

THE CAPTIVE SAVIOR FREEING HIS PEOPLE

NO. 722

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“Jesus answered, ‘I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,’ that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, ‘Of those whom You gave Me have I lost none.’”
John 18:8, 9.

THE whole story of our Lord’s Passion is exceedingly rich in meaning. One is tempted to linger over every separate sentence of the narratives given by the Evangelists. It is possible to preach several series of sermons upon the whole story, and there is not a single incident, though it may seem to be but accidental, which might not furnish a wealth of holy thought to the careful student. In looking through this Chapter one was greatly tempted to speak awhile upon the Master’s selecting the place of His prayer as the place of His agony and betrayal—the holy prudence and forethought by which He had as it were cast up His entrenchments, and made His defenses upon the very spot where He knew He would meet the shock of the evening’s first onslaught; a lesson to us, Christians, not to venture out into the day’s battle without girding on our armor, nor make a voyage upon the sea of life without having seen to it that the vessel is well supplied against every possible danger which may be encountered upon the storm-tossed sea. Jesus prays before He fights, and so must we if we would overcome. One is tempted also to dwell upon that remarkable expression, “Judas also which betrayed Him knew the place,” to show the futility of knowledge apart from sincerity, no, the injuriousness of knowledge if it is not attended with corresponding Grace. Had the traitor not known he could not have betrayed, and had he not been an intimate friend he could not have been so base a wretch. Strange, but strangely true is it, that the ability to become the child of perdition by betraying his Master was found in the fact of his having been the near acquaintance of the Savior. He could never have been so sevenfold an inheritor of Hell if he had not been so largely a receiver of the privilege of companionship with Christ.

Direful truth, that to be educated to take the highest degree in Hell it is almost necessary to enter hypocritically into the school of Christ. Terrible reflection, which should well check any of us who make high professions without a corresponding weight of sincerity. But as time does not allow us, like the bee, to gather honey from every flower, we shall dwell upon the text. In this passage *there is much instruction and we shall endeavor to draw it forth; and then we shall take the liberty to spiritualize it*, to set the words in another sense in order that we may still be promoting our great objective of setting forth our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. When we observe the words of the text, we notice upon the very surface a sure proof of THE WILLINGNESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST TO GIVE HIMSELF TO SUFFER FOR OUR SINS. The voluntary character of Christ’s suffering makes it beam with a matchless splendor of love. He needed not to have died. If it had been His good pleasure He might have tarried gloriously among the songs of angels. He came not to earth to win a crown, because He had none, for all honor and glory are His by right. It was not to earn a dominion, or because He was not Lord of principalities and powers, that He descended from the skies: “Who though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich.” It was a disinterested mission upon which the Redeemer came to the abodes of sinful men. He had nothing to gain, rather He had everything to lose; and yet let me say to correct myself, by that losing He did gain, for now, as our Mediator, He is clothed with a special glory of unrivalled Grace, unequalled by any other manifestation of the Divine Perfections.

The proofs that the Master went voluntarily to His death are very abundant. He rose from supper when He knew that Judas had gone out to betray Him, and He did not seek a hiding place in the corners of Jerusalem, or retire to the calm retreat of Bethany. If He had chosen to ward off His betrayer’s thrust that night and to wait until the day, the fickle multitude would have gathered around Him, and protected Him from His foes, for they would soon have been won to His

side, if He would have consented to become their king. Instead of retreating even for a moment, Jesus, attended by His disciples, boldly advanced to the spot where Judas had planned to betray Him; He went as calmly as though He had made an appointment to meet a friend there, and would not be late when he arrived. He entered upon His terrible sufferings with His whole heart, with the full concurrence of His whole Being, having a baptism to be baptized with, and being straitened until it was accomplished. What true courage is in those words, “Arise, let us go from this place,” when He knew that He was going to the Cross! When the band came to take Him, it appears that they did not know Him. “I am He.” He said to them twice, “Whom do you seek?” He had to reveal himself, or the lanterns and the torches would not have discovered him. He was not after all taken by Judas’ kiss; the kiss was given, but in the confusion they may have missed the token. Jesus had to ask, “Whom do you seek?” And He had to twice announce Himself plainly with the words, “I am He.” He yielded Himself to His blood-thirsty foes, and went willingly with His tormentors. It is very clear that He went willingly, for since a single word made the captors fall to the ground, what could He *not* have done?

Another word and they would have descended into the tomb; another, and they would have been hurled into Hell. He put forth just that little finger of His potency in order to let them feel what He could have done if He had chosen to lay bare the arm of His strength, and to utter but one word of wrath against them. It is very sure that he went willingly, for how could He have gone at all if not with His own consent? There was no power on earth that could possibly have bound the Lord Jesus, had He been unwilling. He who said, “Let these go their way,” and by that word secured the safety of all His disciples, it is certain could have said the same of Himself, and so have gone His way where He would. Men might as well speak of loading the sun with chains, or holding the lightning flash in bondage, or like the foolish king of old, fettering the wild uproarious sea, as to suppose that they could constrain the Lord of Life and Glory, and lead Him a captive against His will. He was led, and led bound too, but He could have snapped those bonds as Samson did the Philistines’ bonds of old. There were other cords that bound Him, invisible to carnal sense; the bonds of Covenant engagements, the bonds of His own oath and promise, the bonds of His love to you and to me, my Brothers and Sisters, the mighty bonds of His marriage union to our souls which compelled Him, without a word, to yield Himself as a lamb to the slaughter. The willingness of Jesus! Let us see it clearly, and let us reverently adore Him for it. Blessed Master! You go of Yourself to die for us. No compulsion but that of Your own heart! Nothing brought You to the tomb but Your Almighty Love to us.

I do not intend to dwell upon this thought, but having brought it before you, the practical use of it is just this—Let us take care that our service of Christ shall ever be most manifestly a cheerful and a willing one. Let us never come, for instance, up to the place of worship unwillingly, merely because of custom, or because it is the right thing to do, which we would gladly avoid doing if we dare. Let us never contribute of our substance to the Master’s cause with a grudging hand, as though a tax collector were wringing from us what we could not afford. Let us never enter upon Christian exercises as a slave would enter upon his labor, hearing the crack of the whip behind him; but let love put wings to our feet, and inspire our souls with a sacred willingness, that as the seraphs fly upon the high behests of Heaven, we may run upon our Savior’s commands with as much swiftness as mortals can command. Let our duty be our delight. Let the service of Christ be a kingdom to us. Let us count it to be our highest gain to suffer loss for Him, and our greatest ease to be fully immersed in abundant labors for His sake. *His* willing sacrifice ought to ensure *our* willing sacrifice. The Savior bleeds freely like the camphor tree that needs no pressure—let us as freely, from our very hearts, pour forth our love and all the kindred Graces and deeds of virtue.

II. Turning from this thought, I beg you, secondly, to notice OUR LORD’S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE HOURS OF HIS GREATEST DISTURBANCE OF MIND. “If you seek Me, let these go their way.” That was intended, in the first place, to be a *preservation for His immediate attendants*. It is singular that the Jews did not surround that little handful of disciples, put them in prison, and then execute them in due season. If they had done so, where would have been the Christian Church? If they the first nucleus of Christianity had been destroyed, as it seems likely they could have been, where would have been the Church of later ages? But those words, “Let these go their way,” very efficiently protected all the weak and trembling fugitives; why did not the soldiers capture John? He seems to have gone in and out of the palace without even a single word of challenge. Why did they not seize Peter? They were searching for witnesses, why did they not examine Peter under torture, as was the Roman custom, in order to have extorted from him some railing accusation against his Lord whom he so readily denied?

Where were the others? Timid, trembling folk, they had fled like harts and roes when they first heard the baying of the dogs of persecution; why were they not hunted down? The Jews did not lack for will, for afterwards they were gratified when James was killed with the sword, and pleased when Peter was laid in prison—why were they allowed to go unharmed? Was it not because the Master had need of them? The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out upon them, and they were not yet fit to be martyrs; they were like green wood that would not burn; they were as yet unbroken to the sacred yoke of suffering, and not endowed with that Irresistible spiritual strength, which made them able to bear tribulation with rejoicing, and therefore that Good Shepherd, who tempers the wind to shorn lambs, tempered the wind to these young beginners.

Those words, “If you seek Me, let these go their way,” were like coats of mail to them, or those fabled, invisible garments which concealed their wearers from their enemies. Under the more than bronze shield of their Lord’s words, the disciples walked securely in the midst of the boisterous mob, and we find John and others of the disciples even standing at the foot of the Cross while those who gnashed their teeth at Christ and laughed at Him, and revealed their savage malice in a thousand ways, did not touch so much as a hair of their heads, or, as far as we know, utter one jest against them. The words of Jesus proved to be right royal words; they were Divine Words; and men were compelled to obey them. The Lord had said, “Touch not Mine Anointed, and do My Prophets no harm,” and therefore, for the time, His disciples were safe.

It strikes me that the expression was not only a guard for the disciples for the time, but, as no Scripture is of private interpretation, I believe that *such a royal passport has been given to all Christ’s people in the way of Providence*. Fear not, servant of Christ, you are immortal till your work is done. When you are fit to suffer, and if necessary, even to die, Christ will not screen you from so high an honor, but permit you to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism; but until your hour is come, you may go and return secure from death. Though cruel men may desire your ill, and devise mischief against you, you are safe enough until the Lord shall be pleased to let loose the lion, and even then you shall suffer no permanent injury. It is amazing, in the lives of some of God’s ministers, how strikingly they have been preserved from imminent peril. We cannot read the life of Calvin without being surprised that he should have been permitted to die peaceably in his bed, an honored man, surrounded by the town councilors and the great ones of the very city from which he had been once expelled. It seems astounding that a poor weak man whose body was emaciated with diseases of all kinds, who had no arms to wield against the furious hosts of Rome, should yet live in usefulness and then die in circumstances of peace and comfort. It is no less remarkable that the brave hero of the Cross, Martin Luther, should seem as if he had carried a safe conduct pass which permitted him to go anywhere and everywhere. He stood up in the Diet of Worms expecting to die, but he came out unscathed. He passed, as it were, between the very jaws of death and yet remained unharmed. Though, as I have said before, Christ has allowed many of His people to die for Him, and they have rejoiced to do so, yet, when He has willed to preserve any of His servants who were needed for a special work, as Calvin and Luther undoubtedly were, He had a way of taking care of them, and saying, “Let these go their way.”

Take, for instance, another illustration, the life of our remarkable reformer, John Wickliffe. Many times his life was not worth a week’s wages, and yet the old enemy of the saints were robbed of their prey, and could never touch a bone of him until years after he had been buried. When he was brought up for trial before the bishop at St. Paul’s, it was a very singular circumstance that John of Gaunt should stand at his side, fully armed, proudly covering the godly man with the prestige of his rank and the arm of his power. When Wickliffe was faint with standing, and begged to be allowed to sit, the bishop tells him that heretics shall have no seats, but John of Gaunt with rough, uncourtly words swears that he shall sit when he wills, and when the time comes the good man goes forth through the midst of the rabble protected by his friend. I know not that John of Gaunt knew the Truth of God, but yet God touched the man’s heart to protect His servant in the hour of peril. Vultures, when God has willed it, have protected doves, and eagles have covered with their wings defenseless children whom God would save. When the Lord wills it, if all Hell should shoot such a shower of arrows as should put out the sun, and if all those arrows were aimed at one poor heart, yet not a single shaft would find its mark, but all would be turned aside by an invisible but Irresistible Power from the man whom Jehovah ordained to save. We understand, then, that Jesus has issued a royal passport for all His servants which enables them to live on in the midst of innumerable deaths.

Mystically understood, the words have a far deeper meaning. The true seizure of Christ was not by Romans or by the envious Jews, but by our sins; and the true deliverance which Jesus gave to His disciples was not so much from Roman

weapons as from the penalty of our sins. How anxiously do I desire that those here this morning whose sins have been tormenting them would hear the voice of Jesus, “If you seek *Me*, let these go their way.” *The Law of God* comes out to seek us who have violated it. It has many and just demands against us, but Jesus, who stood in our place, puts Himself before the Law, and He says, “Do you seek *Me*? Here I am; but when you take *Me* prisoner let these, for whom I stood, go their way.” So then, Beloved, when the Law met with the Lord Jesus and made Him its servant, and compelled Him to bear its penalty, all those for whom Christ stood were by His being bound, absolutely and forever set free. Christ’s suffering the penalty of the Law was the means of removing His people forever from under the legal yoke. Now let me try to apply that Truth to your case. A poor soul under distress of mind has gone to the priest, and the priest says, “If you would be pardoned do penance.” While the poor soul is flogging his back and laying on the stripes most earnestly I think I hear the Savior saying to the whole tribe of priests, “Let these poor souls go their way. My shoulders have borne all *they* ought to have borne; My heart has suffered all the griefs that they were condemned to know. The chastisement of their peace was upon *Me*, and by My stripes they are healed. Let these go!” Put away your whip, cease from your bodily tortures, they are of no service! The Law has taken the Redeemer, it does not want you. You need not suffer, Christ has suffered, and all your sufferings will now be useless and in vain! Christ has paid the debt, no need for you to attempt it again.

Another poor trembler has been sitting under a legal ministry, and he has been told that if he would be saved he must keep the Commandments. He has, therefore, endeavored to forego this sin and the other, and as far as possible to be perfect in holiness. But he has made no headway; his soul is as much in bondage as ever, unsaved with all his exertions, destitute still of true peace notwithstanding all his good works. This morning my Master cries to the preacher who talks after this fashion, “Let these poor enslaved ones go their way. Do not preach to them salvation by their own doing. Do not tell them that they are to earn admittance to Heaven. I have worked out and finished their Redemption; their salvation is complete in *Me*. There is nothing for sinners to do to win forgiveness. All they have to do is to receive what I have done for them. All the righteousness they need to recommend them before God is My Righteousness, which requires not that theirs be added to it, for why should their rags be joined to my cloth of gold? All the merit a sinner can plead is the merit of My Passion. Why should they seek after merit through their repentance and their good works? Why should such stagnant water be poured into the midst of the wine of My merit?” Away with your fancied good works, away with your boasts, your religious doings, your weeping, and your prayers, for if they are used as a ground of confidence instead of the work of Jesus Christ they are things of nothing, mere rottenness and dung to be cast upon the dunghill. Since Jesus was accepted and punished by the Law, sinners believing in Him are free from the Law’s exactions and may go their way.

Perhaps there are some here in whose hearts the Law of God is making terrible confusion. You feel that you have broken the Law and that you cannot keep it, and now the Law is flogging you; it has tied you up as they tie up soldiers in the army to the stocks, and it has been laying on the great cat-o’-ten-tails to your back, the Ten Commandments of the Law, till you are smarting, smarting all over. Your whole conscience is troubled. Now the Lord Jesus Christ says to the Law, “Put away, put away that whip! Do not smite the sinner any more! Did you not smite *Me*, why should you vex him?” But, Sinner, the only way in which you can escape from the Law’s whip is this—hasten to Jesus Christ. You *must* flee to Christ, you must trust in Jesus, and if you shall trust in Jesus He will cast His robe over you, He will lift up the broad shield of His merit and protect you from the shafts of the foe, so that you can say to the Law, “I am not under the curse of the Law now, for I have fulfilled it in the Person of my Surety, and I have suffered its penalty in the Person of my Savior—

***“The terrors of Law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior’s obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.”***

Jesus Christ then, as He stands before the Law and is bound by the Law, and flogged by the Law, and crucified by the Law, and buried by the Law, says to you who trust in Him, “Go your way, the Law cannot touch you, for it has struck *Me* instead of you. I was your Substitute, and you may go free.” Why you all know that this is simple justice; if another person shall have paid your debts, you are not afraid of being immersed again in those debts, are you? And if you are drafted for the army and a substitute has taken your place, you are not afraid of being drawn a second time, are you? So the Lord Jesus Christ is the Substitute for all His people, and if He was a Substitute for you, the Law has no further penal

claims upon you. Christ has obeyed it; Christ has suffered its penalty; You may rejoice in the Law as being now to you a gracious rule of life, but it is not to you a yoke of bondage; you are not under it as a slave, you are free from its dominion; you are not under the Law, but you are under Grace. What a blessing is this!

Further, these words seem to me to bear such a meaning as this, that as we are delivered from legal exaction so are we also *delivered from all penal infliction*. I wish that some children of God were clearer on this point. When you suffer tribulation, affliction and adversity, do not think that God is punishing you for your sins, for no child of God can be punished penally for sin. Let me not be misunderstood. A man is brought before God, first of all, as a criminal before a judge. You and I have stood there. Through Christ's blood and Righteousness we have been absolved and acquitted as before God the Judge, and it is not possible for the Law to lay so much as the weight of a feather upon us since we have been perfectly acquitted. In all the pains and sufferings which a Christian may endure, there is not so much as a single ounce of penal infliction. God cannot punish a man whom He has pardoned. But that criminal being pardoned, is then adopted into the family and becomes a child. Now, if he shall, as a child, offend against his father's rule, he will be chastened for it. Everyone can see the distinction between the chastening of a father and the punishment of a judge. If your child were to steal, you would not think of punishing that child in the light in which the judge would do it, who would commit him to imprisonment for having broken the law; no, you *chasten* your child yourself, not so much to avenge the law as for the child's good, that he may not do this evil thing again. So our heavenly Father chastens His people with the rod of the Covenant, but He never punishes them with the sword of vengeance. There is a difference between chastening and punishing. Punishing is from a judge; Christ has suffered all such punishment, so that no penal infliction can fall upon a soul that believes in Him; but we may have chastisement which comes to us as the result of a father's love, but not as the result of a judge's anger; we have felt such chastisement, and have reason to bless God for it. Our Lord Jesus says with regard to all legal penalty, "If you seek Me, I have borne it: let these go free."

Once more, this text will have its grandest fulfillment *at the last*. When the destroying angel shall come forth with his sword of fire to smite the sinner, when the gulf of Hell shall open and vomit forth its floods of flame, when the dread trumpet shall sound and shall make all ears to hear the Voice of an avenging God, Christ shall stand forth in the front of all the blood-bought souls that came to trust under the shadow of the wings of His Mercy, and He will say to Justice, "You have sought Me once, and you have found all you can ask of Me. Then let these go their way." And up the glorious steep of the celestial hills the happy throng shall stream, singing as they pass through the gates of pearl and tread the pavement of transparent gold, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be Glory forever and ever!" Then shall the great freeing of the slaves take place because Christ was bound; then shall the deliverance of the captive come, because Christ slept in the prison house of the tomb. "If you seek Me, let these go their way." I would to God that some here would perceive that the way of deliverance is for the Lord Jesus to be bound in their place. Trust in Jesus, and it shall be so.

III. Thirdly, but very briefly, notice why our Lord exhibited this great care for His people; PONDER OVER HIS SAYING concerning them, "That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which you gave Me I have lost none." Here is much of matter for thought at your leisure. Do you know that that text was a prayer? Now here it is made into a promise. What? Then is everything that Christ asks for guaranteed to His people, so that His prayer is God's promise? It is so.

Notice next that, verbally understood, this expression, which is quoted from the 17th of John, could only relate to the souls of God's people; but here it is taken as though it related to their bodies. From which I gather that we are never wrong in understanding promises in the largest possible sense. It is, I believe, a rule of law that if a man should get a privilege from the king, that privilege is to be understood in the widest sense; whereas a punishment, or penalty, is always to be understood in the narrowest sense. In the olden times, when princes and kings used to grant monopolies, if a king had granted a monopoly upon all kinds of foreign fruits, if the words had so run, you may rest assured that the person obtaining that monopoly would have put everything down as foreign fruit that could possibly bear the name, and he would have been justified by the law for doing so. Now, when the Great King gives a promise, you may encompass everything within its range which can possibly come under the promise, and we may be sure that the Lord will not run back from His word. God's words are never to be taken with a rebate, or discount, but with such blessed interest as your faith is able to put to them. The grant of Eternal Life includes such providential protections and provisions as shall be necessary on the road to Heaven. The house is secured for the sake of the tenant, and the body because of the soul.

There is also one more remark I cannot help making, namely, that this text is not in the form of a promise at all. “Of them which you gave Me *have* I lost none.” It relates to the past, but here it is used as a reason why none should be lost of the present; from which I gather, that as Jesus has done in the past so will He act in the future, and that all He ever was to His people He will be to them forever more. We may look upon every past act of Divine Grace as being a token and guarantee of future Grace, and we may gather from all our experience of the Lord’s goodness in the days that are gone, that He will do yet again unto us as He has done, and still more abundantly until we see His face in Heaven.

The gracious words before us read as follows: “Of all them which You have given Me I have lost none.” Then some are given. There is an Elect nation. Oh that we may be found in that happy number! Then Jesus keeps those who are given; they cannot keep themselves, but He can keep them and will. He so well preserves them that not so much as one is lost. I have sometimes thought I might imagine such a scene as this at the gates of Heaven when the Great Shepherd comes to give His charge. “Here I am,” He says, “and the children which You have given Me.” “But are they everyone brought safely here?” “Yes,” says the Great Shepherd, “of all whom You have given Me I have lost none.” “But where is Peter? Did he not deny You to Your face in the hall? Did he not three times say, ‘I know Him not!’” “Yes, but I made him go out and weep bitterly, and then I washed him in My precious blood, and here he is,” and Peter sings as sweetly as any. Then, perhaps, the question may be asked, “And where is such a one, the least of all the saints?” Brother, you feel yourself to be the weakest, the meanest, the most useless, but an inquiry will be made for you, and the answer will be, “He is here; of all whom You have given Me I have lost none.” Oh, happy sheep in the care of such a Shepherd! Oh happy, happy hearts that can rely upon such a Keeper! Dear Hearer, is Jesus yours? Are you depending upon Him? Say, have you cast yourself upon Him? Then do not fear concerning your last days; it must be well at the last, if it is well now. If you are now in Christ, He never did cast away, any and He never will. Oh if you have but come to Him and are now depending on Him—

*“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.”*

He suffered for you and therefore you shall go your way, and the Covenant shall be fulfilled. “Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none.”

I have thus used the text as briefly as I could. I shall need your patience a few minutes while I apply this text in a sort of SPIRITUAL SENSE.

The first remark in this department of the subject is—*many seek Jesus but do not know who He is*. So that Christ says to them, “Whom do you seek?” Some here this morning are seeking rest, but they do not know that Jesus is the rest. You feel an aching void in your hearts. You are not happy, the theater does not give you the pleasure it once did. Somehow life has grown dull to you. There is a still small voice within your soul like the voice of wailing, like Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted. You are seeking you know not what. You have begun to read your Bible; you are eager to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel, but you do not know what it is you need. Ah well, it is a good thing to be a seeker; though you cannot tell what it is you need, if you do but desire and lift up your voice to God sincerely and earnestly, He will be found of you.

We now note the fact that *those who seek Christ will find Him*, but they find Him only because He reveals Himself to them. These men sought Christ to kill Him, yet He came and said, “I am He.” There was a woman, if you remember, at the well of Sychar, who sought Him for a very different purpose. She said, “I know that Messiah comes, who is called Christ; when He is come He will tell us all things.” And Jesus said, “I who speak unto you am He.” Whoever seeks Jesus, Jesus will show Himself to them. They came with lanterns and with torches, but they did not find Christ with lanterns and with torches. And you may come, dear Friend, with a great many of your own inventions, a great many fancies and imaginings, but you will not find Him. How could you expect to find the sun with a lantern? No. Christ must come and reveal Himself to you, and if you seek Him He will do so. Only continue to seek Him. Let not past disappointments make you leave off seeking. As long as you have breath continue in prayer. I charge you before the living God if you have sought in vain, do not let Satan make you give up; but ask that Christ would lead you in the right way, for if you did but know the right way you need not seek long for He is here now. Jesus can forgive this morning; before you leave that seat you shall have a full assurance of your interest in Him if you are led to understand the way of salvation. That way is

simply to trust Christ, simply to believe that He can and will save you, and to trust yourself with Him. I will never believe that He will let a sincere soul go hungering and thirsting after Him, and let that soul die without Him; but though He may be pleased for a while to let that spirit wander even in apparent blackness and darkness, yet He will at the last lift the veil from His blessed face, and ah, the sight of that face will well repay you for all the sighs and cries with which you sought Him; and to hear Him say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you,” will so wake up the music of Heaven within your soul that you will think of the months of weariness and the nights of waiting as all too little, and more than enough repaid.

One thing more, *when Jesus is found, there is always much to be given up.* “If you seek Me, let these go their way.” There are always many things that you will have to let go if you have Christ, and this is very often the testing point. If a man keeps a public house which he opens on Sunday, in which cursing and swearing abounds, if he has encouraged all sorts of vice, in order to increase his customers, can he continue in this and yet have Christ? Impossible! Now that man would like to go to Heaven, but if he would he must let go of his evil occupation. Yonder is a woman who has tasted the pleasures of sin. She would gladly have a Savior, but if she will have a Savior she must let her sins go. There is a young man over yonder, proud, vain, giddy; if he would have Christ, he must let all these evils go. Our sins must be abandoned or we cannot receive a Savior. Christ Jesus will pardon sin, but He will never dwell in the same heart with sin. Though you may have been as base as base could be, it can all be forgiven you now; but if you continue in it, there is no mercy for you. He who confesses his sin and forsakes it, shall find mercy; but not the man who with hypocritical lip bewails it, and then with vicious heart plunges into it again. “If you seek Me, let these go.”

What? Can't you give them up? Silly companions, idle habits, foolish songs, pleasure-seeking, so-called, are these too dear to be renounced? Really, some of the things which give pleasure to men nowadays are so absurd, so empty, so devoid of true wit that I wonder the swine do not revolt against the moldy husks which they are fed with nowadays. We cannot wonder that swine eat husks, it is natural they should, and we would not deny them their native food. If I were a swine, I think I should like to have husks that have some sort of substance in them, but the world's pleasure grows more and more dull and worthless, the pleasure of idiots rather than of men. Can't you give these poor things up? Are they such dear attractions, such precious things, that you let Heaven go, and Christ go, sooner than let them go? No, I hope it will be a voice of power to you, and that you will say, “My Savior, let them all go! What are they to me? I shall find thousands of times more pleasure and more profit too in following You than in following the best of them. So by Your Grace I let them go forever, and may they never entice me again.”

Have you any self-righteousness remaining? Are you in your own conceit better than other people? Do you secretly trust in your works? Now if you want Christ, you must let all that go. Christ will tread the winepress alone, and of the people, there must be none with Him; and if you seek to be saved by Christ it must not be by the works of the Law, but by Grace alone. Would to God that there might be a clean sweep made in some of your hearts, and that you would come to Jesus all empty-handed as you are, and say, “Yes, Master, Your precious blood, Your triumphant Resurrection, Your effectual plea, these are our hope and these our joy. We would serve You in life, and bless You in death. Yours we are, Son of God, and all that we have! Take us and keep us, and Yours be the praise. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 18.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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