? Besides, he knows that God won't do what he would like God to do. He would like God to give him good health to go on in sin; he would like him to make him happy in his lusts; he would like him to let him live a sinner and die a saint; he would like him to shape the world so that man might take his sinful pleasure and live as he liked, and yet, after all, receive the wages of a righteous life; and as God won't do that—won't bring himself down to the sinner's taste—therefore, the sinner says, "I cannot trust God," and then he turns round and laughs at the man who can, just to quiet his own conscience and keep the little sense there is within him from rebelling against him.

Now I spoke of the Christian's faith; just let me speak of the unbeliever's faith. It takes much more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer. I am sure the philosophies of the present age which are currently set forth would require a deal more credulity than I am the master of. I can believe Scripture readily, and without violence to my soul, but I could not accept the theory even of the development of our race, which is so much cried up nowadays, nor a great many other theories. They seem to me to require a far greater sweep of credulity than anything that is written in the Word of God. To the ungodly man *this* seems reasonable. "It is reasonable to trust a great man, and to hope that he will be the maker of you; it is reasonable to trust your own reason—to believe you can steer your own course; it is reasonable to be a self-made man, self-reliant; it is reasonable to look after the main chance; it is reasonable to get all the money you can; it is reasonable to put your confidence in it (of course, it has not any wings, and won't fly away); it is a reasonable

and discreet thing to live in this world as if you were to live for ever in it, and never think of another world at all." To a great many it seems to be philosophy to get as far away from God as ever you possibly can, and then you will get to be a wise man that the creature is wisest when it forgets its creator. That is the world's creed, and I can only say that if they scoff at our creed, we can fairly enough scoff at theirs. Trust in yourselves! Why, you are fools to think of such a thing. Trust in your wealth! Have you not seen rich men disappear? How about a few years ago when—we must remember it well, and remember it sorrowfully—how a panic comes, and down go the towers of the great, and those who seemed to be rich burst like bubbles. And oh! the joys of earth! How soon are they scattered, how speedily do they disappear! What are they, after all, but a will o' the wisp? If it be a wise thing to live in this world, and never think of dying, God grant that I may be a fool. If it be a wise thing to think all about this poor body, and never about my immortal soul, may I never know such wisdom. If it be a wise thing to go into the future as a leap in the dark, believing nothing, and only by that means kept from fear, may I never know such philosophy. Truly it seems to me to be wisdom that I, a creature who certainly did not make myself, should think of my Creator; that I, a sinner, should accept that blessed way of salvation, which is laid before me in the Word of God; that I, weak and unable to steer my own course, should put my hand into the great Father's hand and say, "Lead me, guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." This may be jested at and sneered at, but it can bear a sneer and will outlive the mocker. Now, lastly:—

III. HOW OUGHT THOSE WHO ARE MOCKED BEHAVE towards those that mock at them? Well, the first thing is, *never yield an inch*. You young men in the great firms of London, you working men that work in the factories—you are sneered at. Let them sneer. If they can sneer you out of your religion, you have not got any worth having. Remember you can be laughed into hell, but you can never be laughed out of it. A man may by ridicule give up what religion he thought he had, but if he cast away his soul, his companions who caused his loss cannot help him in the day of his travail, and anguish, and bitterness, before the throne of the Most High. Why be ashamed? "They called me a saint." I remember once a person calling me a saint in the street. All I thought was, "I wish he could prove it." Once a man, passing me in the street, said, "There is John Bunyan." I think I felt six inches taller at the least. I was delighted to be called by such a name as that. "Oh! but they will point at you." Cannot you bear to be pointed at? "But they will chaff you." Chaff—let them chaff you. Can that hurt a man that is a man? If you are a molluscous creature that has no backbone, you may be afraid of jokes, and jeers, and jests; but if God has made you upright, stand upright and be a man. Moreover, there is one thing you should always do when you are ashamed—pray. The next verse in the Psalm is, "Oh! that God would turn the captivity of Zion." The best refuge for a believer in times of persecution is his secret resort to God. Let him to on his kneed and say, "My Lord, I have been counted worthy to be spoken ill of for thy name's sake. Help me to bear it. Now is my time of trial. Strengthen me to bear this reproach. Grant that it may be no heavy burden to me, but may I rather rejoice in it for thy name's sake." God will help you, beloved.

Then next to that, *pray always, most for those who treat you worst*. Make them the constant subjects of your prayer.

And then I would say, in your actions *prove the sincerity of your prayers by extra kindness towards those who are unkind to you*. Heap coals of fire upon their head. That is an expression not always explained. When the crucible is to be brought to a great heat, and the metal to be thoroughly melted, it is not enough for the coals all around it to glow. The silversmith that is desiring to melt it thoroughly will heap them so that the metal shall be all surrounded by flames. Do so, I pray you,

with any of your enemies; heap kindnesses upon them. A Christian woman had often prayed for a very ungodly and unkind husband, but her prayers were not heard. However she did this, she treated him more kindly than she had ever done before. If there was any little thing that she could think of that would please his palate, if she had to deny herself, that would be on the table. She kept the house scrupulously comfortable, and did all she could. And one day someone said to her, "How is it that you, with such a husband can act so towards him?" "Well," she said, "I hope I shall win his soul yet, but if not"—and then the tears came in her eyes—all the happiness he will have will be in this life, and so I will let him have all I can possibly give him, since he has no happiness in the life to come." Do that with the ungodly. Lay yourself out to oblige and serve them. Let it be known of you that the best way to get a good turn out of you is to do you a bad turn. "Oh!" says one, "it is too hard. Tread on a worm, and it will turn." And is a worm to be an example to a Christian? Christ Jesus, art thou not better for an exemplar than a poor worm that creeps into the earth? What did our Saviour do but pray for his murderers? The blood they shed redeemed them that shed it. We have heard the old story of the sandal-wood tree that perfumes the axe that cuts it. Do you so, O Christian! Perfume with your love the axe that wounds you. Be like the anvil that never strikes the hammer again, but yet the anvil wears out many hammers by its indomitable patience. Be patient, be courteous, be kind—in a word, Christ-like; and how know you that these very persons who hate you most to-day will not love you well to-morrow, and come together with you to the communion table, and together rejoice in our blessed Saviour?

Now if I have seemed to preach too harshly to-night, it is not so in my heart. Oh! how I wish you all, everyone without exception, knew what a blessed life the Christian life is! I would, not lie for God himself, but I speak the truth to you. I never knew what perfect peace was until I looked to Christ upon the cross, and rested my soul on him. I have had trials, and have suffered bitter pains, but I have always found consolation when I have turned my eyes to my bleeding Saviour, and have given myself up again to the great Father's hands. He is a blessed Lord. I serve a good Master. Trust him, give your hearts up to him, and if you have spoken against his people, or rebelled against his love, he is willing to receive you. He has no hard word to say to returning ones. Come to him; come and welcome. Come just now, and the Lord receive you, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

Christ's Marvellous Giving

A Sermon

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"Who gave himself for us."—Titus 2:14.

WE have once more, you see, the old subject. We still have to tell the story of the love of God towards man in the person of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When you come to your table you find a variety there. Sometimes there is one dish upon it, and sometimes another; but you are never at all surprised to find the bread there every time, and, perhaps, we might add that there would be a deficiency if there were not salt there every time too. So there are certain truths which cannot be repeated too often, and especially is this true of this master-truth, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Why, this is the bread of life; "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the salt upon the table, and must never be forgotten, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief."

Now we shall take the text, and use it thus: first of *all we shall ask it some questions; then we shall surround it with a setting of facts; and when we have done that, we will endeavour to press out of it its very soul as we draw certain inferences from it.* First then:—

I. WE WILL PUT THE TEXT INTO THE WITNESS-BOX, AND ASK IT A FEW QUESTIONS.

There are only five words in the text, and we will be content to let it go with four questions. "Who gave himself for us" The first question we ask the text is, *Who is this that is spoken of?* and the text gives the answer. It is "the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us." We had offended God; the dignity of divine justice demanded that offenses against so good and just a law as that which God had promulgated should not be allowed to go unpunished. But the attribute of justice is not the only one in the heart of God. God is love, and is, therefore, full of mercy. Yet, nevertheless, he never permits one quality of his Godhead to triumph over another. He could not be too merciful, and so become unjust; he would not permit mercy to put justice to an eclipse. The difficulty was solved thus: God himself stooped from his loftiness and veiled his glory in a garb of our inferior clay. The Word—that same Word without whom was not anything made that was made—became flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and his apostles, his friends, and his enemies, beheld him—the seed of the woman, but yet the Son of God, very God of very God, in all the majesty of deity, and yet man of the substance of his mother in all the weakness of our humanity, sin being the only thing which separated us from him, he being without sin, and we being full of it. It is, then, *God*, who "gave himself for us"; it is, then, *man*, who gave himself for us. It is Jesus Christ, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God;

who made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is Christ Jesus, the man, the God, "who gave himself for us." Now I hope we shall not make any mistakes here, for mistakes here will be fatal. We may be thought uncharitable for saying it, but we should be dishonest if we did not say it, that it is essential to be right here.

"Ye cannot be right in the rest
Unless ye think rightly of him."

You dishonour Christ if you do not believe in his deity. He will have nothing to do with you unless you accept him as being God as well as man. You must receive him as being, without any diminution, completely and wholly divine, and you must accept him as being your brother, as being a man just as you are. This, this is the person, and, relying upon him, we shall find salvation; but, rejecting his deity, he will say to us, "You know me not, and I never knew you!"

The text has answered the question "Who?" and now, putting it in the witness-box again, we ask it another question—"What? What did he do?" The answer is, "*He gave himself for us.*" It was a gift. Christ's offering of himself for us was voluntary; he did it of his own will. He did not die because we merited that, he should love us to the death; on the contrary, we merited that he should hate us; we deserved that he should cast us from his presence obnoxious things, for we were full of sin. We were the wicked keepers of the vineyard, who devoured for our own profit the fruit which belonged to the King's Son, and he is that King's Son, whom we slew, with wicked hands ousting him out of the vineyard. But he died for us who were his enemies. Remember the words of Scripture, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure, for a good, a generous man, one might even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." He *gave* himself. We cannot purchase the love of God. This highest expression of divine love, the gift of his own Son, was, in the nature of things, unpurchaseable. What could we have offered that God should come into this world, and be found in fashion as a man, and should die? Why, the works of all the angels in heaven put together could not have deserved one pang from Christ. If for ever the angels had continued their ceaseless songs, and if all men had remained faithful, and could have heaped up their pile of merit to add to that of the angels, and if all the creatures that ever were, or ever shall be, could each bring in their golden hemp of merit—yet could they ever deserve you cross? Could they deserve that the Son of God should hang bleeding and dying there? Impossible! It must be a gift, for it was utterly unpurchaseable; though all worlds were coined and minted, yet could they not have purchased a tear from the Redeemer; they were not worth it. It must be grace; it cannot be merit; he *gave* himself.

And the gift is so thoroughly a gift that no prep of any kind was brought to bear upon the Saviour. There was no necessity that he should die, except the necessity of his loving us. Ah! friends, we might have been blotted out of existence, and I do not know that there would have been any lack in God's universe if the whole race of man had disappeared. That universe is too wide and great to miss such chirping grasshoppers as we are. When one star is blotted out it may make a little difference to our midnight sky, but to an eye that sees immensity it can make no change. Know ye not that this little solar system, which we think so vast, and those distant fixed stars, and yon mighty masses of nebulae, if such they be, and yonder streaming comet, with its stupendous walk of grandeur—all these are only like a little corner in the field of God's great works? He taketh them all up as nothing, and considereth them mighty as they be, and beyond all human conception

great—to be but the small dust of the balance which does not turn the scale; and if they were all gone to-morrow there would be no more loss than as if a few grains of dust were thrown to the summer's wind. But God himself must stoop, rather than we should die. Oh! what magnificence of love! And the more so because there was no need for it. In the course of nature God would have been as holy and as heavenly without us as he is with us, and the pomp of yonder skies would have been as illustrious had we been dashed into the flames of hell as it will be now. God hath gained nought, except the manifestation of a love beyond an angel's dream; a grace, the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of which surpass all knowledge of all creatures. God only knows the love of God which is manifested in Jesus Christ. He gave himself. We will leave this point now, when it is fully understood that Christ's dying to save sinners, and giving himself for the ungodly, was a pure act of gratuitous mercy. There was nothing to compel God to give his Son, and nothing to lead the Son to die, except the simple might of his love to men. He would not see us die. He had a Father's love to us. He seemed to stand over our fallen race, as David stood over Absalom, and we were as bad as Absalom; and there he fled, and said, "My son, my son! Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!" But he did more than this, for he did die for us. and all for love of Us who were his enemies!

"So strange, so boundless was the love,
Which pitied dying man;
The Father sent his equal Son
To give them life again."
'Twas all of love and of grace!

The third question is, "*What did he give?*" "Who gave himself for us," and here lies the glory of the text, that he gave not merely the crowns and royalties of heaven, though it was much to leave these, to come and don the humble garb of a carpenter's son; not the songs of seraphs, not the shouts of cherubim: 'twas something to leave them to come and dwell amongst the groans and tears of this poor fallen world; not the grandeur of his Father's court, though it was much to leave that to come and live with wild beasts, and men more wild than they, to fast his forty days and then to die in ignomy and shame upon the tree. No; there is little said about all this. He gave all this, it is true, but he gave *himself*. Mark, brethren, what a richness there is here! It is not that he gave his righteousness, though that has become our dress. It is not even that he gave his blood, though that is the fount in which we wash. It is that he gave himself—his Godhead and manhood both combined. All that that word "Christ" means he came to us and for us. He gave himself. Oh! that we could dive and plunge into—this unfathomed sea—himself! Omnipotence, Omniscience, Infinity—himself. He gave himself—purity, love, kindness, meekness, gentleness—that wonderful compound of all perfections, to make up one perfection-himself. You do not come to Christ's house and say, "He gives me this house, his church, to dwell in." You do not come to his table and merely say, "He gives me this table to feast at," but you go farther, and you take him by faith into your arms, and you say, "Who loved me, and gave *himself* for me." Oh! that you could get hold of that sweet word—himself! It is the love of a husband to his wife, who not only gives her all that she can wish, daily food and raiment, and all the comforts that can nourish and cherish her, and make her life glad, but who gives himself to her. So does Jesus. The body and soul of Jesus, the deity of Jesus, and all that that means, he has been pleased to give to and for his people. "Who gave himself for us."

There is another question which we shall ask the text, and that is, "*For whom did Christ give himself?*" Well, the text says, "For us." There be those who say that Christ has thus given himself for every man now living, or that ever did or shall live. We are not able to subscribe to the statement, though there is a truth in it, that in a certain sense he is "the Saviour of all men," but then it is added, "Specially of them that believe." At any rate, dear hearer, let me tell thee one thing that is certain. Whether atonement may be said to be particular or general, there are none who partake in its real efficacy but certain characters, and those characters are known by certain infallible signs. You must not say that he gave himself for you unless these signs are manifest in you, and the first sign is that of simple faith in the Lord Jesus. If thou believest in him, that shall be a proof to thee that he gave himself for thee. See, if he gave himself for all men alike, then he did equally for Judas and for Peter. Care you for such love as that? He died equally for those who were then in hell as for those who were then in heaven. Care you for such a doctrine as that? For my part, I desire to have a personal, peculiar, and special interest in the precious blood of Jesus; such an interest in it as shall lead me to his right hand, and enable me to say, "He hath washed me from my sins, in his blood." Now I think we have no right to conclude that we shall have any benefit from the death of Christ unless we trust him, and if we do trust him, that trust will produce the following things:—"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity"—we shall hate sin; we shall fight against it; we shall be delivered from it? "and purify unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." I have no right, therefore, to conclude that I shall be a partaker of the precious blood of Jesus unless I become in my life "zealous of good works," My good works cannot save me, cannot even help to save me; but they are evidences of my being saved, and if I am not zealous for good works, I lack the evidence of salvation, and I have no right whatever to conclude that I shall receive one jot of benefit from Christ's sufferings upon the tree. Oh! my dear hearer, I would to God that thou couldst trust the Man, the God, who died on Calvary! I would that thou couldst trust him so that thou couldst say, "He will save me; he has saved me." The gratitude which you would feel towards him would inspire you with an invincible hatred against sin. You would begin to fight against every evil way; you would conform yourselves, by his grace, to his law and his Word, and you would become a new creature in him! May God grant that you may yet be able to say, "Who gave himself for me"! I have asked the text enough questions, and there I leave them. For a few minutes only I am now going to use the text another way, namely:—

II. PUT THE TEXT INTO A SETTING OF FACTS.

There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days; a time when there was no time, but when Eternity was all. Then God, in the eternal purpose, decreed to save his people. If we may speak so of things too mysterious for us to know them, and which we can only set forth after the manner of men, God had determined that his people should be saved, but he foresaw that they would sin. It was necessary, therefore, that the penalty due to their sins should be borne by someone. They could not be saved except a substitute were found who would bear the penalty of sin in their place and stead. Where was such a substitute to be found? No angel offered. There was no angel, for God dwelt alone, and even if there had then been angels, they could never have dared to offer to sustain the fearful weight of human guilt. But in that solemn council-chamber, when it was deliberated who should enter into bonds of suretyship to pay all the debts of the people of God, Christ came and gave himself a bondsman and a surety for all that was due—from them, or would be due from them, to the judgment-seat of God. In that day, then, he "gave himself for us."

But Time began, and this round world had made, in the mind of God, a few revolutions. Men said the world was getting old, but to God it was but an infant. But the fulness of time was come, and suddenly, amidst the darkness of the night, there was heard sweeter singing than ere had come from mortal lips, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good will to men!" What lit up the sky with unwonted splendour and what had filled the air with *chorales* at the dead of night? See the Babe upon its mother's breast, there in Bethlehem's manger! "He gave himself for us." That same one who had given himself a surety has come down to earth to be a man, and to give himself for us. See him! For thirty years he toils on, amidst the drudgery of the carpenter's shop! What is he doing? The law needed to be fulfilled, and he "gave himself for us," and fulfilled the law. But now the time comes when he is thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, and the law demands that the penalty shall be paid. Do you see him going to meet Judas in the garden, with confident, but solemn step? He "gave himself for us." He could with a word have driven those soldiers into hell, but they bind him—he "gave himself for us." They take him before Pilate, and Herod and Caiaphas, and they mock at him, and jeer him, and pluck his cheeks, and flagellate his shoulders! How is it that he will smart at this rate? How is it that he bears so passively all the insults and indignities which they heap upon him? He gave himself for us. Our sins demanded smart; he bared his back and took the smart; he gave himself for us. But do you see that dreadful procession going through the streets of Jerusalem, along the rough pavement of the Via Dolorosa? Do you see the weeping women as they mourn because of him? How is it that he is willing to be led a captive up to the hill of Calvary? Alas! they throw him on the ground! They drive accursed iron through his hands and feet. They hoist him into the air! They dash the cross into its appointed place, and there he hangs, a naked spectacle of scorn and shame, derided of men, and mourned by angels. How is it that the Lord of glory, who made all worlds, and hung out the stars like lamps, should now be bleeding and dying there? He gave himself for us. Can you see the streaming fountains of the four wounds in his hands and feet? Can you trace his agony as it carves lines upon his brow and all down his emaciated frame? No you cannot see the griefs of his soul. No spirit can behold them. They were too terrible for you to know them. It seemed as though all hell were emptied into the bosom of the Son of God, and as though all the miseries of all the ages were made to meet upon him, till he bore:—

"All that incarnate God, could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

Now why is all this but that he gave himself for us till his head hung down in death, and his arms, in chill, cold death, hung down by his side, and they buried the lifeless Victor in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea? He gave himself for us!

What more now remaineth? He lives again; on the third day he cometh from the tomb, and even then he still gave himself for us! Oh! yes, beloved, he has gone up on high but he still gives himself for us, for up there he is constantly engaged in pleading the sinner's cause. Up yonder, amidst the glories of heaven, he has not forgotten us poor sinners who are here below, but he spreads his hands, and pleads before his Father's throne and wins for us unnumbered blessings, for he gave himself for us.

And I have been thinking whether I might not use the text in another way. Christ's servants wanted a subject upon which to preach, and so he "gave himself for us," to be the constant topic of our ministry. Christ's servants wanted a sweet companion to be with them in their troubles, and he gave himself for us. Christ's people want comfort; they want spiritual food and drink, and so he

gave himself for us—his flesh to be our meat, and his blood to be our spiritual drink. And we expect soon to go home to the land of the hereafter, to the realms of the blessed, and what is to be our heaven? Why, our heaven will be Christ himself, for he gave himself for Us. Oh! he is all that we want, all that we wish for! We cannot desire anything greater and better than to be with Christ, and to have Christ, to feed upon Christ, to lie in Christ's bosom, to know the kisses of his mouth, to look at the gleamings of his loving eyes, to hear his loving words, to feel him press us to his heart, and tell us that he has loved us from before the foundation of the world, and given himself for us.

I think we have put the text now into a setting of certain facts; do not forget them, but let them be your joy! And now the last thing we have to do is to:—

III. TURN THE TEXT TO PRACTICAL ACCOUNT BY DRAWING FROM IT A FEW INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw is this—*that he who gave himself for his people will not deny them anything*. This is a sweet encouragement to you who practice the art of prayer. You know how Paul puts it, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?" Christ is all. If Christ gives himself to you, he will give you your bread and your water, and he will give you a house to dwell in. If he gives you himself, he will not let you starve on the road to heaven. Jesus Christ does not Give us himself and then deny us common things. Oh! child of God, go boldly to the throne of grace! Thou hast got the major; thou shalt certainly have the minor; thou hast the greater, thou canst not be denied the less.

Now I draw another inference, namely, that if Christ has already given himself in so painful a way as I have described, since there is no need that he should suffer any more, *we must believe that he is willing to give himself now unto the hearts of poor sinners*. Beloved, for Christ to come to Bethlehem is a greater stoop than for him to come into your heart. Had Christ to die upon Calvary? That is all done, and he need not die again. Do you think that he who is willing to die is unwilling to apply the results of his passion? If a man leaps into the water to bring out a drowning child, after he has brought the child alive on shore, if he happens to have a piece of bread in his pocket, and the child needs it, do you think that he who rescued the child's life will deny that child so small a thing as a piece of bread? And come, dost thou think that Christ died on Calvary, and yet will not come into thy heart if thou seekest him? Dost thou believe that he who died for sinners will ever reject the prayer of a sinner? If thou believest that thou thinkest hardly of him, for his heart is very tender. He feels even a cry. You know how it is with your children; if they cry through pain, why, you would give anything for someone to come and heal them; and if you cry because your sin is painful, the great Physician will come and heal you. Ah! Jesus Christ is much more easily moved by our cries and tears than we are by the vies of our fellow-creatures. Come, poor sinner, come and put thy trust in my Master! Thou canst not think him hard-hearted. If he were, why did he die? Dost thou think him unkind? Then why did he bleed? Thou art inclined to think so hardly of him! Thou art making great cuts at his heart when thou thinkest him to be untender and ungenerous. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he would turn unto me and live." This is the voice of the God whom you look upon as so sternly just! Did Jesus Christ, the tender one, speak in even more plaintive tones, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"? You working men, you labouring men, Christ bids you come to him "all ye that labour." And you who are unhappy, you who know you have done wrong, and cannot sleep at nights because of it; you who are troubled about sin, and would fain go and hide your heads, and get:—

"Anywhere, anywhere out of the world,"

—your Father says to you one and all, "Run not from me, but come to me, my child!" Jesus, who died, says, "Flee not from me, but come to me, for I will accept you; I will receive you; I cast out none that come unto me. "Sinner, Jesus never did reject a coming soul yet, and he never will. Oh! try him! Try him! Now come, with thy sins about thee just as thou art, to the bleeding, dying Saviour, and he will say to thee, "I have blotted out thy sins; go and sin no more; I have forgiven thee." May God grant thee grace to put thy trust in him "who gave himself for us"!

There are many other inferences which I might draw if I had time, but if this last one we have drawn be so applied to your hearts as to be carried out, it will be enough. Now do not you go and try to do good worlds in order to merit heaven. Do not go and try to pray yourselves into heaven by the efficacy of praying. Remember, he "gave himself for us." The old proverb is that "there is nothing freer than a gift," and surely this gift of God, this eternal life, must be free, and we must have it freely, or not at all. I sometimes see put up at some of our doctors that they receive "gratis patients." That is the sort of patients my Master receives. He receives none but those who come gratis. He never did receive anything yet, and he never will, except your love and your thanks after he has saved you. But you must come to him empty-handed; came just as you are, and he will receive you now, and you shall live to sing to the praise and the glory of his grace who has accepted you in the Beloved, and "who gave himself for us" God help you to do it. Amen.

A Prospect of Revival

A Sermon

(No. 3514)

Published on Thursday, June 1st, 1916.

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."—Isaiah 51:3.

THE pedigree of God's chosen nation Israel may be traced back to one man and one woman—to Abraham and Sarah. Both of them were well stricken in years when the Lord called them, yet, in the fulfilment of his promise, he built up of their seed a great nation, which, for number, was comparable to the stars of heaven. Take heart, brethren; these things are written for our example and for our encouragement. His Church can never sink to so low an ebb that he cannot soon build her up again, nor in our own hearts can the work of grace ever decline so grievously that the same mighty power which once quickened cannot revive and restore us. Think of Abraham and Sarah, childless till they were old, then rejoicing in one son, who became their heir. Hence sprang the great multitude that peopled Palestine. With such a panorama unfolding before you, there is no excuse for despair; but you may find ten thousand reasons for confidence in God.

With such preface the Lord proceeds to unfold to his people a series of delightful promises. As we have no time to spare, and no words to waste, we will plunge at once into the heart of the text, and observe, first, that you have before you:—

I. HEAVENLY COMFORT PROMISED.

This is a promise to God's Church. There are some who would have us always restrain Isaiah's prophecies to the Jews, as though this was their exclusive application. I have no objection to your so understanding them in their original and literal sense, nor have I any objection to our friends labouring for the Jews especially, as a class; far rather would I commend them. Only, I would have them recollect that no Scripture is of private interpretation that, in God's sight, neither Jews nor Gentiles are recognised under this dispensation of the gospel, for he has made both one in Christ Jesus. I, therefore, as a Christian minister, when I preach the gospel, know neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free, but I simply know men as men, and go out into the world to "preach the gospel to every creature." It seems to me that this is the order in which God would have his Church carry out every evangelical enterprise, forgetting and ignoring all fleshly distinctions, understanding that now men are either sinners or saints. As to circumcision or uncircumcision, vast as its importance in the kingdom of Israel, it is of no account in the kingdom of God. The text, we believe, whatever may be its relation to the Jews as a people, belongs to the Church of God and the disciples of Christ; for "*all things are yours.*" Zion was the stronghold of Jerusalem. Originally a fortress of the Jebusites, it was taken by a feat of arms by David and his valiant men. It became afterwards the residence of David, and there, too, was the residence of the Great King; for in it was built the temple which became the glory of all lands. Hence the Church of God—which has been

captured by Christ from the world, which is the palace where he dwells, which is the temple where he is worshipped—is frequently called "Zion," and the Zion of this passage, I believe, we are warranted in interpreting as the Church of the living God.

We are told here, then, that the Lord will comfort his Church. Let *the object of this comfort*, therefore, engage your attention. "The Lord will comfort Zion." Well he may, for she is his chosen. "The Lord hath chosen Zion." He would have those upon whom his choice is fixed be glad and happy. The elect of a great king have cause for thankfulness, but the chosen of the King of Kings should rejoice continually in the God that chose them. He would have his Church rejoice because he has not only chosen her, but he has cleansed her. Jesus has put away the sin of his people by his blood, and by his Spirit he is daily renewing the nature of his children. Sin is the cause of sorrow, and when sin is put away sorrow shall be put away too. The sanctified should be happy. The Lord will, therefore, comfort them, because he cleansed them. The Church of God is placed where God dwells:—

"Where God doth dwell sure heaven is there;
And singing there should be."

What can ye conceive of weeping and lamenting in the house where Jehovah dwelleth? It was a rule with one of the old monarchs that no one should come into his presence sad. In all our afflictions we may draw near to the Lord, but his presence should dispel our sorrow and sighing; for the children of Zion should be joyful in their King. If the Lord dwelleth in the midst of his people, there ought to be shootings of joy. The presence of the King of Heaven is the heaven of their delight. Moreover, Zion enjoys her Monarchs love, and therefore, he would have her comforted. We know not how dear to the heart of Christ his Church is, but we do know this: that for his Church he left his Father's house and came down to earth, and was poor, that she, through his poverty, might be made rich. A man leaveth father and mother, and cleaveth to his wife, and they become one flesh; but what shall I say of the great mystery of this glorious Lover, who left his Father's house, and did cleave unto his Church, and became one flesh with her that he might lift her up and set her upon his own throne, that she might reign with him as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife? Well may, therefore, the Lord desire his Church to be happy. Eternal love has fixed itself upon her. Eternal purposes cluster around her. Eternal power is sworn to protect her. Eternal faithfulness has guaranteed eternal life to all her citizens. Why should she not be comforted? I do not wonder that the text says the Lord will comfort the people whom he has thus favoured.

And *the Lord himself is the Comforter*. "The Lord will comfort Zion." Beloved, we make but sorry comforters for God's people unless Jehovah puts his own hand to the work. I have sometime tried to cheer up my brethren when they have been desponding, and I hope not without success; yet I have always felt that to relieve and refresh a desponding saint, I must fetch the remedies from my Master's pharmacy. So, doubtless, those of you who have ever sought to obey the command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," must have found that it was not your word that could comfort Zion, nor your sympathy, but God's truth applied by God' Spirit, for this alone can comfort Zion. Oh! blessed promise! "The Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort her waste places." He that made the heavens will become the Comforter of his people. The Holy Ghost, who brooded over chaos, and brought order out of confusion; the mighty Spirit who came down at Pentecost in tongues of fire, with a sound like a mighty rushing wind—that same blessed Spirit will come to the hearts of the members of his Church and comfort them. There are sorrows for which there is no solace within the reach of the creature; there is a ruin which it would baffle any mortal to retrieve. Happy for us

that the Omnipotent comes to our aid. It is "he who telleth the number of the stars; calleth them all by their names"; who also "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds!" Where he is, rolling the stars along, filling heaven with wonder as he creates majestic orbs, and keeps them in their pathways, making the comet fling its gorgeous light across space and startle nations, holding the burning furnace of the sun in the hollow of his hand; yet he stoops down to minister to a desponding spirit, and to pour the oil and wine of heavenly comfort into a poor distracted heart! Yes, it is Zion that is to be comforted, but it is Jehovah himself who has promised to be her Comforter!

And how does the Lord propose to comfort Zion? If you read the verse through, you will find it is *by making her fertile*. He will turn her barren deserts into fruitful gardens, and her unproductive wilderness into a blooming Eden. The true way to comfort the Church is to build her synagogues, restore the desolation of former times, to sow her fields, plant her vineyards, make her soil fruitful, call out the industry of her sons and daughters, and fill them with lively, ardent zeal. There is an everlasting consolation for the Church in those grand doctrines of grace revealed to us in covenant, such as election, particular redemption, effectual calling, final perseverance, and the faithfulness of God. Resting in his love, God forbid that we should ever keep back these grand truths; they are the wells of salvation from which we rejoice to draw the water of life. But there are other truths besides these and we could not make full proof of our ministry if we overlooked the rain, even the former and the latter rain, which God gives in due season, or withholds in his chastening anger. I have often remarked that those persons who are always crying after the comfort that is to be derived from the stability of God's purpose are strangely lacking in that present joy and jubilant song which revels in the goodness of the Lord, who clothes the pastures with flocks, and covers the valleys over with corn. I have also remarked that the best way to make a Christian man happy is to make him useful, ploughing the fields which God has watered, and gathering the fruits which he has ripened. A Christian Church never enjoys so much concord, love, and happiness as when every member is kept hard at work for God, every soul upon the stretch of anxiety to do good and communicate, every disciple a good soldier of the Cross, fighting the common enemy. Thus the Lord will comfort Zion, and he comforts her by turning her desert into a garden, and her wilderness into Eden.

And oh! my brethren, how happy is the Church when all the members are active, all the trees bearing fruit; when sinners are converted, and daily added to the fellowship of the saved; when, instead of the thorn, there comes up the myrtle, and instead of the briar, there comes up the fir-tree; when God is turning hard hearts, that were, like rocks, into good soil, where the corn of the Kingdom may grow. There is no joy like it! If you can be happy in seeking your own good, without caring for the welfare of others, I pity you. If a minister can be content to go on preaching without converts or baptisms, the Lord have mercy upon his miserable soul! Can he be a minister of Christ who does not win souls? A man might as well be a huntsman and never take any prey; a fisherman, and always come home with empty nets; a husbandman, and never reap a harvest! I wonder at some people's complacency. When God never blesses them, they never fail to bless themselves. "Divine sovereignty withholds the increase," they say. But it really is their idleness that tends to poverty. The promise of God is to the diligent, not the indolent. Let Paul plant, and let Apollos water, God will give the increase. It may not come to-day, nor to-morrow, nor the next day, but come it must. The Word cannot return unto God void. It must prosper in the thing whereto he has sent it. Had God sent us on a listless, bootless errand, we might well complain, but he doth not so. Only let us preach Jesus

Christ with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and we shall, doubtless, come again rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. Although when we went forth, we wept because of our inability and our want of confidence, yet this is the way in which God comforts us.

The promise, you will observe, is given in words that contain an absolute pledge. He *shall* and he *will* are terms that admit of no equivocation. What an emphasis that man of God, the late Joseph Irons, used to lay on the words when he got hold of a "shall" and a "will" from, the mouth of the Lord! Though some people say we must not make too much of little words, I will venture to make as much as ever I can of these two potent monosyllables. "The Lord *shall* comfort Zion; the Lord *will* comfort all her waste places." How much better and brighter this reads than an "if," or a "but," or a "perhaps," or a "peradventure"! He *shall* comfort Zion. Oh! how those dear saints, the Covenanters, when they were hunted about, and fled into dens and caves, said, "Ah! but King Jesus *will* have his own; he *shall* comfort Zion!" And our Puritan forefathers, when priests threatened to harry them out of the land, could see with prophetic eye the time when the harlot church would yet be driven out, and the true, legitimate children of God would take her place; they could say, "The Lord *shall* comfort Zion," and they looked forward to happier halcyon days. No less did those glorious Albigenses and Waldenses, when they stained the snows of the Alps with their blood, feel confident that the Church of Rome would not gain the day, that God would yet return and avenge the blood of his martyred saints, and give the victory to his true people. And surely you and I may take comfort too. "The Lord *shall* comfort Zion; he *will* comfort her waste places." Brethren, there are brighter days to come. The day breaketh, and the shadows flee away! Our hope is in God. Never doubt the true progress of the Church. Believe that, notwithstanding every discouragement that checks our progress, the cause of God goes on; it must go on, and it *shall* go on, till King Jesus is universally acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We have not to serve a master who cannot take care of his own. To your tents, ye Philistines, when the God of Israel comes to the battle! Where will ye be? Your ranks are broken; ye flee like thin clouds before a Biscay gale! When God comes forth he has but by his Spirit to blow upon his enemies, and they fly before him, like the chaff before the wind. The Lord *shall* and the Lord *will*; who, then, shall disannul it? Though foes may hoot and fiends may howl, he will keep his word; it shall come to pass, and he will get to himself renown in fulfilling his own good pleasure. Having thus enlarged upon the heavenly comfort promised, we proceed to notice the:—

II. MOURNFUL CASES FAVOURED.

"*He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.*" Now are there not to be found in the visible Church persons whose character is here vividly depicted? I think there are three sorts of people in such a case, to all of whom I trust the blessing will come. *There are those who once were fruitful, but are now comparable to wastes.* If God should visit his Church, he will be pleased to comfort the waste places. Do I not address some who must needs recognise their own portrait? You used to be church members, and then you did seem to run well; what did hinder you? You were, apparently, brave soldiers once, but you deserted and went over to the enemy. Still, if you are the Lord's people, one of the signs of God's grace to his Church will be the recovery of backsliders. I remember one Monday afternoon, when we had been waiting upon the Lord in prayer ever since seven o'clock in the morning, that there came a most remarkable wave of prayer over the assembly. And then two backsliders got up and prayed, one after the other. According to their own account, they had been very bad fellows indeed, and had sorely transgressed against God; but there they were, broken-hearted and fairly broken down. It was a sight to make

angels rejoice as their tears flowed. Certainly their sobs and cries touched the hearts of all of us who were assembled. I thought to myself, "Then God is blessing us, for when backsliders come back it is a proof that God has visited his people." You recollect when it was that Naomi returned to Israel with Ruth, her daughter-in-law. They never came back during the time of famine; they stopped in Moab then, but they came back when they heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Even then Naomi said, "Call me not Naomi." She seemed to come back from her exile groaning and full of bitterness, and yet she came back because God was with his people. Backsliders, come back, come now, for God is with his Church, and he has promised to comfort her waste places. Oh! you who have forgotten your Lord, remember your first Husband! It was better with you then than now. Though you have gone astray, yet the Lord saith, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." You may break the marriage bond with God, but he will not break it with you. He claims that he is married to you, and he bids you return to him. I hope that some backslider will be encouraged by this promise to return, with full purpose of heart, to the God of his salvation.

Then a second department of the promise is, "*He will make her wilderness like Eden.*" I take the wilderness here to be a place of scanty vegetation. The Oriental wildernesses are not altogether barren sand, but there is a feeble herbage which struggles for existence. We are told, you recollect, that "Moses kept his father's sheep in the wilderness." Oh! how many there are in the Church of God who are just like that! They are Christians, but sorry Christians they are. They do love the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is with a moonlight love, cold, very cold, and chill. They have light, but it is dim and hazy. If they do anything for Christ, their service is scanty; their contribution mean; their charity grudging. They bring him no sweet cane with money. They do not fill him with the fat of their sacrifices, but they make him to serve with their sins, and they weary him with their iniquities. Ah! dear friend, if thou art indeed a child of God, then there is this comfort for thee. We will make her wilderness like Eden. Even you who have borne so little for God shall yet be visited, and made fruitful when the Lord comforts his people.

A third character is implied in the desert—the deserted places where no man dwells, where the traveller does not care to linger :How many professors of religion, how many who attend our chapels, answer to this description of the soil! They are like deserts. You not only never did bring forth fruit, but you never concerned yourself to do so. No man seems to care for you, and you appear to yourselves as though you were like the sand, which it would be a hopeless task to plough, for the gleaner would never fill his hand from the produce, much less the reaper his bosom with the sheaves. Ah! well, but God has a word for these desert souls. He will make her desert like the garden of the Lord. I pray—nay, I know—that during the gracious season which God has given us we shall see many a desert heart made to blossom like the rose. These be they whom the Lord will specially transform—backsliders, scanty Christians, and those who have often heard, but never yet proved the power of the gospel at all.

Ask ye now, what does the Lord say he will do for them? He says (hear it and marvel!) that he will make the wilderness like Eden. You know what Eden was. It was the garden of the earth in the days of primeval purity. Fruit and flower, lofty tree, and lively vegetation abounded there in profuse luxuriance. I know not how its groves and shrubberies were tenanted by graceful creatures and lovely birds, but I can well imagine that every sense of man was regaled by its unflinching charms. No thorns or thistles cursed the soil, no sweating brow with arduous toll forced the crops from barren sods. The land laughed with plenty. The river, branching into many heads, watered the

garden. God himself was pleased to water it with the mists, and to make the fruits grow, to swell in rich abundance, and early come to mature perfection. So the Lord says that when he visits his Church he will make these poor backsliders, these immature Christians, these nominal professors, like Eden. Oh! that the Lord would do it! Oh! that he would make them healthy, fruitful, prolific in fruitfulness, and spontaneously fruit-bearing, so that we should almost have need to say, "Hold, Lord!" just as Moses and Aaron did when the people brought in the offerings for the Tabernacle, until there were more than enough. Oh! that the Church of Christ may be enriched with all spiritual gifts, with all heavenly graces, with all that can minister to the welfare of the saints, to the advantage of the world, and to the glory of him who created and redeemed us! God grant it may be so!

Moreover, as if to strengthen the volume of his grace and our hope, he says that *he will make her desert like the garden of the Lord*. He shall come to you and delight your heart and soul with his converse. If ever you should be an Eden, you shall be like to Paradise for a yet higher reason, because your fellowship shall be with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. There shall be upon you the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed. The Lord shall water his Church, shall water it every moment. He shall make fat our bones, and cause us to be as a watered garden, as a well of water whose waters fail not. Oh! some of you may well envy those happy days you once enjoyed! Would you like them back again? Then plead with God the promise of the text. You were once blessed with nearness to, and communion with, Christ. You once prayed with fervour, and your souls prospered. Go to God with this promise and say, "Lord, I am a desert; I am a wilderness; I am a waste place; but comfort thy Church, and let me partake of the consolation by making me fruitful in every good word, and work to thy glory!" The Lord will do it, for the promises of God shall certainly be fulfilled.

Who but Jehovah himself can do this? I have already noted this. "He will make her wilderness like Eden." It is he only that can perform it. The minister cannot. The Church cannot, with all her efforts. Talk of getting up a revival! It were insufferable arrogance to make the attempt. It belongeth not to us to do this. Unto the Lord our God alone doth this belong. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." If he will but visit his Church, then we shall see the wilderness rejoice, but if not, we may plough, as is our duty, and we may work upon it, as is our calling, but there shall be no joy and no rejoicing. We conclude with the view of:—

III. CERTAIN DESIRABLE RESULTS WHICH ARE PREDICTED.

"Joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving and the voice of melody." You notice the doubles. The parallelism of Hebrew poetry, perhaps, necessitated them. Still, I am prone to remember how John Bunyan says that "all the flowers in God's garden bloom double." We are told of " manifold mercies," that is, mercies which are folded up one in another, so that you may unwrap them and find a fresh mercy enclosed in every fold. Here we have "joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Just so; the Psalmist tells us of our soul being satisfied with "marrow and fatness"—two things. Elsewhere he speaks of "loving-kindness and tender mercy"—two things again. The Lord multiplies his grace. He is always slow to anger, but he is always lavish of his grace. See here, then, God will give his people an overflowing joy, an inexpressible joy, a sort of double joy, as though he would give them more joy than they could hold—joy and then gladness—,thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Oh! *what a delightful thing must a, visitation from God be to his Church!* Without God, all she can do is to groan. Nay, she will not always do that. She sometimes indulges a foolish conceit, and says, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." After that will Soon be heard

the hooting of dragons and the cry of owls. Let God visit his Church, and there is sure to be thanksgiving and the voice of melody. It has been remarked that all revivals of true religion in ancient as well as modern times have been attended by revival of psalmody and song. The joy that makes the heart grateful, enlivens the spirits, and diffuses happiness, will seek and must find some tuneful strains. Not to speak of the Hebrew Psalter or of the Greek Hymnals, in Luther's day his translation of the Psalms and his chorales did more, perhaps, to make the Reformation popular than even his preaching, for the ploughman at his field-labour, and the housewife at the cradle, would sing one of Luther's Psalms; so, too, in our own country, in Wycliffe's day, fresh psalms and hymns were scattered all over the land. And you know how, in the last century, Wesley and Whitefield gave a new impetus to congregational singing. The hymns were printed on little fly-sheets after each sermon, and at length these units swelled into a volume. Collections and selections of hymns were published. So fond, indeed, were the Methodists of singing, that it became a taunt and a by-word to speak of them as canting Psalm-singers. But this is the mark of a revived church everywhere. New impetus is given to the service of song. When the Bridegroom is gone we may well mourn and fast, and hang our harps on the willows; it is when the Bridegroom cometh that joy and feasting seek the aid of vocal music, and the people of God break forth into thanksgiving with the voice of melody. I do fervently hope, beloved, that we shall have this thanksgiving, and this voice of melody in our midst for many a day to come! Would God that all the churches enjoyed it! Need I say that from all parts of the country there are, tokens of it now? We do not desire at any time a monopoly of blessing. May every Christian denomination and every Christian community be favoured with the dew of heaven, and have their roots watered by that river which is full of water. Oh! that all the Churches of Christ were fruitful! Instead of wishing any of them to be weak, I would say, with Moses, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them! Oh! that Jesus might be extolled from the uttermost parts of the earth to the highest heavens! Brethren, let us ask God to fulfil this promise to the Church at large. Let us say to him, "Lord, comfort thy Zion! She has many waste places—comfort her! Thou knowest she has many barren spots—turn them into gardens of the Lord! Oh! let the heavenly rain descend, and the divine dew come from thee, that the wilderness and the solitary place may yet be glad!"

But what shall I say to those of you who are not saved? If you want to become as these gardens of the Lord, it is only the grace of God which bringeth salvation that can work in you this mighty change. Look to the Lord. He it is who must do it. He hears prayer. A negro was once sent by his master on an errand that did not suit him; he did not want to go. So when he came to a river he turned back, and said, "Master, I came to a river; and I could not swim across it." "Well, but was there not a ferryboat?" "Yes, there was a ferry-boat, but the man was on the other side." "Well," said the master, "did you call to the ferry-man to come and take you across?" No; he did not think of doing that, for, as he did not wish to go over, he was glad to find an excuse. Now it is true, sinner, that you cannot save yourself, but there is One who can. There is a ferry-boat and there is a Ferry-man. Cry to him! Cry to him, "Master, across this river be pleased to take me; I cannot swim it, but thou canst bear me over it. Oh! do for me what I cannot do for myself. Make me to be accepted in the Beloved!" If you seek the Lord, he will be found of you. He never did set a soul a-seeking but what he meant to bless it. But if you will not seek, what should be said of you but that on your head should lie your own blood? I know many of you to be greatly impressed this week. I hope the impression will not be blown away, like smoke out of a chimney. May God make a deep work in your souls! Oh! some of you were easily impressed, but you quite as easily forgot the impression.

You are like Ephraim's cake that was baked on one side; you do not get thoroughly cooked. You do not feel the power of the gospel permeating your whole nature in every part. You are like a cake not turned, and God accepts you not because of this. Oh! that there might be a thorough work of the Spirit in your souls, a work of grace that should bring you to Jesus to be rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Amen.

The Fruits of Grace

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's day Evening, January 21st, 1872.

"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it all be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the, work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."—Isaiah 19:18-25.

THIS is a very remarkable prophecy. Attempts have been made to explain it, as if it were already fulfilled. I believe all such attempts to be utter failures. This promise stands on record to be, fulfilled at some future day In those bright days for which some of us are looking, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, so the waters cover the sea, then shall this word to Egypt be verified; yea, and God shall be glorified both by Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the land of Israel. This ought to be an encouragement to carry on missionary operations with great vigour. Here is a distinct promise for Assyria and for Egypt. Let not the missionary be afraid, even if for thousands of years to come there should be little apparent success to the preaching of the gospel. If the Lord should tarry another six thousand years, ay, sixty thousand years—and he may—we are still to go on working, and still to go on labouring, looking for his coming, and expecting it, but not relaxing our efforts because he pleases to delay it, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall know his glory, and you may depend upon it, there is no spot of earth that shall be left to be Satan's dominion. It shall be conquered for Christ, and in truth he shall "see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied." It is most encouraging to find Egypt mentioned. You find it in one of the Psalms, "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and they shall come out of Ethiopia." Now this I believe to be the literal meaning of the passage. You must understand that the prophecy was given to the people of Israel, and it was given to them, as it were, to children that were using types and figures. It speaks in their language. Hence it speaks of altars, and pillars, and oblations, all of which are to be understood now in the spiritual sense. The Church of God has come to her manhood, in which she has done

with material altars and material oblations, seeing that she has Christ to be her only altar, her only priest, and prayer and praise to be the spiritual oblation which she shall bring. I understand the prophecy to be, in brief, just this. In the latter day, Egypt will be converted, and Assyria too, and wonders of grace will be performed in that land, and the people of the land shall with delight worship the Most High.

Having said this, I am now going to use the text for another purpose. *Here is a wonderful display of the grace of God* in this promise to Egypt. I see the very heart of God revealed. I see a display of what God will do, not to Egypt only, but to others also, and though we have much to say, we will try to open up, in as few particulars as we can make them, the display of grace which God gives among the sons of men. We begin thus:—

I. THE GRACE OF GOD OFTEN COMES TO THE VERY WORST OF MEN.

It is promised to Egypt. Now Egypt was the nation which was the type of God's enemies. It was over Egypt that he triumphed at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord?" and we regard Egypt as always being typical of the enemies of God—the peculiar and chief enemies. Yet the grace of God is to come to Egypt. And so will it come often to the worst enemies that God has. Saul of Tarsus, foaming at the mouth with rage against the Christ of God, was met and conquered by eternal love, and his heart was renewed, and he was made an apostle. And oftentimes since then, electing love has chosen those that were most furious against Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit has come upon them, and turned the lions into lambs, and made them lie down at the feet of the Saviour. Let us have hope for the worst of men, and let the worst of men have hope for themselves under the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Egyptians were a peculiarly debased people as to their idolatry. If you go into the British Museum you will still see the cats, the crocodiles, the scarlet ibis, which they were accustomed to worship. Besides that, it was one of the sarcasms of the Roman poets that the Egyptians worshipped gods which they grew in their own gardens. They had the sacred beetle, the sacred mouse, and I know not what. And yet, degraded as they were by idolatry, the grace of God was to come to them. And men may have gone far into superstition; they may have debased even their own intellect by what they have tried to believe, and forced themselves down into the very deeps of superstition, and yet, for all that, the grace of God can come to them and lift them up. And the Egyptian were degraded politically too, for we read in one passage of the prophets that Egypt shall be the basest of all nations; and yet, though the basest of nations in that respect, the grace of God shall come to them. Oh! how wondrous is the sovereignty of God! The devil cannot dye a soul so scarlet in sin but what the blood of Christ can make it white as snow. Satan cannot drive a chosen sheep of Christ so far on the mountains of vanity, or into the deserts of sin, but what the great Shepherd of the sheep can find that sheep, and bring it back again. There is hope for the mart sunken. There is hope for those that grovel, and that sink in the mire. The infinite compassion of God can reach them, and the eternal power of God can lift them up.

But there is one singular note in the text, that one of the cities in that land of Egypt (if I read the text aright) that was to be saved was called the City of Destruction. It had come to be named by that name, and yet, think of that, God looked upon it with mercy. Now there are in villages, and there are in towns, and certainly there are in London, men that have become so notorious for every sort of vice and sin that they are only known as the devil's own servants; and if anybody in the place were to speak of them, it would be with no question about the horrible condition of their minds and the state of their character. And yet in how many cases has the Lord been pleased to make such beings, new men in Christ Jesus! I have some in my mind's eye now, who have been to

me a source of unutterable joy, whose characters were known, and certainly not admired. They were the dread of all with whom they dwelt. I remember one whose fist had many a time laid low his adversary, and whose oaths, and cursings, and songs at midnight often made the village tremble when he was filled with drink. But what a humble child he became when at last the gospel brought him down! How changed and how quiet was his manner when Jesus Christ had renewed his soul—something like John Bunyan with his drink and his Sabbath breakings—but what a saint was he when bowed at his Saviour's feet, he found his sins forgiven! We must not say, "Our children are hopeful, and God will save them, but we cannot expect him to look upon the fallen and degraded." Ah! if, is Pharisaism that would make us speak so. The gospel has found some of its brightest jewels in the lowest haunts of vice. Bear it, bear it into the caves of darkness, where the blackness seems to be palpable, and to hang like the glooms of death—bear ye aloft the everlasting torch, which the divine Lord himself has kindled, and you shall discover by its light some precious blood—redeemed ones, who shall be to the praise of the glory of his grace. "One shall be called the City of Destruction, but thus saith the Lord, I have delivered it, I will save it, for my name's sake."

Now this ought to be very encouraging to every hearer present, for where there is mercy proclaimed to the chief of sinners, there is encouragement to every form of sinner to come humbly to the heavenly Father, and plead the precious blood of Jesus, and obtain life and peace. God grant we may be led there for his name's sake! But now the second observation is that grace is displayed in our text from the fact that:—

II. GOD'S GRACE SENDS A SAVIOUR.

Note, too, that he adds this word, "A GREAT ONE, and he shall deliver them." Beloved friends, you know, all of you, what I have to say, but yet, though you know it, I know no story ever make score glad your spirit than the old, old story of the Saviour. He that has come to save us is Jesus, the Son of God; to save us from every stain of sin; to save us from our propensity to sin, from the power of our habits, and from the snares of Satan. He has come to save us from the death eternal, to save us from the wrath to come. God has sent us a Saviour. We could not have saved ourselves, but one has come who can. The text says that Saviour is a great one. Oh! I wanted a great Saviour. A little Saviour would not have answered my turn, for great sin wanted a great atonement, and my hard heart wanted great grace to soften it down. Now he that came to save us was God himself—Jesus—nothing less than God—counting it not robbery to be equal with God. He is great in his nature, for as God he is infinite—omnipotent. He is great also in what he has done. Look to him on the cross; it is the Son of God pouring out his life for sinners that they may live through his death. There must be great merit in such a sacrifice. I never dare believe in any limited merit in Christ. He who gave himself there upon the cross, being very God of very God, though certainly man—there can be no limit set to the value of the atonement which he made. Oh! beloved, it is a great Saviour that God gives. And now that he has risen from the dead, he stands before God to plead for us, and it is no little plea—no plea which might be put back or put off. With authority he pleads before his Father's throne, points to his own wounds, and the Father's heart always yields to the Son's intercession. You have a great Saviour, for he is a great pleader. And, besides that, all power is in his hands; the keys of death and hell are at his girdle, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God. Oh! what a Saviour we have! Dare we doubt him? When we cast ourselves upon him, is there not an end to all our fears, for Jesus is mighty to save,

And what a word that is in the text?"a Saviour and a great one, and *he shall deliver them*!" God did not send Christ at a haphazard. Jesus did not come here to save those who might perchance be saved—to make men salvable, but he will save all he came to save. Those on whom he fixed his eye of everlasting love, for whom the precious drops were shed—these he will, by the power of his arm, pluck from the jaws of the lion, because, with the blood of his heart he had redeemed them. "He shall deliver them." Oh! you that trust in Jesus, lay this word home. May the Spirit of God lay it home to you. He shall deliver them from all temptation, from all trial, from all affliction, from death itself. "He shall deliver them."

Now put the two points together. We have mentioned that the grace of God comes to the greatest of sinners, and it brings to them a Saviour, and a great one, and I have laid open to you something of the heart of God in the greatness of his compassion. But we must pass on. Where the grace of God comes, it seems from the text that:—

III. IT CHANGES MEN'S LANGUAGE.

Turn to the 18th verse. "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan"—the spiritual meaning of which is that the grace of God shall make men speak that holy and pure language which is the mark of a child of God. O dear hearer, if the grace of God ever meets with you, your friends will know it—every one—by your conversation. That man could not speak without an oath; there will be no oath now. When he did speak, it was in a proud, boastful, hectoring way about himself. Ah! you will hardly know him to be the same man; for he will speak so humbly and so gently, and when he comes to speak about himself he will have the tears in his eyes to think of what he used to be, and what the grace of God has done for him now. Then his language would be lascivious and unclean at times, but now he desires not even to hear of such things, much less to mention them; for it is a shame for a Christian to speak of the things which are done by many in secret. The grace of God soon rinses out a man's mouth. His wife knows it; his children know it; his workfolk know it; and though some of them will think him a fool to speak after the way in which he now does though he does not imitate the language of Christians, and is not a cant, yet there is something about his very brogue and talk that might make men say, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee." Oh! would not it be a mercy if God would change the speech of some in London! Even our boys in the streets sometimes talk in a way that is enough to make your blood chill. Foul words are very common in our streets and elsewhere. O sovereign grace, come and visit these, and they shall speak no longer the language of Babylon and the language of Belial, but they shall speak the language of Canaan, for God shall give them a pure language. When you hear men that once could curse begin to pray, when those who were given to blasphemies begin to pray, and when, instead of hearing the noise of strife in the working-man's house, you hear the song of praise, then is fulfilled the saying that is written, "In that day shall five cities speak the language of Canaan. and swear to the Lord of Hosts." But I must pass on. Where the grace of God comes:—

IV. IT SETS MEN ON HOLY SERVICE.

"There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of :Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. "When a man is in sin he worships himself, or he serves his pleasure and Satan; but when the grace of God comes, the man begins at once to serve God, and becomes God's servant. I am sure I know houses now that have an altar to God in them—the family altar—where you would not have thought such a thing could ever have been. I know some, too, that will this very day give of their substance to God, who two or three years ago would have scorned the act. They would

have said it was a waste of money altogether to give anything to the cause of the Most High. There are some teaching at the Sabbath school, and spending the day of rest in, perhaps, the hardest toil of the week, and doing it very cheerfully too, who once would have laughed to scorn any proposal that they should have done any such thing. But the Lord, when he gets men's hearts, and washes away their sins, takes them into his service, and makes those who were most ready to serve Satan become most willing to serve him. Is not this true—I appeal to many here present—is it not your delight now to do all you can for the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps, however, while you say "Yes," you also add, "But I do not do half as much as I should, nor as I ought." You feel precisely as I also felt—and I must make the same confession as yourself. But, brothers and sisters, do not let it end in confession. Let us wake up and do more; for the love that saved us, the love that bought us at such a price, ought not to be recompensed so poorly as it has been. And let us pray for the grace of God, that we may ever have an altar in our own hearts, and be ourselves the sacrifice—that our whole life may be a life of consecration to the living God. Oh! that our common dress might be as priestly vestment, and our ordinary meals as sacraments, and ourselves as priests unto the living God; our whole life a psalm, and our whole being a hallelujah to the Most High! Where the grace of God comes with power, it makes the worst of men become the best, and the lowest of the low become true servants of the living God. "Can it be?" says one; "can I ever be a servant of God" Ah! yes: hark to the song of heaven! "We have washed our robes"—then they needed washing—"and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Glory be to him who hath made us kings and priests unto our God."

The next display of divine grace in the text is to be seen in this, that where the grace of God comes:—

V. IT TEACHES MEN TO PRAY.

We read in the 20th verse, "They shall cry unto the Lord because of oppressors." This is a kind of prayer that only God can teach us. You can easily learn to say a form of prayer, or to read one from a book, but a prayer that can fairly be called a cry is the fruit of grace. The cry is the natural expression of distress. There is no hypocrisy in a cry. When one is sore sick and ready to die, and cries out in anguish, it is the genuine expression of an oppressed spirit. And God always teaches his children to pray such prayers as those. And oh! how sweetly will saved souls pray next to the songs of angels, I think the prayers of new converts are among the sweetest things that ever reach our ears. When we have been a long time professors, we are very apt to get into a sort of stilted mode of talking to God in prayer, and men that have more gifts than graces will spend the time in words, words, words. But oh! how has my heart leaped when I have heard a cry, such as "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" when some soul, ready to burst with fear of the wrath to come, has cried out, "Jesus, Lord, have mercy upon me!" or when some heart that has just found Jesus has praised and magnified the exceeding mercy that has put away its sin. Christ can teach the blasphemer to pray; he can take the profane into his school, and teach them all to cry, and what all the clergy and ministry in the land could not do, namely, teach a man to pray one sincere prayer, God the Holy Ghost can do to the very offscouring and the scum of the universe, when once he comes to deal with them in the way of grace. Wonders of grace to God belong. He that teaches us to pray will teach us to praise him in heaven. The soul that lisps out its desires sincerely to God shall one day sing with cherubim and seraphim before the eternal throne. But I must hasten on. Where grace comes:—

VI. IT INSTRUCTS MEN.

We learn this from the next verse, "And the Lord shall be known in Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day." It is a very serious evil with many hearers that they are altogether ignorant of the things of God; but it is delightful to observe how sweetly the Holy Spirit can teach. I have spoken lately with some whom God has called by his grace during the past few weeks, and I have been surprised that, although they had never been Bible readers, nor received any religious instruction in their youth, when the grace of God showed them their sin, he did it thoroughly, and when he showed them the Saviour, he did it in a wondrous way, so that when they came to read the Bible it was not difficult to them to understand it, nor to lay hold upon it with delight, and some have become well instructed in the things of the kingdom in a very short time indeed. There is no teacher like the Holy Spirit! "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord," and when he teaches they are taught indeed. What boots it to a man to know all earthly knowledge if he knows not his God? But where grace comes, the man is no longer a stranger to the Lord; he knows the Father, the Son, the Spirit. He must know the Father, for he has become a child. He must know the Son, for he is his only confidence. He must know the Spirit, for it is the Spirit that dwelleth in him, and hath renewed him. Oh! that God would be pleaded to-night to take some fresh scholars into his school! Don't say, "I am poor and illiterate." What matters that? With the Lord to teach you, you will make an apt scholar. We can only teach your ears; he can teach your hearts. We can only write the copy in a book, but he can write it on the fleshy tablets of your souls. Never despair of being instructed in the things of heaven. The Lord can graciously instruct you, and if he leads you to-night to receive the Saviour—the great one—he will begin the divine teaching which will end in your being complete in Christ, and your entering into his glory. I want you to notice a little more. Where the grace of God comes into a man's heart:—

VII. IT MAKES EVEN TROUBLE A BLESSING TO HIM

Read the 22nd verse. "The Lord shall smite Egypt"—there is the trouble—"he shall smite"—there is the trouble again—"and heal it"—there is the mercy—"and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them." An ungodly man when he is in trouble, has nothing whatever to sustain him, and no good comes out of the trouble. But get the heart renewed, and let the man receive the Saviour, and perhaps the greatest mercies he has are those which are blessings in disguise. I read a story the other day—an incident which happened to a City Missionary. He was preaching one night out in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there was a man—an extremely aged man, who had lost his wife, and lived in a garret alone. He had scarcely a rag upon him and was nearly starved, and he was going out to commit suicide, but, moved by curiosity, he listened to the preaching of the gospel, and it saved his soul. It turned out that he had once been worth £100,000, and had been a distinguished merchant, but had lost his all in a foolish speculation, and had come down from the heights of riches to the lowest poverty, and at an extreme age he found Christ. The missionary found him friends who kept him with about enough to keep body and soul together—a humble crust in a very lowly, solitary room—but he used to say that now he had found the Lord; but he might never have found him if he had not lost all his wealth, and he looked upon it as the greatest blessing that had ever occurred to him, that he was brought to such beggary, that he was able and willing to stand in the street to listen to a sermon; for he said that in his riches he had despised the gospel, and had been altogether an atheist and an unbeliever but now, when brought to the lowest, Christ had found him, and he had more happiness with his cross than he had with his wealth. Oh! get the grace of God in your heart, and then broken limbs will be a bleeding. That long depression of trade that brought you oft low will appear a very different thing now. Your lot is very

lowly now perhaps, and your toils severe, but God's grace will gild all these dark things in such a way that you shall even learn to glory in tribulation also, and bless the Lord that he did not leave you to be a stranger to him, but made you his child and, therefore, made you feel his rod for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? Beloved, what a blessing it is to have the grace of God, seeing it turns adverse circumstances into true prosperity and makes our losses to be our lasting gains! One other reflection, and that is this concerning the grace of God:—

VIII. IT CHANGES THE RELATIONS OF MEN ONE TO ANOTHER.

Read the 23rd verse. "In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." Now the Egyptians and the Assyrians were enemies to one another; they were always fighting. There was a bloody feud and war between them century after century; but when the grace of God shall visit them both, there shall be no more fighting; the Egyptian shall go and visit the Assyrian, and the Assyrian shall visit the Egyptian. Have you never met with a case? Two brothers were at enmity, and would not speak to each other. One of them was saved by grace, and he thought, "Oh! if my brother John might be converted!" He wanted to fall into his brother's arms and make it all up, and be friends again. Meanwhile, brother John had heard the gospel somewhere else, and his soul had been saved, and he goes to find out the other brother, and all are reconciled, and the families that had been at a distance are knit together in love. Oh! the gospel soon breaks down barriers. I won't give a penny for your religion if you are at enmity with anybody—if you can say of anyone of your kith and kin, "I will never speak to them again." Mind, in that day when you appear before God, how can you expect mercy? Well, now, genuine grace makes us forgive as we have been forgiven, and it establishes intercommunications between those who had long been enemies to one another. Should there happen to be in this place at this time any that have long been at variance, I believe that there is no way of establishing a lasting love between you like your both loving Jesus Christ. If you cannot meet anywhere else, you are sure to meet if you come to the cross. A common Saviour will hind you together. Bought with the same blood, and filled with tile same divine life, you will become members of the same mystical body; you cannot help loving each other. Oh! that God would put an end in the world to all wars between nations, as well as all strifes between individuals. It won't come about by trade, nor yet be politics, nor by anything of man's devising; but if the gospel spreads, if God converts Egypt and converts Assyria, then Egypt will not desire war with Asia, nor Assyria with Egypt, but they shall be one in Christ Jesus the Lord. Wonders of grace! wonders of grace, that those that hated should love, and enemies should become friends. We will close with these last words. Where the grace of God comes:—

IX. IT MAKES MEN TO BE BLESSED, AND TO BE A BLESSING.

You will find that affirmed in the last two verses. "They shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, and it shall be said, Blessed be Egypt, my people." The man that was accursed before, and was a curse, becomes blessed, and is a blessing. I will not enlarge upon it, but I will say this to you, the members of the church. It has delighted me to find the many earnest hearts there are here that are trying, to do good, some in one way, and some in another. I would in every case, if my encouragement were worth your having, give it you very heartily. But, beloved, if I do not know of it, and if no one knows of it but yourself and God, go on, go on. It is God's work to save souls, and you are workers together with him. Oh! this city wants you—wants ten thousand earnest spirits. The lodging-houses want you; the alleys and the courts want you; the poor want you; the rich want you. If you have anything to say of the remedy which wisdom has prepared for the remedy of sins

disease, the millions want it. They won't come to hear the gospel presaged, take it to their houses, carry it to their doors. If they reject a Saviour, let it not be for want of your hunting after them. Push it in their way. Sow beside all waters. In season and out of season teach ye the Word. Ye know not where God may bless you. But never be discouraged because of the badness of the neighbourhood, or the lowness of the character of the people. If Egypt shall be saved, have faith for this Egypt. If Assyria shall be saved, have confidence in God for those who are often worse than heathens, and you shall have your reward in that day when he of the pierced hand shall distribute crowns to those who faithfully serve him. Rewards, not of debt, but of grace, shall be given to the most obscure and unknown of you, who for his sake have sought to teach little children or to reclaim the adult who had fallen into sin. Take courage—your work of faith and labour of love are not in vain in the Lord, and will do wonders yet to the praise of his grace. And as to you that are not saved. I have been saying great things of encouragement to you. I don't know who may take hold of them, but if there were one here who should reckon himself to be quite out of hope, it is to that man I spoke; and if there is a man here who says, "You don't mean me; you don't know my character," I will suppose it to be the worst character that was ever heard of—I meant you. He is "able to save unto the uttermost than that come unto God by him." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Seek ye the Lord! Confess your sins to him. Weep out your confession with your head on your Father's bosom and say, "Forgive me, forgive me for thy Son's sake," and it shall be done unto you. God grant it may be done, even now: for his name's sake! Amen.

The Sum and Substance of All Theology
Unpublished Notes of a Sermon
Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, April 17th, 1892,
Delivered by
C. H. SPURGEON,
Delivered at Bethesda Chapel, Swansea
On June 25th, 1861.
 From *Sword and Trowel*

Note: On Tuesday, June 25th, 1861, the beloved C. H. Spurgeon visited Swansea. The day was wet, so the services could not be held in the open-air; and, as no building in the town was large enough to hold the vast concourses of people who had come from all parts to hear the renowned preacher, he consented to deliver two discourses in the morning; first at Bethesda, and then at Trinity Chapel. At each place he preached for an hour and a quarter. The weather cleared up during the day; so, in the evening, Mr. Spurgeon addressed an immense gathering of people in the open-air.—T.W.M.

FORWARDED BY PASTOR T. W. MEDHURST, CARDIFF.

"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."—John 6:37.

What a difference there is between the words of Christ, and those of all mere men! Most men speak many words, yet say but little; Christ speaks few words, yet says very much. In modern books, you may read scores of pages, and scarcely come across a new thought; but when Christ speaks, every syllable seems to tell. He hits the nail on the head each time He lifts the hammer of His Word. The Words of Christ are like ingots of solid gold; we preachers too often beat out the gold so thin, that whole acres of it would scarcely be worth a farthing. The Words of Christ are always to be distinguished from those of His creatures, not only for their absolute truthfulness, but also for their profound fulness of matter. In all His language He is "full of grace and truth." Look at the text before us. Here we have, in two small sentences, the sum and substance of all theology. The great questions which have divided the Church in all ages, the apparently contradictory doctrines which have set one minister of Christ against his fellow, are here revealed so simply and plainly, "that he may run that readeth" (Habakkuk ii.2). Even a child may understand the Words of Christ, though perhaps the loftiest human intellect cannot fathom the mystery hidden therein.

Take the first sentence of my text: "*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.*" What a weighty sentence! Here we have taught us what is called, in the present day, "High Calvinistic doctrine"—the purpose of God; the certainty that God's purpose will stand; the invincibility of God's will; and the absolute assurance that Christ "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

Look at the second sentence of my text: "*And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*" Here we have the richness, the fulness, the unlimited extent of the power of Christ to save those who put their trust in Him. Here is a text upon which one might preach a thousand sermons. We might take these two sentences as a life-long text, and never exhaust the theme.

Mark, too, how our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the whole truth. We have many ministers who can preach well upon the first sentence: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Just set them going upon Election, or everlasting covenant engagements, and they will be earnest and eloquent, for they are fond of dwelling upon these points, and a well-instructed child of God can

hear them with delight and profit. Such preachers are often the fathers of the Church, and the very pillars thereof; but, unfortunately, many of these excellent brethren cannot preach so well upon the second sentence of my text: "And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." When they get to that truth, they are half afraid of it; they hesitate to preach what they consider to be a too open salvation. They cannot give the gospel invitation as freely as they find it in the Word of God. They do not deny it, yet they stutter and stammer sadly, when they get upon this theme.

Then, on the other hand, we have a large number of good ministers who can preach on this second clause of the text, but they cannot preach on the first clause. How fluent is their language as they tell out the freeness of salvation! Here they are much at home in their preaching; but, we are sorry to be compelled to say that, very often, they are not much at home when they come to doctrinal matters, and they would find it rather a difficult matter to preach fluently on the first sentence of my text. They would, if they attempted to preach from it, endeavour to cut out of it all that savours of Divine Sovereignty. They do not preach the whole "truth" which "is in Jesus."

Why is it that some of us do not see both sides of God's revealed truth? We persist in closing one eye; we will not see all that may be seen if we open both our eyes; and, sometimes, we get angry with a brother because he can see a little more than we do. I think our text is very much like a stereoscopic picture, for it presents two views of the truth. Both views are correct, for they are both photographed by the same light. How can we bring these two truths together? We get the stereoscope of the scripture, and looking with both eyes, the two pictures melt into one. God has given us, in His Word, the two pictures of divine truth; but we have not all got the stereoscope properly adjusted to make them melt into one. When we get to heaven, we shall see how all God's truth harmonizes. If we cannot make these two parts of truth harmonize now, at any rate we must not dare to blot out one of them, for God has given them both.

Now, as God shall help me this morning, I want to expand both sentences of my text with equal fidelity and plainness. I shall not expect to please some of you while speaking on the first sentence, and I shall not be surprised if I fail to please others of you when I come to the second sentence; but, in either case, it will be a small matter to me if I have an easy conscience because I have proclaimed what I believe to be the whole truth of God. I am sure you will be willing to give a patient hearing to that which you may not fully receive, if you believe it to be declared in all honesty. Reject what I say, if it be not true, but if it be the Word of God, receive it; and, be it known unto you that it is at your peril if you dare to reject the truthful Word of the glad tidings of God.

I. I will begin with the first sentence of the text: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." We have here, first, **THE FIRM FOUNDATION UPON WHICH OUR SALVATION RESTS.**

It rests, you perceive, not on something which man does, but on something which God the Father does. The Father gives certain persons to His Son, and the Son says, "All that the Father giveth Me Shall come to Me." I take it that the meaning of the text is this,—that, if any do come to Jesus Christ, it is those whom the Father gave to Christ. And the reason why they come,—if we search to the very bottom of things,—is, that the Father puts it into their hearts to come. The reason why one man is saved, and another man is lost, is to be found in God; not in anything which the saved man did, or did not do; not in anything which he felt, or did not feel; but in something altogether irrespective of himself, even in the sovereign grace of God. In the day of God's power, the saved are made willing to give their souls to Jesus. The language of Scripture must explain this point. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will

of man, but of God" (John i. 12, 13). "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans ix. 16). If you want to see the fount of grace, you must go to the everlasting God; even as, if you want to know why that river runs in this direction, and not in that, you must trace it up to its source. In the case of every soul that is now in heaven, it was the will of God that drew it thither. In the case of every spirit that is on its way to glory now, unto God and unto Him alone must be the honour of its salvation; for He it is who makes one "differ from another" (1 Cor. iv. 7).

I do not care to argue upon this point, except I put it thus: If any say, "It is man himself who makes the difference," I reply, "You are involving yourself in a great dilemma; if man himself makes the difference, then mark—man himself must have the glory." Now, I am certain you do not mean to give man the glory of his own salvation; you would not have men throw up their caps in heaven, and shout, "Unto *ourselves* be the glory, for we, ourselves, were the hinge and turning point of our own salvation." No, you would have all the saved cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and give to Him alone all the honour and all the glory. This, however, cannot be, unless, in that critical point, that diamond hinge upon which man's salvation shall turn, God shall have the control, and not the will of man. You know that those who do not believe this truth as a matter of *doctrine*, do believe it in their hearts as a matter of *experience*.

I was preaching, not very long ago, at a place in Derbyshire, to a congregation, nearly all of whom were Methodists, and as I preached, they were crying out, "Hallelujah! Glory! Bless the Lord!." They were full of excitement, until I went on to say in my sermon, "This brings me to the doctrine of *Election*." There was no crying out of "Glory!" and "Hallelujah!" then. Instead, there was a great deal of shaking of the head, and a sort of telegraphing round the place, as though something dreadful was coming. Now, I thought, I must have their attention again, so I said, "You all believe in the doctrine of Election?" "No, we don't, lad," said one. "Yes, you do, and I am going to preach it to you, and make you cry 'Hallelujah!' over it." I am certain they mistrusted my power to do that; so, turning a moment from the subject, I said, "Is there any difference between you and the ungodly world?" "Ay! Ay! Ay!" "Is there any difference between you and the drunkard, the harlot, the blasphemer?" "Ay! Ay! Ay!" Ay! there was a difference indeed. "Well, now," I said, "there is a great difference; who made it, then?" for, whoever made the difference, should have the glory of it. "Did you make the difference?" "No, lad," said one; and the rest all seemed to join in the chorus. "Who made the difference, then? Why, the Lord did it; and did you think it wrong for Him to make a difference between you and other men?" "No, no," they quickly said. "Very well, then; if it was not wrong for God to make the difference, it was not wrong for Him to purpose to make it, and that is the doctrine of Election." Then they cried, "Hallelujah!" as I said they would.

The doctrine of Election is God's purposing in His heart that He would make some men better than other men; that He would give to some men more grace than to other men; that some should come out and receive the mercy; that others, left to their own free will, should reject it; that some should gladly accept the invitations of mercy, while others, of their own accord, stubbornly refuse the mercy to which the whole world of mankind is invited. All men, by nature, refuse the invitations of the gospel. God, in the sovereignty of His grace, makes a difference by secretly inclining the hearts of some men, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to partake of His everlasting mercy in Christ Jesus. I am certain that, whether we are Calvinists or Arminians, if our hearts are right with God, we shall all adoringly testify: "We love Him, because He first loved us." If that be not Election, I know not what it is.

II. Now, in the second place, note THE CERTAINTY OF THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF ALL WHO WERE GIVEN TO JESUS; "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me."

This is eternally settled, and so settled that it cannot be altered by either man or devil. All whose names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, all whom God the Father designed to save when He gave up His well-beloved Son to die upon the cross of Calvary, shall in time be drawn by the Holy Spirit, and shall surely come to Christ, and be kept by the Spirit, through the precious blood of Christ, and be folded for ever with His sheep, on the hill-tops of glory.

Mark! "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Not one of those whom the Father hath given to Jesus shall perish. If any were lost, the text would have to read: "Almost all," or, "All but one;" but it positively says "All," without any exception; even though one may have been, in his unregenerate state, the very chief of sinners. Yet even that chosen one, that given one, shall come to Jesus; and when he has come, he shall be held by that strong love that at first chose him, and he shall never be let go, but shall be held fast, even unto the end. *Miss Much-afraid*, and *Mrs. Despondency*, and *Mr. Feeble-mind*, shall as certainly come to the arms of Christ, as *Mr. Great-heart*, and *Mr. Faithful*, and *Mr. Valiant-for-Truth*. If one jewel were lost from Christ's crown, then Christ's crown would not be all-glorious. If one member of the body of Christ were to perish, Christ's body would not be complete. If one of those who are one with Christ should miss his way to eternal life, Christ would not be a perfect Christ.

"All that the Father giveth Me *Shall come to Me*." "But suppose they will not come?" I cannot suppose any such thing, for He says they "*shall come*." They shall be made willing in the day of God's power. God knows how to make a passage through the heart of man; and though man is a free agent, yet God can incline him, willingly, to come to Jesus. There are many sentences even in Wesley's hymn-book which contain this truth. If God took away freedom from man, and then saved him, it would be but a small miracle. For God to leave man free to come to Jesus, and yet to so move him as to make him come, is a divinely-wrought miracle indeed. If we were for a moment to admit that man's will could be more than a match for God's will, do you not see where we should be landed? Who made man? God! Who made God? Shall we lift up man to the sovereign throne of Deity? Who shall be master, and have his way, God or man? The will of God, that says they "shall come", knows how to make them come.

"But suppose it should be one of those who are living in the interior of Africa, and he does not hear the gospel; what then?" He shall hear the gospel; either he shall come to the gospel, or the gospel shall go to him. Even if no minister should go to such a chosen one, he would have the gospel specially revealed to him rather than that the promise of the Almighty God should be broken.

"But suppose there should be one of God's chosen who has become so bad that there is no hope for him? He never attends a place of worship; never listens to the gospel; the voice of the preacher never reaches him; he has grown hardened in his sin, like steel that has been seven times annealed in the fire; what then?" That man shall be arrested by God's grace, and that obdurate, hard-hearted one shall be made to see the mercy of God; the tears shall stream down his cheeks, and he shall be made willing to receive Jesus as Saviour. I think that, as God could bend *my* will, and bring *me* to Christ, He can bring anybody.

"Why was *I* made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,

And rather starve than come?
 "'Twas the same love the spread the feast,
 That sweetly forced *me* in;
 Else *I* had still refused to taste,
 And perish'd in *my* sin."

Yes, "*sweetly forced me in*;"—there is no other word that can so accurately describe my case. Oh, how long Jesus Christ stood at the door of my heart, and knocked, and knocked, and knocked in vain! I asked: "Why should I leave the pleasures of this world?" Yet still He knocked, and there was music in every sound of His pleading voice; but I said, "Nay, let Him go elsewhere." And though, through the window, I could see His thorn-crowned head, and the tears standing in His eyes, and the prints of the nails in His hands, as He stood and knocked, and said, "Open to Me," yet I heeded Him not. Then He sent my mother to me, and she pleaded, "let the Saviour in, Charlie;" and I replied, in action, though not in words, "Nay, I love thee, my mother; but I do not love Christ, thy Saviour." Then came the black hours of sickness; but in effect I said, "Nay, I fear not sickness, nor death itself; I will still defy my Maker." But it happened, one day, that He graciously put in His hand by the hole of the door, and I moved toward Him, and then I opened the door, and cried, "Come in! Come in!" Alas! alas! He was gone; and for five long years I stood, with tears in mine eyes, and I sought Him weeping, but I found Him not. I cried after Him, but He answered me not. I said, "Whither is He gone? Oh, that I had never rejected Him? Oh, that He would but come again!" Surely the angels must then have said, "A great change has come over that youth; he would not let Christ in when He knocked, but now he wants Christ to come." And when He did come, do you think my soul rejected Him? Nay, nay; but I fell down at His feet, crying, "Come in! Come in! thou Blessed Saviour. I have waited for Thy salvation, O my God!"

There is no living soul beyond the reach of hope, no chosen one whom Christ cannot bring up even from the very gates of hell. He can bare His arm, put out His hand, and pluck the brand "out of the fire" (Zechariah iii.2). In a horrible pit, in the miry clay, His jewels have been hidden; but down from the throne of light He can come, and thrusting in His arm of mercy, He can pull them out, and cause them to glitter in His crown for ever. Let it be settled in our hearts, as a matter of fact, that what God has purposed to do, He will surely accomplish.

I need not dwell longer upon this point, because I think I have really brought out the essence of this first sentence of my text: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Permit me just to remark, before I pass on, that I am sometimes sad on account of the alarm that some Christians seem to have concerning this precious and glorious doctrine. We have, in the Baptist denomination,—I am sorry to have to say it,—many ministers, excellent brethren, who, while they believe this doctrine, yet never preach it. On the other hand, we have some ministers, excellent brethren, who never preach anything else. They have a kind of barrel-organ that only plays five tunes, and they are always repeating them. It is either Election, Predestination, Particular Redemption, Effectual Calling, Final Perseverance, or something of that kind; it is always the same note. But we have also a great many others who never preach concerning these doctrines, though they admit they are doctrines taught in Sacred Scripture. The reason for their silence is, because they say these truths are not suitable to be preached from the pulpit. I hold such an utterance as that to be very wicked. Is the doctrine *here*—in this Bible? If it is, as God hath taught it, so are we to teach it. "But," they say, "not in a mixed assembly." Where can you find an unmixed assembly? God has sent the Bible into a mixed world, and the gospel is to be preached in "all the world", and "to every

creature." "Yes," they say, "preach the gospel, but not these special truths of the gospel; because, if you preach these doctrines, the people will become Antinomians and Hyper-Calvinists." Not so; the reason why people become Hyper-Calvinists and Antinomians, is because some, who profess to be Calvinists, often keep back part of the truth, and do not, as Paul did, "declare all the counsel of God"; they select certain parts of Scripture, where their own particular views are taught, and pass by other aspects of God's truth. Such preachers as John Newton, and in later times, your own Christmas Evans, were men who preached the whole truth of God; they kept back nothing that God has revealed; and, as the result of their preaching, Antinomianism could not find a foot-hold anywhere. We should have each doctrine of Scripture in its proper place, and preach it fully; and if we want to have a genuine revival of religion, we must preach these doctrines of Jehovah's sovereign grace again and again. Do not tell me they will not bring revivals. There was but one revival that I have ever heard of, apart from Calvinistic doctrine, and that was the one in which Wesley took so great a part; but then George Whitefield was there also to preach the whole Word of God. When people are getting sleepy, if you want to arouse and wake them up thoroughly, preach the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty to them; for that will do it right speedily.

III. I shall now turn very briefly to the second sentence of my text: "*And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*"

"Now," says somebody, "he is going to knock down all that he has been building up." Well, I would rather be inconsistent with myself than with my Master; but I dare not alter this second sentence, and I have no desire to alter it. Let it stand as it is, all its glorious simplicity:—

"HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT."

Let the whole world come, still this promise is big enough to embrace them all in its arms. There is no mistake here, the wrong man cannot come. If any sinner come to Christ, he is sure to be the right one. Mark, too, as there is no limitation in *the person coming*, so there is no limitation in *the manner of the coming*. Says one, "Suppose I come the wrong way?" You cannot come the wrong way; it is written, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." "No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father" (John vi.44,65). If, then, you come to Christ in any way, you are drawn of the Father, and He cannot draw the wrong way. If you come to Christ at all, the power and will to come have been given you of the Father. If you come to Christ, He will in no wise cast you out; for no possible or conceivable reason will Jesus ever cast out any sinner who comes to Him. There is no reason in hell, or on earth, or in heaven, why Jesus should cast out the soul that comes to Him. If Satan, the foul accuser of the brethren, brings reasons why the coming sinner should not be received, Jesus will "cast down" the accuser, but He will not "cast out" the sinner. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest," is still His invitation and His promise, too.

Let us suppose a case by the way of illustration. Here is a man in Swansea,—ragged, dirty, coal-begrimed,—who has received a message from Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria. It reads in this wise: "You are hereby commanded to come, just as you are, to our palace at Windsor, to receive great and special favours at our hand. You will stay away at your peril." The man reads the message, and at first scarcely understands it; so he thinks, "I must wash and prepare myself." Then, he re-reads the royal summons, and the words arrest him: "*Come just as your are.*" So he starts, and tells the people in the train where he is going, and they laugh at him. At length he arrives at Windsor Castle; there he is stopped by the guard, and questioned. He explains why he has come, and shows the Queen's message; and he is allowed to pass. He next meets with a gentlemen in

waiting, who, after some explanations and expressions of astonishment, allows him to enter the ante-room. When there, our friend becomes frightened on account of his begrimed and ragged appearance; he is half inclined to rush from the place with fear, when he remembers the works of the royal command: "*Stay away at your peril.*" Presently, the Queen herself appears, and tells him how glad she is that he has come just as he was. She says she purposes that he shall be suitably clothed, and be made one of the princes of her court. She adds, "*I told you to come as you were.*" It seemed to be a strange command to you, but I am glad you have obeyed, and so come."

I do think this is what Jesus Christ says to every creature under heaven. The gospel invitation runs thus: "Come, come, come to Christ, *just as you are.*" "But, let me feel more." *No, come just as you are.* "But let me get home to my own room, and let me pray." *No, no, come to Christ just as you are.* As you are, trust in Jesus, and He will save you. Oh, do dare to trust Him! If anybody shall ask, "Who are you?" answer, "I am nobody." If anyone objects, "You are such a filthy sinner," reply, "Yes, 'tis true, so I am; but He Himself told me to come." If anyone shall say, "You are not fit to come," say, "I know I am not fit; but He told me to come." Therefore,—

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity join'd with power;
He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more.
"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the *fitness* He requireth,
Is to feel you need of Him:
This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Sinner, trust in Jesus: and if thou dost perish trusting in Jesus, I will perish with thee. I will make my bed in hell, side by side with thee, sinner, if thou canst perish trusting in Christ, and thou shalt lie there, and taunt me to all eternity for having taught thee falsely, if we perish. But that can never be; those who trust in Jesus shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Come to Jesus, and He will in no wise cast thee out.

May the Lord bless the words I have spoken! Though hastily suggested to my mind, and feebly delivered to you, the Lord bless them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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