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THE VOICE BEHIND YOU

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DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it,
when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left.”
Isaiah 30:21.*

ON the Sabbath before last we spoke concerning “the still small voice.” After the thunder and the fire and the earthquake had passed away, for the Lord was not in them, there came a still small voice unto Elijah which reached the Prophet’s heart and brought him back to his former condition of communion with God. This hopeful morning we shall hear that same “still small voice” actually speaking a warning and teaching Word of God. And we shall see how it operates upon the sinner, reaching both his ears and his heart. God calls to the rebellious and, by His gentle word they are brought to His feet with repentance, turned from their evil wandering and led in the way of obedience.

The word behind us which is spoken of in the text is mentioned as one among other covenant blessings. No “if” or “but” is joined to it. It is one of those gracious, unconditional promises upon which the salvation of the guilty depends. There are many comforts of the new life which depend upon our own action and behavior—these come to us with “ifs”—but those which are vital and essential are secured to the chosen of God without, “but,” or, “perhaps.” It shall be so—God declares it shall and He has power to carry out every jot and tittle of every promise that He makes to His people.

I shall ask you at this good hour mainly to admire the free and Sovereign Grace of God in making such a promise as this to anybody and especially in making it to a people whom He speaks of as “a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the Law of the Lord.” He severely upbraids them and then in great patience He says to them, even to them, “Your ears shall hear a word behind you.” God’s Grace is marvelous in itself, but its most marvelous point is the singular channel in which it chooses to flow—it runs down into the Dead Sea of sin and makes the waters pure.

I. I invite you to notice, first of all, THE POSITION OF THE WANDERER to whom this special blessing comes. How does God find men when He declares that they shall hear a word *behind* them? First, He finds them with their backs turned to Him. This is clear enough, if you remember that the word is to be heard “behind” them. The sinner has gone away from God and God calls after him from behind. He has turned his back upon his true Friend, his best Friend, his only capable Friend, but that Friend does not, therefore, change His temper and resent the insult. No, He is provoked to a love more pleading and persuasive than ever and calls to him to come into the right way.

After having transgressed willfully and wickedly, the rebel now distinctly turns his back on God and His Truth. According to the Lord’s complaint, “they have turned unto Me the back, and not the face.” He turns his back on the Law, on the Gospel, on mercy, on eternal life. He turns his back on the adoption of the great Father, on pardon bought with the blood of Jesus, on regeneration which can alone be worked by the Holy Spirit. He turns his back upon holiness, happiness and Heaven. He turns away from sunlight and wanders down into deeper and yet deeper night, striving to get away from God and holy influences.

Yet the Lord follows him and with a voice of touching love and tender compassion He calls to him, “This is the way, walk you in it.” The word of warning, instruction and entreaty follows the wanderer—and with ever-increasing pathos beseeches him to turn and live. Again and again the wise, earnest, personal voice assails his ears, as if love resolved that he should not perish if wooing could win him to life. The wanderer seeks not God, but His God seeks him! Man turns from the God of Love, but the love of God turns not away from him. What matchless Grace is this, that God should thus call after sinners when they openly renounce His rule and flee from His mercy!

Oh, if the Lord had turned His back on us, where had we been? If He had given us up to our own devices and left us to ourselves, then our eternal ruin would need but a few more days and months to consummate itself—and we should be

driven forever from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His power. Have we not said unto God, “Depart from us! We desire not the knowledge of Your ways”? If He had replied to us, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell,” it had only been the echo of our own words! When we said to Him, “Depart,” suppose He had turned round and said, “Depart, depart yourselves”? But instead of that, while we turn ourselves deliberately away from God, He still calls after us. He will not let us go! **BACKSLIDERS**

We have a freedom of will, but it is by that freedom of will that men are damned, since they will not come unto Christ that they might have life, but they will to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. Free will, thus held in chains by evil lusts, becomes the most destructive agency in the world! But, blessed be God, *He* has freedom of will, too, and that freedom of Sovereign Grace will not have its hands bound nor its lips closed, but it will act and speak in Omnipotent Love! So when the Lord sees us in the wantonness of our wickedness, dead in trespasses and sins, His great love with which He loves us seeks us out and from the lips of that love come tender accents bidding us return to God, saying, “This is the way, walk you in it.”

Observe that these persons had not only turned their backs on God, but they were going further and further away from Him. Of course, when you have once turned your back upon the right, the further you travel the more wrong you become. They were not content to be near to God, even with their backs to Him, but they hastened away. They are eager and quick to escape from their own mercy! Like the prodigal, they are not satisfied till they get into “a far country.” They cannot rest in the same land with their God. They journey with all speed away from the Lord and the greater the distance that they can set between themselves and their Father, the more are they at ease. In forgetting God they find a horrible peace—the peace of death—a peace which will stupefy them into eternal destruction.

Now, it is while they are thus going hot foot away from God, further and further every day, madly rushing along the downward road, never satisfied with the sin to which they have attained, flying from God as if He were their terror and would be their destroyer—it is even then that the word sounds behind them and they are startled into thought. They have a powerful voice pleading with them thus—”Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel? This is the way, walk you in it. The way you are now pursuing is not the way to peace and safety; return at once, for this is the way, walk you in it.”

Here again I admire the overflowing riches of the Grace of God, that He should call men to Himself when they are altogether taken up with other things—when every thought, every word, every act is in rebellion against Him! Paul says, “Does God care for oxen?” But here is a far greater wonder, “Does God care for worthless rebels?” When a chosen man is desperately set on mischief, determined to destroy himself, God is yet more determined to save him. The two determinations meet and we shall see which of the two will prove itself the stronger one! We soon find that the determination of God overcomes the determination of man. The iron breaks the northern iron and the steel. “Thus says the Lord; your covenant with death is broken, and your league with Hell is disannulled,” for there was a prior Covenant, a Covenant of Grace made by God, Himself, which stands fast forever.

And there was a prior league which God made with His Son on our behalf—and that league shall overthrow our league with death and Hell. Glory be to God that even when the sinner is still rebellious and shows no signs of repentance, nor is conscious of any wish to turn from the error of his ways, even then—while his heart is black as night and his spirit is choke-full with rebellion, God calls to him—“Return, O backsliding children.” “They shall hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way.” More than this, however, is true. They had turned their backs on God and were going further from Him, though they were warned not to do so, and they were pursuing their course in spite of warning.

Read the 20th verse—“Your eyes shall see your teachers”—there they stood, good men, right in the way, entreating their hearers to cease from provoking their God and destroying their own souls. Hear them cry, “Turn you from your iniquities, for this way leads to death: turn you, turn you!” They can see their teachers stretching out their hands with eager importunity, pleading even unto boiling tears, persuading them to turn from the way and the wages of sin. Still they push on, as if eternal destruction were a prize to be sought rather than a doom to be dreaded!

Was it not so with many of us in the days of our unregeneracy? Mother and father endeavored to block up the evil road—in them our eyes beheld our teachers. How they taught us! How they prayed with us! How they labored, if possible, to turn us from the error of our ways! But we persevered with obstinate resolve. It is hard going to Hell over a pleading mother and equally hard to destroy one’s self by pushing aside an earnest father’s good advice. But we seemed

resolved to do so. Then, perhaps, followed Sunday school teachers, full of intense love to us, and how they pleaded! How wisely they set the case before us and how tenderly they pleaded—our eyes did see our teachers, but still our eyes would not see the right way, nor would our hearts desire it—we were determined that we would, by hook or by crook, land ourselves in Hell!

Our soul was given to her idols and after those idols we resolved to go. We loved the wages of iniquity, the pleasures of the flesh, the pride of life, the conceit of self-salvation—we loved *anything* better than our God. And though our teachers were before us, ready to help and eager to teach, we made small account of them. Later in life it may be our teachers were earnest pastors who would not preach dull, dead sermons and would not suffer us to sleep ourselves into perdition. They cried aloud and spared not! They were in anguish about us! They gave themselves no rest until we would turn from our iniquities! We could see our teachers, and we had a loving respect for them too, yet we cast their word behind our back. It was of no use to us—we loved iniquity and that way we would go, come what might of it.

Yet even then, when we were despising God's Prophets and paying no regard to all the words of warning, the Lord was still loving us, looking after us and crying after us and saying, "This is the way; this is the way: walk you in it. Come back, come back, come back! You are destroying yourselves! Return unto your Father and your God." Why did He not throw the reins on our necks, and say, "Let them alone, they are given unto idols: I have hewed them with the Prophets, I have plowed them with men of God, but all has come to nothing; they have stiffened their necks, they have hardened their hearts, they have made their forehead like unto an adamant stone; therefore let them reap the result of their transgressions"? But it was not so, for God had made this word an unconditional promise of His Covenant, "They shall hear a voice behind them."

One more mark of the ungodly condition of those whom God would call was this, that they had many ways in which to wander. Sometimes they roamed to the right hand; at other times they wandered to the left, but they never turned face about. Hear you the way to Heaven—it is right about face, then keep straight on to Glory! No, but we will turn this way, we will turn that way, we will turn any way except to God. Some men have right-hand sins, respectable iniquities which challenge little censure from their fellows. Not black, but whitewashed sins. Such men are not thieves, they are not licentious, they are not drunks—their sins take a quieter form—they mock God with their self-righteousness and insult Him with their prayers, which are not prayers, but only pretences and fictions. They are not the real prayers of God's elect ones.

Others have left-hand sins. They plunge into the sins of the flesh; no vice is too black for them. Only propose to have a little pleasure and they will plunge into any vice to gain it! Yes, and almost without pleasure, altogether without present profit, they will sin as if for sin's own sake. When they have burned their finger in the candle, they will, after that, hold their *arm* in the fire. When they have brought disease into their bodies by sin, they will return to the evil which caused it. When they have beggared their purse by their extravagant lusts, still they will go on playing the profligate. When they have filled themselves with despair till they are as a bucket running with gall and wormwood—and this has been emptied out for them by God's Grace—they will fill it up again, for they are infatuated with sin! They find a delight in it and they will not, they *cannot* give it up. Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may they that have been accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Alas, such a miracle has not happened to them. They choose all shapes of evil, but the good they will not have.

I say their right-hand sins, their left-hand sins, sins of their life, sins of their heart—they will follow all these eagerly, but unless God, by His own Omnipotent Voice shall call them back, they will not come to Him, to Jesus, to Grace, to holiness, and Heaven. Tell it, tell it, tell it! Sound it forth beneath the sky forever and ever, that the Lord does call to Himself such wanton wanderers! "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, says the Lord: Turn, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you." Oh, the pity of God, not only for the miserable, but for the wicked—it surpasses thought!

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Favor to the guilty is the choicest of favor! We come not to preach salvation to the righteous—for where shall we find them?—but we proclaim it to the *unrighteous* and to the *ungodly*. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." And Christ has come after the sick, calling, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Oh, if anything will touch the heart, it should be this word of Free Grace, this fact that God does bid men return to Him! Mercy is full of patience. It bears and forbears, and still it cries, "This is the way,

walk you in it.” Oh, who would be so cruelly ungrateful as to close his ears against its pleadings? Thus I have spoken sufficiently upon the position of the wanderer.

II. Now, for a little while, we will dwell upon THE CALL OF MERCY. “Your ears shall hear a word behind you.” Notice, it is a call that is altogether undesired and comes unsought to the man who has gone astray. He hears the inward call whose voice is, “Return.” He looks for a moment and then puts his foot down to pursue his journey. “Never,” he says, “will I alter my course,” and he boldly hastens on, though before him lie death and Hell! As he is persevering in his ruinous course, the same word again bids him, “Return.” He hears the admonition, but still he pushes on. He must not and will not return from the way of evil. **METHODISTS**

If he could reach a spot where such disturbing voices would never trouble him, how gladly would he hasten towards it. Hence so many altogether forsake the place of worship—they prefer the stagnant pool of stupid obstinacy to the sweet river of the Water of Life. So far from desiring to be warned, if they could voyage to a distant Tarshish, where voices of warning would never reach them, it would be a delightful journey! And if a ship could be taken, they would, like Jonah, pay the fare to the shipmaster and secure a berth in the next vessel. I have heard of one in the backwoods of America who was unloading his furniture, and while doing so, up rode a Methodist minister. “Confound you,” said he, “I have moved half-a-dozen times to get away from you Methodist fellows! I am never comfortable where you are. I will put the things on the cart again and find a spot where I shall be free from you.”

On they went to another clearing, but when they reached it the first thing that happened, before the man took up His lodging, was the appearance of a Methodist minister. “Where shall I go to get away from you Methodist preachers?” “There is nowhere I know of,” said the minister, “that you can go, for I am afraid if you go to Hell you will find some of them *there*, for preachers have been lost. The very best thing you can do is to yield at once and let me hold a service to-night in your camp.” That was sound advice and so some of you will be pestered and worried as long as you live if you will not come to Christ! Omnipotence has servants everywhere and these are all charged to warn you of your peril.

I knew one who would not go to a place of worship. He threw every Bible out of his house, but found a copy of the holy Book in his house and as he cursed and swore, he learned that it was the property of a daughter whom he loved too much to scold and he was obliged to let the sacred volume rest where she had placed it. A Bible in a house where it is forbidden to be read is a splendid power for good, as he soon discovered. In a house where it is outwardly honored, the Bible may have little influence, but if it gets where it must not be allowed, everybody reads it! If you can make God’s Word to be forbidden fruit, Eve will feed on it and Adam will follow her. Thus the Grace of God came into the house, and it would never be expelled. **BIBLE**

Down by Mitcham, when the lavender is growing, if you take a house there, you will discern a smell of lavender. You may shut the windows and close the doors, but when any persons enter, a whiff of lavender enters with them! You cannot help it. And if you live where the Gospel is preached at all, you will be sure to hear it, and be made to know of it. It is God’s intention that you should. It is a voice that comes unasked and undesired, but come it does! “A word behind you.” It is the voice of an unseen Caller whose existence has been almost forgotten. It is not the teachers that speak in this powerful way. The teachers, you have seen with your eyes, and they have done you no good. But someone calls whom you never saw and never will see till He sits on the Throne of Judgment at the Last Great Day! But still He utters a word which cannot be kept out of your ears. It will come to you mysteriously at all sorts of hours crying, “Return, return, return.”

It will sound, often, at dead of night, and make the chambers of conscience ring with its notes. I have known it to wake a man out of his slumber! I have known it sound in his dreams till he dreamed of Hell and woke up and felt the torment in his own conscience! Though he has done all he could, has been off to the theater, to the gay party, to the entertainment, to deeper sin, still, even there, the word has haunted him. I remember one who in this very city plunged into all manner of gaiety to try to get rid of this word, yet God met him in a play! Words were used in the performance which touched his conscience and he fled from the playhouse as from a burning building, fell on his knees, and sought and found the Savior! This call of mercy is the word of a hidden One—you cannot see who it is that speaks, yet you cannot shut your ears to His admonitions nor refuse reverence to His warnings. This voice pursues and overtakes the sinner.

Do you see him running? With all his might he is rushing to his own destruction! The word comes, at first, rather feebly—"Return." He scarcely looks back, but on he flies. Lo, the voice follows. He runs faster from it to show his determination to carry out his own will. The voice still follows him, saying, "Return." Then he stops a minute, but being desperately enamored of his transgressions, he again takes to his heels to flee away from God. Still the word pursues his footsteps and, in pleading accents cries—"Return, return, return, return," till, at last, he is constrained to sit down and listen to the word which comes from, he knows not where He cannot understand how and why it comes so home to him, but it is a fulfillment of the promise—it is the word behind him saying, "This is the way, walk you in it."

That voice, when it comes to sinners, is generally most opportune, for, according to the text, they are to hear this voice behind them when they turn to the right hand or to the left. A man may go steadily plodding on in his course of ungodliness and hear no such word of pleading, but often it has happened that there has been a temptation of a more than usually forceful character and the traveler was about to turn to the right, and then, at that precise moment, he has heard the Word of God behind him giving him warning. His feet had almost gone! His steps had well-near slipped, but the Word of the Lord upheld him and he went not into the deadly sin!

Or it may be it is what I have described as a left-handed sin—the man was carried on to an action which, if he had actually performed it, would have involved his sure destruction—but just as he was about to turn down Deadman's Lane, there came a voice behind him, "Return, return." Often it is so and even if the man does not return and seek the right way, but keeps steadily on as carelessly as ever, still, he is slackening his speed and he dares not take that left-hand turning into gross sin which he would have followed if the word had not checked him. Even where the Spirit of God does not save a man, it keeps him from many a sin. And when men rebel against the Light of God and will not yield to it, yet still that Light has a restraining influence over them of which they may be unconscious.

Those who watch them know that if that bit and bridle had not been supplied by the Word of God, they would have gone to an excess of riot which would have been dangerous to others as well as totally destructive to themselves. Blessed be God for the Word of Mercy. Men delay to come, but God does not delay to call. And you see, to close this second point, that it is absolutely necessary that the potent Word of God should be spoken and should be heard. For the man had seen his teachers, but they had not worked him any good. How often the Lord seems to put us ministers right up in the corner with our faces to the wall till we are little in the eyes of our hearers and little in our own eyes. He does so with me and while I can glorify His name and bless Him abundantly for the many that are brought to Christ, yet I never take the slightest congratulation to myself about it, for what am I but the driest and most barren stick that there is in all my Master's garden apart from His watering? **SPUR HUMILITY**

If sinners had nothing to save them but us poor preachers, not one of them would be brought up from death and Hell! Sinners would laugh at us as simpletons if God were not with us—they do so as it is and I do not wonder at it because there is enough in us that deserves to be laughed at. They are ready to despise us and we cannot be broken-hearted if they do, for we, ourselves, used to, in former days, despise the servants of God! And if we do not do so now, it is because the Grace of God has made a change in us. We cannot expect better treatment than we ourselves rendered to better men when they pleaded with us! The word behind *us* is necessary—that "still small voice" which no mortal man can speak, but only God, Himself—that inward monition of the conscience, that touching language of the heart which is as much beyond the power of man as to make a world or breath life into an image of clay.

Therefore pray you mightily to the blessed Spirit that He may breathe on men and save them and that the Word of God may still follow and pursue them till they turn from the way of transgression. I leave that point. You have seen the position of the rambler and the Grace of God in the call of mercy.

III. But what was THE WORD OF THAT CALL? It is stated at full length, "This is the way, walk you in it." That is the word of the call. It contains within itself, first, specific instruction. "This is the way." There is a kind of preaching which has nothing specific, definite and positive in it—it is a bit of cloud-land and you may make what you like out of it—God's Grace or man's merit, faith in Christ or faith in self. You need to be your own instructor and then, like the child looking into the fire, you will see whatever your own eyes choose to create. Too much preaching is of a kind so mixed that it reminds me of the showman when his visitors asked, "Which is Wellington and which is Napoleon?" "Whichever you please," he said. "You have paid your money and you may take your choice."

So it seems to be with many preachers as to doctrine. You may have what kind of doctrine you like so long as you pay your pew-rent. “Cleverly put,” cries one, when he had heard a smart sermon. Is not that enough? I answer, it is not enough—we need the sure testimony of Revelation, sealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit! Cleverness is not God’s way of blessing men. Conjectures and loose opinions are not worth the breath which is expended in expressing them. The Lord lays down a definite pathway and He says, “This is the way.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “This is the way.” “Repent and be converted, every one of you. This is the way.” “To leave sin, to quit self, to trust in Christ—this is the way.” **PREACHING**

Something definite is laid down before those who desire to be taught of God and they are told what is to be done, what is to be received, what is to be given up. “This is the way.” Definite instruction is given! This may not suit the Broad School, but it is exactly what the anxious seeker needs. This definite instruction may also be said to be a special correction. When the voice behind says, “This is the way,” it does as good as say that the *opposite* path is *not* the way, for there is only one way to Heaven and there never will be two. And when men hear a voice saying, “This is the way,” it does, in effect, remind them that the opposite is not the way. If you are going the reverse of the right way, turn you from it and you shall live.

How much we ought to bless God that the Gospel comes in as a corrective, kills the false and introduces us to the true. May falsehood be slain within us and the Truth of God reign there forever. May we leave all other roads, since the Lord has said of one road only, “This is the way.” It is also a word of sure confirmation. “This is the way.” When that is heard many times—”This is the way.” “This is the way.” “This is the way.” When, according to our hymn—

*“We hear our Savior say,
‘Come here, soul, I am the Way,’”*

if we have already believed it to be the way, we are strengthened in that conviction. Hearing the mysterious word declaring again and again, “This is the way,” men grow to believe the Truth of God’s Word, and out of that, by-and-by, there is begotten a living faith in a living Savior. Oh, this is a great mercy, to hear the same thing many times, to hear the voice proclaim again and again and again, “This is the way,” “This is the way.” “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ, the righteous.” May the repetitions of the Spirit effectually preserve us from the deadly shadow of doubt and fix us as a nail in a sure place.

This is followed up by a word of personal direction. “Walk you in it.” Do not merely *hear* about it, but “*walk* you in it.” Be not content to be critics, thinkers and considerers, but become *doers* of the Word of God. “This is the way”—here is the doctrine—“Walk you in it” There is the practice! Well is it when the Lord, by His Spirit, speaks to the runaway sinner and tells him what he is to do and to believe. Then He makes the way and the walk to be vividly present—”This is the way, walk you in it” without delay. This takes the form of encouraging permission. Some think they may not come to Christ. They actually ask the question, “May I believe in Him? Is there salvation for me?” The says text, “This is the way.” Do not sit *looking* at it—“walk you in it.” “But I am so big a sinner.” “Christ is the way; walk you in it.” There is room enough for big sinners in Jesus!

“But I have been so long coming.” Never mind. This is the way, “walk you in it.” Never mind if you have been 70 years coming if you have at last come to the way, “Walk you in it.” “But I am afraid my feet are so polluted that I shall stain the way.” “This is the way, walk you in it.” You are not told to stand on one side and wait till something shall happen to you which shall persuade you to come, but here is the king’s highway, walk you in it! Walking is the simplest of all exercises. There is no great artistic skill required in order to walk, but walking is all that is needed. Come to Christ—come to Him now. Oh soul, *tumble* to Him! Trust Him as best you can and if you cannot do it without question, trust Him because you *must* trust Him, since you have nobody else to trust! Throw yourself into Jesus’ arms! Swoon away on the bosom of Christ! It is the essence of faith, to die into the life of God in Christ Jesus! This is the message which comes behind many a runaway sinner—”This is the way, walk you in it.”

IV. According to our text, success is promised to the word. “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it.” Notice, THE SUCCESS OF THE WORD—your *ears* shall hear. God not only gives us something to hear, but He gives us ears to hear with! Oh, the mercy of God! He spreads the table and then He gives the appetite! He furnishes the garments and He gives us the sense of nakedness—and so leads us to put them on! Everything

that is wanted to bear a man from the gates of Hell to the gates of Heaven, Free Grace provides. Nothing is left out—the catalog is complete—He that sends the tidings also opens the ears.

“Your ears shall hear.” This is effectual Grace! Teachers cannot make men hear. They can appeal to the external ear and after that, they have no more that they can do. But God can make men hear. Without violating the freedom of their wills, He can get at their hearts, at their consciences, at their understandings and He can press His Truth home to their souls. When the Lord does it, it is done! When we do it, it is often so done that afterwards it is undone, but verily, I know that what God does shall be forever! All that is of Nature’s spinning will be unraveled one day, but when God spins, it will last throughout eternity!

I take it when we read here, “Your ears shall hear,” it means first, that the message of Divine Love shall come to the man’s mind so as to create uneasiness in it. He is jauntily traversing the road to destruction. He has chosen the path and he delights in it. It often looks to him to be a flowery way, a pleasant road. So he walks on and he would be very happy but for that word behind him crying, “Turn you! Turn you! Turn you!” Just as he was turning down that glade in the wood to the right, where all the flowers of spring are found in profusion, that call troubled him, again! He would sooner have seen a serpent hissing in the pathway, or heard a lion roar from the thicket, than have heard that Word of God! The man says, “I never can be quiet. I can see other people going to amusements and pleasures and they heartily enjoy themselves. But the fact is, the more amusement I have, the less I am amused, and I am never more miserable than when everybody else is laughing. Why am I thus?”

He thinks he is hardly done by and is the special object of God’s hatred. Everybody else is jolly, but he is gloomy. They can look on the wine when it is red, when it moves itself aright, when it gives its color in the cup—and so could he once look into the rosy depths, but now he sees that serpent at the bottom of it and he is afraid to touch it lest the draught should turn to venom in his veins. He almost curses the arrangements of Heaven which have made him so ill at ease. He wishes he had never heard the parson preach the sermon which bothered him so. He wishes he had never had a godly mother at all, that he might have gone straight away into sin and have been as merry as a cricket. But now there is that voice again behind him, boring its way into his tingling ears! For a moment He had forgotten it, but there it comes again—”Turn! Turn! Turn! Turn!” He covers his ears, but it bombards his soul with worse than cannonballs, as if the Word of God pounded him with shells, He hears the thunders of the cannonade,—”Return! Return! Return!” What can he do? He longs to escape from the Divine rebuke. The word has made him quiver and quake!

So far so good. We shall see, next, what will happen to him. After a while there gets to be a desire in his heart. It is only a faint and spasmodic desire—nothing very strong or constant—but there it is and it cannot be quenched. “I wish I could get right, somehow, for in my present condition I am in an evil case. I am sailing in the wrong boat. I wish I could land somewhere and take the return boat and get to my home. I do not feel at all easy. I wish I knew what to do to be saved. I do know it, somehow, for I have heard it every Sabbath, but yet I do not understand it. I cannot get hold of it. I wish I could, for I am anxious to be forgiven, to be renewed in the spirit of my mind, to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

“Do you know,” he says to someone, “that voice I could not bear, that used to wake me up at nights, that kept me out of pleasure? There is a kind of music in it now! I like to hear it! I wish I heard it so that it had an effect upon me, for I am afraid I shall go down to the Pit and be lost under accumulated responsibilities for having neglected the call of Divine Love. Oh, help me to come to Christ, for I am anxious to reach Him, but I feel as if I cannot come. I do not feel as I ought. I am told to believe, but I do not know what it means, or I cannot do it—

*“I would but can’t believe,
Then all would easy be.
I would but cannot,
Lord, relieve—
My help must come from You.”*

He is getting on all right, Friends! We shall have a better bulletin concerning him directly. He is wonderfully improving—a great deal of the fever of pride has gone out of the man—we shall have him, yet, in perfect health!

He could not rest because he heard too much of the word behind him and now he cannot rest because he cannot hear enough of it! He desires that it may penetrate his soul and change him from darkness to light. What shall happen next? As

that voice continues to sound, it pulls him up and leads to resolve. The Word of the Lord has put a bit into his mouth and a bridle between his jaws. He does not dare go any further. He sits down to consider. I think I saw him on his knees, too, and he is resolved if Heaven is to be had, he will have it! If mercy is to be found, he will find it. He will rake the world over, but he will gain the pearl of great price. I think I heard him say he would not go to sleep till he found Jesus. I am glad he has come to that pass.

Friend, you are just like the prodigal when he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” Only take care you do not end in resolutions. Let it be said of you as of that same prodigal, “He arose, and came to his father.” For all our resolutions are not worth the making unless they are most earnestly and speedily carried into effect. Observe the effect of the word behind the wanderer. Cannot you see the man who was running so fast? He has pulled up. He sees a line drawn across his path and he must not go over it. He feels that if he goes further, he may never have another call of mercy and this makes him pause. Did not we sing this morning—

“Soon that voice will cease its calling”?

The man is anxious to obey while he may. He is not yet resolved to go back, but he dares not go further. Watch him, for the voice is calling, again, and he is every now and then turning his ear round as if he wanted to hear it.

“Return, return, return.” He smites upon His breast and cries, “Would God I could return! I will return, for I cannot perish! I cannot let things go as once I did! I cannot leave everything to take its own way while I take my chance. No, I must have Christ or else I die and I must have Him soon, or else I shall seal my eternal destiny and prove a castaway forever. O God, call again, call again! Keep on calling, till I come, for lo, my spirit answers, ‘Draw me, and I will run after You.’ When You said unto me, ‘Seek you My face,’ my heart said unto You, ‘Your face, Lord, will I seek.’”

What will be the last stage of this inner work? Since the man dares not go any further in this wrong way, what is he to do? He cannot turn to the right or to the left, for God has hedged up his way with thorns. Now, listen to what he will say, “I will return unto my first husband, for it was better with me then than now.” This poor soul looks on Him whom he pierced. He did not know he was piercing his Redeemer, but now he sees it all. And while his eyes begin to stream with tears, he turns unto this Christ upon the Cross, and finds life while looking at Him! See him get up and feel as if he did not know what to do with himself as he cries—

*“Blest Cross; blest sepulcher; blest rather be
The man that here did shed His blood for me.”*

Now he enquires, “Which is my way? Speak, sweet voice! Speak, sweet voice! Tell me which is my way.” And now the voice moves and speaks in *front* of him, for shepherds go before their sheep. The man looks and sees the Crucified One with pierced hands and feet leading the way and he delights to follow Him—yes, and he shall follow Him until at the last he shall see His face in Glory everlasting! Redeemed by blood and rescued by eternal power and brought home to the great Shepherd’s fold, to go no more out forever, the sinner shall be filled with gladness! Listen, then, listen, you that have turned your backs on God! Infinite mercy woos you! Boundless compassion entreats you to be saved!

Turn you! Turn as you are, all black and filthy and bemired—tarry not to mend or wash, but come to Jesus all unholy and unclean, without a single sound speck upon your leprous frame, utterly lost and ruined! Christ died for such as you! I say again, tarry not to improve yourselves, but come *now*, while Mercy’s voice incites you—while the Holy Spirit not only entreats, but sweetly constrains! Come and welcome, Sinners, come! The Lord bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 30.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 496, 497.

WHO IS THIS?

NO. 1673

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord.”
Jeremiah 30:21.*

I MENTIONED in the reading that there is a very remarkable change of tone in the Book of Jeremiah, at the 30th chapter. You read on through the 29 chapters and you hear nothing but “a weeping and wailing,” while the Prophet stands before you, girt with sackcloth, bidding Israel, “lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us.” When you come to the middle of the 30th chapter, all is changed—you have left the dungeon for the pleasant meads and you hear “thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry.” Here flowers of promise glorify the fields and birds of praise sweeten the air with music. The people are first made to tremble and fear on account of sin and all faces are turned into paleness—and then the Lord declares His immeasurable Grace, saying, “I am with you to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you.”

The condition of the sinful people is brought home to them and the nation is solemnly told—“Your bruise is incurable and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you.” And then man’s extremity of misery becomes God’s opportunity of mercy! When and where sin abounds, Grace does much more abound, and the Lord displays His wonders of love. He graciously declares—“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”

The reason for the change is not difficult to find. The Prophet is led to speak of Covenant promises, such, as that in the 22nd verse, “You shall be My people, and I will be your God.” No wonder that Jeremiah’s strain grew more cheerful and jubilant! Was there ever such a box of perfume as the Covenant? Was there ever such a harp of golden strings, all tuned to the music of consolation, as the Covenant? Inspired by this subject, he exclaims in the next chapter—“For thus says the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.” **EVERLASTING COVENANT MEDIATOR**

Moreover, he introduces to us that glorious Messenger of the Covenant whom we delight in. He speaks of the Messiah, who is the Glorious One who has engaged His heart to approach unto God and, as when the sun rises, darkness flees, so when the Savior appears, his sorrows vanish and Jeremiah becomes as eloquent with joy as Isaiah himself! Think no more of Jeremiah as exclusively the weeping Prophet, for the flashes of his delight make the night of his sorrow brilliant with an aurora of heavenly brilliance! The answer to the question of our text is the reason why Jeremiah put away his dust and ashes and girt himself with beauteous array.

God had, for a while, on account of their great sin, put away His people and wounded them with the chastisement of a cruel one for the multitude of their iniquities. They could not walk with Him, for they were not agreed with Him. He could not accept their sacrifices, for they were polluted. He could not listen to their prayers, for they were hypocritical. He could not dwell with them, for they were proud-hearted and rebellious. So Zion came to be called an outcast whom no man seeks after. God Himself seemed to have given her a bill of divorce and to have put her away—but it only seemed that way.

In Jehovah’s heart of hearts He was still bound to His people, whom He loved with an everlasting love. He could not cast away the seed of Abraham, His friend, and His heart yearned towards the people whom He had loved of old and borne with in great long-suffering. He had put them under a cloud because of their sin, yet He did earnestly remember them, still, for He bears witness, saying, “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.” The Lord loathed the distance which separated His people from Him, but He longed to see them approach Him that He might comfort them

and satiate their souls with His goodness. How was this to be done? This was the problem of that age, as it is the problem of all ages!

How can guilty man return unto the Holy God? How can there be peace and amity, love and concord between the Judge of all the earth and His revolting and polluted creature, man? It was necessary that one should arise who would approach God on the behalf of the people, so that God might be well pleased with them for his righteousness' sake. But where was he to be found? Someone must come to God and by his coming make a way through which those whom he represented might have access. But where was this representative to be found? Paradise was lost—who was he by whom it could be regained? The question was asked and in man's ears it seemed to be asked in vain, for it is written, "There is none to plead your cause; all your lovers have forsaken you." "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me?" says the Lord."

One was needed to bridge the chasm which divided man from God. Who could do it? God Himself asked the question because He had Himself found the Person and would have us see Him and understand His glorious Character. My text comes from Jehovah's own lip—"Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me?" says the Lord." He sets the Mediator before us and asks, "Who is this? We are sure that the Lord does not need to ask questions of us that He may gain information from us. "Known unto God are all His works," and much more must He be known by whom His grandest work is accomplished! Speaking in the name of wisdom our glorious Mediator says of the Lord, "I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

So that the Lord only asks the question for our good, to set us thinking. This enquiry is fitly the sinner's question, when, trembling and convinced of sin and led to seek His God, he needs an Interposer, One of a thousand, who can put His hand upon the offender and the Offended and reconcile the rebel to His Lord. Therefore, in love the Lord takes up the sinner's question and answers it by Another. Behold a Daysman of Jehovah's own providing, who can lay His hand upon both—look at Him and answer, "Who is He?" The enquiry is made, I think, with three great designs, upon which I shall speak as I am enabled of the Spirit of God.

First, to direct attention to this glorious Person—"Who is this?" Secondly, to excite admiration of His wondrous work "that engaged His heart to approach unto Me, says the Lord." And then, thirdly, to awaken our interest in the result of this marvelous approach unto God—for by it we are permitted and enabled to approach unto the Lord, ourselves, and we become His people and He confesses Himself to be our God. O for the Holy Spirit's own teaching, that I may speak aright to you upon this transcendent subject!

I. The question of our text is asked TO DIRECT ATTENTION TO THIS GLORIOUS PERSON. "Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me?" says the Lord." We read the chapter and if you have read it attentively, or will do so, you will learn that the Person who must draw near to God must be one of ourselves. "Their nobles," or their Glorious One, "shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto Me." It is clear that a fit representative for men must be, himself, a man. It would not have been seemly that Adam, the representative of our race, should have been an angel—it was natural that He should be a man. In the same way, as man blocked up the road of communion with God, it was fitting that a man should make a new road, and reestablish Divine communion.

In Adam we transgressed and died to God—in another Adam must we be restored. If an angel were capable in all other respects of drawing near to God, yet it is clear that he could not do it on *man's* behalf, for an angel can only represent angels. Each order of beings must be represented by its own kind. Our Lord, as Man, took not up angels, for He was not made in *their* nature, but He took up the seed of Abraham because He had assumed their nature. It needed a man, perfect in his manhood, to head us up and stand as our federal head and representative, or otherwise we could not be restored by him.

Now, then, Brothers and Sisters, where is this man to be found? "Who is this?" If he is to come of ourselves, where is he? Not among *this* assemblage—nor if all the myriads that dwell on the face of the earth could be gathered together would there be found one who could undertake this enterprise—"For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God." We have, none of us, that perfection which is required for such a work! How shall a sinner atone for sinners? He cannot make atonement for his *own* sin! He cannot render unto God for himself and on his own account the righteousness which Justice demands of him! How, then, can he have anything to spare for his fellow men? The best of men are, each

one in the condition of the wise virgins who, when the foolish virgins said, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out," replied, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

If the whole roll of history is searched, from Adam's fall to this moment, there is not one mere man to be found who could represent the race and make an approach for them to God on the ground of personal perfection! This is God's own verdict—"All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God." The Lord looked from Heaven to see if there were any among the children of men that had not transgressed, but He found none, for, "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one." Nor is it merit, alone, that is needed, for he that would approach unto the Lord as mediator must be prepared with strength to suffer. Who can sustain the load of human sin? Who can endure the indignation of the Lord against iniquity?

Assuredly none of us could do it—the fire would consume us as stubble. O for an Interposer! But where can he be found? Who is this who can, as man, appear for men, and by his personal righteousness and sacrifice render man acceptable with God? There was a Man of matchless birth, at whose coming, angels sang, for they were told that He would bring Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace. Find Him in Bethlehem's manger—there He lies, the son of Mary, truly Man, one of ourselves, partaker of our flesh and blood, subject to human needs, weaknesses, woes and able, therefore, to sympathize with us and have compassion upon us! That Man grew up in this world without taint or spot, free from sin whether natural or acquired, and yet He was, in the truest sense, one of ourselves, so that He is not ashamed to call us brethren!

When the malicious eyes of Satan searched Him through and through, he found nothing of evil in Him. He was without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and He it is—glory be to His name—He it is that has engaged His heart to approach unto God on our behalf! He is the Son of Man, most truly, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, but still truly fellow with men! Though He counted it no robbery to be equal with God, yet He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was made in the likeness of men that He might redeem us from our sin! Now look at the context and you will see that the person who must approach God for us must be a prince-priest, for he is called "their Glorious One" and "their Governor," and yet it is said of him, "I will cause Him to draw near," which work of drawing near is in other places ascribed to *priests*, for these God had set apart for the service of His sanctuary!

The Hebrew word, "to draw near," signifies that peculiar action of a priest when he stands dealing with God on the behalf of men. The person, then, must be a priest and yet a prince. Who is he and where is he? It is not David, for if David would approach unto God in the office of a priest, he must not—he must resort to the priest who has the Urim and the Thummim—and the priest of the house of Aaron must inquire of God *for* David. This was one distinction between David and Saul, that David knew the limits of his office and never thought to over step it. David and Solomon never attempted to intrude into the holy office—they knew that they were not priests, but only kings—and when Uzzah stood to sacrifice like a priest you know how the leprosy fell upon him. And they drove him out of the house of God which he was desecrating by intruding himself into the priestly office. He had to be shut up in a separate house all the rest of his life.

Where shall we find one that even as a priest can really draw near to God for mankind? For remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the priests of old only drew near to God in *figure* and in *metaphor*—they could not actually and in very deed do so—for God is a consuming fire! Even when Moses went up unto the mount with God and did draw near in a certain sense, yet he never saw the face of God, for the Lord said, "You cannot see My face and live." The brightest vision that ever Moses had was that he saw the skirts of Jehovah's robe, or what Scripture styles His back parts, for the face of God could not be seen. Mercy draws us near to God in Christ Jesus, but apart from the Mediator, an approach to absolute Deity means destruction.

Neither among kings nor priests could the one man be found who could open the way to the Father! And certainly no king-priest could be found—the combination of the two offices falls not to the house of Aaron. A reverend personage had passed before the camera of history and left a shadowy trace of himself. But where now is he who was named Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, to whom Abraham gave tithes of all? He was raised up for a special purpose and no one has inherited his peculiar call. That vision taught us what to look for, but it did not supply the object of our search! It has prophesied the coming of the *true* Melchisedec, the Man without beginning of days or end of years, the Man without predecessor or successor, who is greater than Abraham and abides as both priest and king

forever, having once and for all drawn near to God on our behalf. You know Him—the true Priest of God, not of the order of Aaron—and the King eternal, immortal, invisible, King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is He that engaged His heart to draw near to God on our behalf!

The question, however, may be answered in another way, so as to bring out more clearly the matchless Person whom our hearts adore at this moment. It was necessary that he who should draw near to God should be chosen to that office by God, Himself, and should be qualified for it by Divine power. “I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach to me.” Now, is there anyone among us all that God has ever chosen to represent our fellow men as their mediator, acting as the head of the race and as such entering into the immediate Presence of God on his own merits? We have not, I hope, the presumption to imagine such a thing! “There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus.” He it is that takes upon Himself our nature and our sin, and then goes in onto God and stands there, amidst the blaze of the ineffable Light, to represent manhood—and there is none else!

On Him rested the Spirit of God without measure. The Dove descended on Him in the waters of His baptism and the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was the great One elect of Heaven, ordained of the Father before the foundation of the world—and the Spirit of Glory and of might did rest upon Him—that He might be equipped for His mighty service and might engage His heart to approach unto God. This is He who said, “I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me.”

Moreover, to close this description, He was not only appointed of God and qualified, but He was one who was willing to undertake the task and ready to pledge Himself to it. He voluntarily covenanted to do it, as it is written, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Your will, O God: yes, Your Law is My delight.” He engaged His heart to this gracious office, resolving to carry out to a happy issue the work of reconciliation. Moved by inconceivable, immeasurable love and counting all the cost, He devoted Himself to the supreme effort. “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” Of His own free will He placed Himself before offended Justice to meet its claims and so He removed every barrier which stood between us and the Throne of God! He is that Breaker who has gone up before us, that King who is at the head of all His chosen ones.

Now, where is such an One to be found unless it is the Lord Jesus? I trust many of us have given ourselves up to God and to His fear, drawn by almighty love. But it was never in our hearts to imagine that by giving up ourselves to holy service we could stand before God and open a way to Him for our fellow men! We are well aware of our incompetence for so grand a task. None of us have struck hands and covenanted with God to mediate, for we could not do it! I dread the thought of seeming to intrude into so Divine a work! We are priests unto God, but not mediators for men! When I hear of men pretending to hear the confessions of their fellow men and absolving them of their sins, I wonder that they sleep nights after professing so tremendous an act! *A/C*

I am amazed at what the power of Satan over them must be that they can rest after having assumed to act as vicars of Jehovah, He having given them no warrant and no authority for such a mediatorial position! Brothers and Sisters, this blasphemy of blasphemies may well become the Mother of Harlots, but the Bride of Christ abhors it! But oh, when my eyes rest upon Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, in human flesh, then I cry, “This is He! Glory be to His name!” And, lost in wonder, my soul exclaims, “Who is this? Who is this? What manner of Man is this? Who is a God like unto You?” All this in wonder, but not in doubt, for the Lord Jesus can do this great work and He wills to do it! He has resolved and He will not fail nor be discouraged!

Glory be to His name, He has done it! He has approached with engaged heart unto God on our behalf and, by His sacrifice, He has made a way by which each one of us who is willing to do so may now approach unto God, even the Father, without fear. “Who is this?” Our soul is filled with amazement, but not with ignorance, for we answer this question in a word—He is God, Himself, Light of Lights, very God of very God, veiled in human flesh who has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. “Who is this?” I answer, it is the Lawgiver Himself who has put Himself under the Law and who has borne the penalties of the Law that the Law may be glorified, while sin is pardoned and Law-breakers are justified! “Who is this?” It is infinite Holiness which has burdened itself with human sin, “For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Oh, if I had but words to speak with, I would try to extol Him who, being infinitely pure, nevertheless was numbered with the transgressors! Who, being incapable of spot, yet did bear upon Himself the enormous and horrible load of human guilt! In His own body on the tree, in flesh and soul, He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Mark that words, for they show His end and objective—“to bring us to God.” This is the way by which He brought us near, even by His own most precious blood! Yes, it is the heavenly One, who is blessed forevermore, who was made a curse for us! On whom, being everlastingly the object of Jehovah’s love, there fell Jehovah’s wrath on our account! Mystery of mystery! Miracle of miracles! This has astonished Heaven and earth and Hell!

Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews and Son of the Highest, engaged His heart that He might wait upon the Judge of all the earth and answer for rebellious man with His own life—and so complete a way of access by which we may rise from our abyss of woes to the bosom of the Eternal! Though I have thus spoken to the best of my knowledge, I know that I cannot set out before you the full Glory of the Person of our Covenant Head. I shall go home saying to myself, “Who is this? Who is this?” and I shall have succeeded in my endeavor if you will, each one, say, “He could not tell us who He was. He could not reach the height of that great argument, but we shall, all through time and in eternity, go on wondering and saying, Who is this?”

The more we wonder, the more shall we love and praise the Lord Jesus with our heart of hearts and say, “He has done all things well. We are made near by Him, never more to be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Thus much upon the Person. How freely could I weep because I speak in words so poor and ill chosen! I do but hold a candle to show the sun! **TRINITY JC**

II. I come now TO EXCITE ADMIRATION OF HIS MATCHLESS WORK. If Jesus Christ is to approach God for us, it is clear that He must come down into our condition, for He must first descend or He cannot ascend. Naturally there is such a Oneness between the blessed Persons of the Trinity that there can be no approaching, in their case, to one another. but Jesus, though He was forever in the highest sense with God, left His place of Glory and took the position of our shame. “Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” There He stands, even where we stood by nature! Where we lay in our blood, there He came and engaged His heart to deliver us.

He stood at the Judgment bar because we had brought ourselves there. He was rejected of the people because we were rejected as reprobate silver. He was condemned because we were condemned and He was put to death because such was the sentence upon us! He descended into our depths to engineer a way from the lowest to the highest, to come back from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea, leading the van of the armies of His chosen as they return unto God with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads!

This lowly place being taken, behold, our Lord actually approaching unto the offended Majesty on high! Though found in fashion as a Man, by reason of His becoming a curse for us, He was denied the Presence of the Father, so that He cried in anguish, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Yet He did approach unto God! He did come near! No, He *remains* near, able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him! He has passed under the cloud and the darkness, and through the consuming fire—and now He is the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God! He has gone into the Holy of Holies and revealed the Mercy Seat. He has bridged the great gulf which sin had made! “It is finished,” He said, before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

As a result, the pathway is open! Every gulf is filled! Every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill laid low! It is finished—the way from man to God has been already trod by myriads of cleansed feet, for our Glorious One has cast up the king’s highway and made straight paths for our feet! Come, let us tread the road. With holy confidence let us draw near unto God! Our Lord, with all His heart, desired to do this. He “engaged His heart” to perform it. Before all worlds, His master purpose was to approach unto God as man’s Representative. He is styled, “the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world,” because this was the firm resolve and bent of His entire Being, before ever the earth was!

He had vowed in His soul that He would restore the banishment of the Fall and bridge the distance between man and God. When God would not have sacrifice and offering at man’s hand, then Jesus said, “Lo, I come.” He says of Himself, “The Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” His heart was determined and resolved, for so the expression means, when the text says, “He engaged His heart.” But why this readiness, this eagerness? Love is the one reply! His heart was occupied with love to God and love to man and He could not rest till He had restored the broken concord between these divided ones. With all

the forcefulness of His Divine Nature and with all the energy of His perfect Humanity, He was resolved to bring men back to God.

While He was yet a boy He felt bound to be about His Father's business. When He first appeared among the multitude it was by submission to the Father's ordinance to fulfill all righteousness. He could not hold His peace or take rest because His mission was urgent and His heart was in it. Many a time He set aside a crown to hear a cross. All the kingdoms of this world could not bribe Him from His sacred purpose, though displayed before Him by the arch-tempter in a sudden blaze of brightness. If any endeavored to dissuade Him from His purpose, even though they did it out of love, He saw the evil spirit who was using them as his instruments and with indignation He broke the snare! Even though it were the beloved Peter, He looked on him as the devil's advocate, and said, "Get you behind Me, Satan."

How full of meaning is that sigh, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" He was shut up like a man in a narrow prison and His only enlargement was to be by anguish and death. He was straitened till He could give Himself up as a Sacrifice and so open a door for us to our God. The insatiable desire of our Lord's vehement spirit was the finishing of the work which the Father had given Him to do. It was His meat and His drink to accomplish the purpose of love. "Who is this?" "Who is this?" The more I turn it over and think of it, the more I am astonished that so condescending, gracious and glorious a work should engage the heart of the Lord of All!

We had not loved Him, but He loved us. We were His enemies, but what a Friend was He! Our hearts were set on wandering, but His heart was engaged to bring us near to God. Let us each pause here and admire as we say, "He loved me and gave Himself for *me*." Who is this that thus has spent His love upon so poor a being? Having thus determined that He would approach unto God on our behalf, He took all the consequences. A correct reading of the passage would be, "Who is this that has pledged His heart or His life to approach unto Me, says the Lord?" If you take the meaning of the word, "heart," to be "life," since the heart is the source of life, then we read that our Lord pledged His life, put His life in surety that He would approach unto God, the Judge of All, and bring us near to Him.

When He came as the Representative of sinful men—then vengeance with its sword must smite Him—and He was willing to be smitten. Voluntarily He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He did not hide His face from shame and spitting. He must die, if He draws near to God for sinful men, for such is the penalty due. But He willingly laid down His life, and, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost. He must be deserted of God and He even submits to that, till He cries "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He might have drawn back from His undertaking if He would, but He never thought of drawing back. With desire He desired to eat that Passover.

In order to die, He broke off in the middle of a discourse, saying, "Arise, let us go therefore." His slogan was, "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" He saved others, but Himself He could not save, because Love held Him bound in her chains. How intensely ought we to love Jesus since He thus reckoned nothing too hard or heavy, that He might appear in the Presence of God for us and make a way to God for poor sinners such as we are. He even delighted in suffering and dishonor for this end. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." He made pledge, not merely of hands or eyes, but of His heart and life. He came with His life in His hands before Jehovah's face and gave up that life that He might remove from us the death penalty due to justice—and so reconcile us to the Lord of All!

Tune your harps, you angels! Make this Sabbath on which we think of this sublime mystery a special festival of song! Oh, sing unto the Lord, you redeemed ones who see His face! You are before the Throne of Glory because He stood before the throne of vengeance and made it possible for your robes to be washed white as snow! As for you, you redeemed with blood who are still below, bring forth your loudest notes and praise Him who has once and for all cleared the way and opened an avenue of Grace to you. Who is this wonderful Savior? Who shall declare the generation of Him who pledged His life that He might draw near to God for us and endured all the consequences to the bitter end?

And now, today, Beloved, Jesus Christ rejoices to think that He has approached unto God on our behalf and made eternal amity between God and man! Let us rejoice with Him! Let us become happy in fellowship with our God—

*"Tis finished all; the veil is rent,
The welcome sure, the access free;
Now then, we leave our banishment,
O Father, to return to Thee!"*

This is the joy of Christ's heart forever! He welcomes our return to God! He is glad when our communion is hearty and continuous! By His Holy Spirit He draws us near! Blessed be His name!

III. Let me try, and may the Spirit of God help me, TO AWAKEN YOUR INTEREST IN THE SWEET RESULTS OF JESUS CHRIST'S HAVING APPROACHED GOD FOR US. The first result is found in the chapter. Read that 22nd verse. Read it with your own eyes and wonder that it should be put there. "Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord. *And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.*" That is, because our royal High Priest approached unto God for us, therefore we who were called outcasts; we whose wound was incurable and grievous; we that were utterly ruined and undone—we, believing in this Jesus, shall in Him become the people of God!

Let me speak plainly with you, beloved Brothers and Sisters—how many of you have realized this? It is all idle for me to talk about Christ making the way unless you run in the way. Are you the Lord's people? Many of you humbly rejoice in this high honor, but there may be a few here who are of another mind—you care nothing for having the Lord to be your God. Possibly you sneer and call it cant. Yes, but if you knew the Truth of God you would not do so. When we hear you speaking contemptuously of being God's people, all we can say is, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Will you mind thinking just for half a minute? Will you try to think justly and rightly? Must it not be good and right that the creature should love the Creator? Must it not be a wise thing that the children whom God has formed should love their heavenly Father and be on good terms with Him? Is it not likely that it would be a happy thing for you if you were one of God's people? You can never rest till you are!

But you ask, "How can I be?" Why, it all follows upon what I have been talking of! Jesus Christ went to the Father for us, that we might approach unto the Father in Him and through Him, that we might become the Lord's own people and that the Lord might become our God! I tell you I would sooner say, "This God is my God," than anything else that I can imagine! To say, "This kingdom is my kingdom," or, "This whole world is mine," were a miserable business compared with saying, "My Beloved is mine and I am His!" You would not think I exaggerated if you tried it. I invite you to an honest, practical test.

See if there is not joy in the salvation of God. Religion is, with some people, a sort of dreamy thing on Sundays—you sit in your pews and bear with us long-winded talkers about things which you do not care for. Oh, but if you did value and enjoy them! If you could but taste and handle them you would say, "Go on, Preacher! Go on! You are a poor hand at it, for your themes are so great and wondrous that you cannot reach to them; but, still, go on! Ring that bell again! Open more doors and let us peep in upon the secret treasures. Bring us more clusters of the grapes of Eshcol and let us at least pluck a berry here and there if we cannot carry away a whole cluster—and so fill our mouths with the inexpressible delight of being God's people and having Jehovah to be our God!"

This bliss comes to those of us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, because Jesus said, "I will wait upon the Lord that hides His face from the house of Jacob." The face of the Lord is no longer hidden from us! We have access with confidence into this Grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. I seem to see in my spirit that old legend of Rome worked out in very deed. So says the story—in the Roman Forum there gaped a vast chasm which threatened the destruction of the Forum, if not of Rome. The wise men declared that the gulf would never close unless the most precious thing in Rome was cast into it. See how it yawns and cracks, every moment, more horribly! Hasten to bring this noblest thing! For love of Rome sacrifice your best!

But what, or *who* is this? Where is a treasure meet for sacrifice? Then Curtius, a belted knight, mounted his charger, and rightly judging that valor and love of country were the noblest treasures of Rome, He leaped into the gulf! The yawning earth closed upon a great-hearted Roman, for her hunger was appeased. Perhaps it is but an idle tale, but what I have declared is the Truth of God! There gaped between God and man a dread abyss, deep as Hell, wide as eternity and only the best thing that Heaven contained could fill it! That best thing was He, the peerless Son of God, the matchless, Perfect Man and He came, laying aside His Glory, making Himself of no reputation. And He sprang into the gulf, which then and there closed, once and for all!—

*"Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead.
Oh, for this love let rocks and hills*

*Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak."*

One great result of Christ's having died is to leave us a way of access which is freely opened to every poor, penitent sinner. Come! Are you using that way of access? Do you use it every day? Having used it and thus having drawn near to God, do you *dwell* near to God? Do you abide in God? Is God the main thought of your life, the chief delight and object of your being? If it is not so, I earnestly invite you, by the Spirit's help, to make it so. You must engage your heart to come to God in Christ. There is no coming to God without sincere resolve and eager desire. Are you engaged to such an end? Alas, it may be you are drawn elsewhere. Are you engaged? Alas, some are engaged to Madame Bubble! Some are engaged to Belial! Some are engaged to self! Some are engaged to Mammon! Some seem engaged to the very devil of Hell!

Be wise and break these unlawful engagements. Let your covenant with death be broken and your league with Hell be annulled. Though you are weary of my words, yet would I stir you up to interest in this all-important matter. Break these deadly bands asunder! God help you, by a sudden energy which He shall give you, to snap your fetters once and for all, and then at once firmly engage your hearts to Christ! Never such loveliness, never such love will you find elsewhere. Come, say now—Whatever else I do or do not do, I will do this—I will approach to God by the way that Christ has opened for me—I will arise and go to my Father! I will throw myself at my Father's feet—I must be reconciled! I cannot live an enemy to Him! I must be made a friend—

*"I will approach You—
I will force
My way through obstacles to You."*

Jesus goes before me and I gladly follow. I will not leave the throne till You, O Lord, have said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." I shall be greatly happy, I shall be exceedingly glad if I may induce one spirit to come to God by Jesus Christ! But if the whole of you will come at once; if God's spirit shall now prompt all Believers to come and all unbelievers to become Believers, and so to come, what a splendid company of us will enter into the golden gates! And what joy there will be in Heaven over all of us as we approach unto the Most High! I think I note a seraph, as he takes down his harp, stand in the center of the heavenly choir and suggest to his fellow choristers that their theme should be, "Who is this that has engaged His heart to approach unto the living God?"

Hark how ten thousands of voices say—"Who is this?" Let us in humble notes lift up our praises. Here is a verse which may serve our turn—

*"Who is this that enters Glory,
Clearing for His saints a way?
Who shall tell the wondrous story
Who His glorious work display?
Jesus makes our access clear,
To the Father brings us near."*

Thus the question "Who is this?" admits of a second answer, for now, in Christ Jesus, *all* Believers with engaged hearts are approaching unto God! Who is this? At first it is Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God. And next it is His Church with all her heart engaged approaching unto God by Jesus Christ! My Hearers, can you join in the song of praise which is now rising from Heaven and earth? Angels are waiting till you approach their God! Come, hurry up! Hasten to be blest! At once approach your God by Christ Jesus and as angels see you coming their song shall grow yet louder, till it shall excel the noise of many waters and out-voice the last great thundering!. They come! They come! Sinners are coming to God! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

BROUGHT UP FROM THE HORRIBLE PIT **NO. 1674**

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 13, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I waited patiently for the Lord: and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my going. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”
Psalm 40:1-3.

This passage has been used with great frequency as the expression of the experience of the people of God and I think it has been very rightly so used. It is a very accurate picture of the way in which sinners are raised up from despair to hope and salvation, and of the way in which saints are brought out of deep troubles and made to sing of Divine love and power. Yet I am not certain that the first verse could be truthfully uttered by all of us. I question, indeed, whether any of us could thus speak. Could we say—“I waited patiently for the Lord.” Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that it might rather read—“I waited impatiently for the Lord,” in the case of most of us? All the rest may stand true, but this would need to be modified.

We could hardly speak in our own commendation if we considered our conduct in the matter of patience, for that is, alas, still a scarce virtue upon the face of the earth! If we read the Psalm through, we shall see that it was not written exclusively to describe the experience of God's people. Secondly we may regard it as *David's* language, but in the first instance a greater than David is here. The first Person who uttered these words was the Messiah and that is quite clear if you read the Psalm through, for we fall upon such language as this—“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears have You opened: burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.”

We need not say with the Ethiopian, “Of whom speaks the Prophet? Of Himself or of some other?” For we are led at once by the plainest indications to see that he is not speaking of himself, but of our Lord. And if we needed confirmation of this we get it in Hebrews 10, where Paul expressly quotes this passage as referring to the Lord Jesus. To Him, indeed, alone, of all men can it with accuracy be applied. So this morning I shall have to show that this text of ours is most fit to be the language of the Lord, our Representative and Covenant Head. When I have shown this, you will then see how we can use the same expressions, because we are in Him.

Each Believer becomes a mirror in which is reflected the experience of our Lord, but it would be ill for us to be so taken up with the mere reflection as to forget the express Image by which this experience is formed in us. I shall ask you, then, at this time, to observe our Divine Lord when in His greatest trouble. Notice, first, our Lord's behavior—“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto Me, and heard My cry.” Then consider, secondly, our Lord's deliverance, expressed by the phrase, “He brought Me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay,” and so forth. Then let us think, thirdly, of the Lord's reward for it—“Many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord”—that is His great end and objective—and in it He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

We shall close, fourthly, by perceiving the Lord's likeness in all His saved ones, for they, also, are brought up from the Pit of destruction, and a new song is put into their mouths. He is not ashamed to call them Brethren, since in each one of them His own experience is repeated though upon a smaller scale. **JC OBEDIENCE**

I. First, let us think of our Lord's behavior. “I waited patiently for the Lord.” Here we greatly need the teaching of the Holy Spirit—may it be given us abundantly. First, our Lord's conduct when He was under the smarting rod was that of waiting. He waited upon the Lord all His life and this waiting became more conspicuous in His passion and death. He went down into Gethsemane and there He prayed earnestly, but with sweet submission, for He said, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Complete submission was the essential spirit of His prayer. He rose up from prayer all crimson

with His bloody sweat and He went to meet His foes, delivering Himself up voluntarily to be led as a sheep to the slaughter.

He did not unsheathe the sword as Peter did, much less did He flee, like His disciples, but He waited upon the will of the Most High, enduring all things till the Father should give Him deliverance. When they took Him before Annas and Caiaphas, and Pilate and Herod, hurrying Him from bar to bar, how patiently He kept silence, though false witnesses appeared against Him. Like a sheep before her shearers He was dumb, submitting Himself without a struggle. In the Omnipotence of patience, He held His peace even from good, because it was so written of Him. When they led Him away to crucifixion through the streets of Jerusalem, He did not even encourage the lamentations of the sympathizing women who surrounded Him, but in His wondrous patience He said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me.”

He did not refuse to bear His Cross, or to let the Cross bear Him. He did not complain of contempt and contumely, since these were appointed Him. When they nailed Him to the tree and there He hung in the burning sun, tortured, fevered, agonizing—the words that escaped Him were not those of murmuring and repining, but those of pity, pain, patience and submission. Till He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He bowed His whole being to His Father’s will, waiting His time and pleasure. He steadily took a long draft at the appointed cup and drained it to the bitter end. His eyes were unto the Lord as the eyes of servants are to the hands of their masters. He waited in service, in hope, in resignation and in confidence. He knew that God would help Him and deliver Him.

He knew that His head would be raised on high above the sons of men, but still He waited for the Father’s time and, meanwhile, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant—and as a servant yielded all His strength to the work which was given Him to do. He was willing, in the hour of His passion, to be treated as the scum and scorn of all mankind! Nor did He hurry the hour when all the shame and scorn should blossom into Glory and honor. He went down in His waiting even to the utmost of self-denial and truly proved that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Never man served and waited like this Man!

Our text adds to this word, “waited,” the word, “patiently.” “I waited patiently.” If you would see patience, look not at Job on the dunghill, but look at Jesus on the Cross! Job, the most patient of men, was assuredly impatient at the same time, but this blessed Lord of ours gave Himself up completely and showed not the slightest sign of repining. Not a speck of impatience can be detected in the crystal stream of our Lord’s submission! His soul was all melted and it all flowed into the mold of the Father’s will—no dross was in or about Him—nothing refused to melt and to run into the mold. One would have supposed that He would have spoken an angry word to Judas, who betrayed Him. Instead of which He gently asked of him, “Friend, why are you here?”

It would not have seemed out of place if He had upbraided the Jews who so falsely accused Him, or the rulers who so unjustly treated Him. But here is the patience of the Saintly One—He was perfect master of His own Spirit. His answer to His murderers was the prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” So meek and lowly in heart was He that to men He gave no sharp replies. His answers were all steeped in gentleness. Take, for example, His word to the High Priest—“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you smite Me?” They sat down around the Cross and mocked Him, jeered at Him, insulted Him and made mirth even of His cries and prayers! But He did not utter a single word of rebuke, much less did He leap from the Cross to dash His mockers to pieces and prove by their destruction that He was, indeed, the mighty Son of God. **CRUCIFIXION ATONEMENT**

“I waited patiently,” He says. No thought or word or deed of impatience can be charged upon Him! Waiting, He waited and waited more. We are in such a hurry when we are in trouble—we hasten to escape from it at once—every minute seems an hour and every day an age. “Help me speedily, O my God!” is the natural cry of the child of God under the rod! But our Savior was in no ill haste to get from the chastisement which came upon Him for our sakes—He was at leisure in His woe. So thoroughly was He resolved to do His Father’s will that even on the morning of His Resurrection He arose with deliberation and quit the grave in order, folding His grave clothes and laying the napkin by itself. He steadily persevered in all His work of holiness and sorrow of Sacrifice, never accepting deliverance till His work was done. Patiently He endured to have His ear bored to the doorpost, to have His head encircled with thorns, His cheeks disdained with spit, His back furrowed with the lash, His hands and feet nailed to the wood and His heart pierced with the spear! In His body on the tree, patience was written out in crimson characters.

Now, this was necessary for the completeness of His Atonement. No expiation could have been made by an impatient Savior. Only a perfect obedience could satisfy the Law of God. Only an unblemished Sacrifice could put away our sins. There must not, therefore, be about our Substitute a trace of resistance to the Father's will, nor as a Sacrifice must He struggle against the cords, or turn His head away from the sacrificial knife. In truth, His was a willing, patient doing and suffering of the Divine Will. "He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting." "I waited patiently for the Lord," He says, and you know, Brothers and Sisters, how true was the declaration. **PATIENCE PRAYER**

But while the Savior thus waited, and waited patiently, we must not forget that He waited *prayerfully*, for the text speaks of a cry which He lifted up, and of God's inclining Himself to it. That patience which does not pray is obstinacy. A soul silent to God is apt to be sullen rather than submissive. A stoical patience hardens itself against grief and asks no deliverance—but that is not the patience which God loves—it is *not* the patience of Christ. He used strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. Let Gethsemane tell of that wrestling which infinitely excelled the wrestling of Jacob—Jabbok is outdone by Kedron! His was a wrestling, not to sweat alone, but unto sweat of blood! He sweats who works for bread, the staff of life, but He sweats *blood* who works for life itself.

What prayers those must have been under such a fearful physical, mental and spiritual agony which were so fervent that they brought an angel from the Throne of God, and yet, so submissive that they are the model of resignation! He agonized as earnestly as if He sought His own will and yet He wholly resigned Himself to the Father, saying, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." Our Lord was always praying—there never was a moment in His life in which He was not in full communion with God, unless we except the period when He cried, "Why have You forsaken Me?" He did often go aside to pray a more special prayer, but yet, even when He spoke to the people; even when He faced His foes, His soul was still in constant fellowship with His Father. But ah, when He came between the upper and the nether millstones—when this good Olive was ground in the olive press and all the oil of His life was extracted from Him—then it was that His strong crying and tears came up before the Lord His God and He was heard in that He feared.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, look at your Pattern and see how far short you have come of it! At least, I will remember with regret how far short I have come of it! Have we waited? Have we not been in too great a hurry? Has it not been too much our desire that the Lord might make His will like *our* will rather than make our will like *His*? Have you not had a will of your own, sometimes, and a strong will, too? Have you not been as the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke? Have you not kicked against the pricks? You have not waited, but you have worried! Can we say that we waited patiently? Oh, that patience! Every man thinks he has it until he needs it! But only let his tender point be touched and you will see how little patience he possesses. It is the fire which tires our supposed resignation and under that process much of our palace of patience burns like wood, hay and stubble! Old crosses fit the shoulder, but let a new cross be laid upon us and we writhe under it. Suffering is the vocation of a Christian, but most of us come short of our high calling. Our Lord Jesus has joined together reigning *and* suffering, for we read of "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." He was the royal example of patience, but what are we?

Remember, again, that Jesus prayed importunately while He waited—"being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly." Have we not, at time, *restrained* prayer? Have we not pleaded as an excuse for our feeble petitions the very facts which ought to have been a spur to our earnestness? "I felt too ill to pray." Could you not pray for health with all the more fervency? "I felt too burdened to pray." Should you not pray for help to bear your burden? Can we ever safely say to ourselves, "I may be excused from supplication, now, for my sorrow is great." Talk not so! Here is your balm and benediction, your comfort and your cordial! Here is your strength and succor, your constancy and confidence! Even in the midnight of the soul let us arise and pour out our hearts like water before the Lord. O tried Believer, get to your knees and from above the Mercy Seat, the Glory of the Lord shall shine forth upon you! Pray even as Jesus did and as all His saints have done and so shall you, in patience, possess your soul. **SUFFERING CHASTISEMENT**

In due time the Lord inclined to the afflicted suppliant, listening to His moaning from the bottom of the pit—of this it is high time for us to speak. Yet let us not leave this first point till we learn from the example of our Lord that patience is seen in waiting as well as in suffering. To bear a great weight for an hour or two is nothing compared with carrying a

load for many a day. Patience knows its letters, but waiting reads the page and praying rehearses it in the ears of God! Let us add to our patience waiting—and to waiting—prayer.

II. We come, secondly, to consider our Lord's deliverance. In due time, when Patience had had her perfect work and prayer had at last prevailed, our suffering Lord was brought up, again, from the deeps of sorrow. His deliverance is set forth under two images. First, it is represented as a bringing up out of a horrible pit. It is a terribly suggestive metaphor. I have been in the dungeon in Rome in which, according to tradition, Peter and Paul were confined (though, probably, they were never there at all).

It was, indeed, a horrible pit, for originally it had no entrance, but a round hole in the rock above. And when that round hole at the top was blocked with a stone, not a ray of light nor a particle of fresh air could possibly enter. The prisoners were let down into the cavern and they were left there. When once the opening was closed they were cut off from all communication with their fellow men. No being has ever been so cruel to man as man! Man is the worst of monsters to his kind and his cruel inventions are many. He has not been content to leave his fellows their natural liberty, but he built prisons and dug pits in which to shut up his victims.

At first they would place a man in a dry well merely for custody and confinement, or they would drop him into some hollow cavern in the earth in which corn or treasure had been concealed. But afterwards, with greater ingenuity of malice, they covered over the top of these pits so that the prisoners could not be partakers of God's bountiful air, or the merciful light of the sun, or the silver sheen of the moon. Covered all over and shut in, the captives were buried alive. Even in modern times we have seen what they call oubliettes, or dungeons in which prisoners were immured, to be forgotten as dead men out of mind, buried so as never to come forth again. Such unfortunates as were doomed to enter these tombs of living men bade farewell to hope. They were inhabitants of oblivion, dwellers in the land of death-shade, to remain apart from their kind, cut off from memory.

These worst of dungeons may illustrate our text—"He brought Me up also out of a horrible pit." In the original, we get the idea of a crash, as when some mailed warrior in the midst of the battle stumbles into a pit and there he lies bruised and broken. And there is the thought of the fall of waters rushing strangely, furiously, mysteriously. The Hebrew has it, "The pit of noises," or as some render it, "the pit of destruction." Such was the condition of our dear Redeemer when He was bearing our sin and suffering in our place. Just notice, first, that our Lord was like a man put into a pit and so made to be quite alone. Imagine yourself now confined in one of those caverns with the big stone rolled over the mouth of it. There would be neither hearing nor answering.

Now you will know the dread solemnity of silence! You may speak, but no gentle whisper of sympathy will reach your ears in return! You may cry again and again and make the dungeon's dome echo to your voice—but you are speaking as to brass—no man cares for your soul. You are alone—alone in a fearful solitude. Thus it happened to our Savior. All His disciples forsook Him and fled. And what was infinitely worse, His God forsook Him, too. He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Can any man tell me all that was meant by that infinite lament? Of course, a prisoner in such a pit as that was in total darkness. He could not see the walls which enclosed Him, nor so much as His own hand. No beam of sunlight ever wandered into that stagnant air—the captive would have to grope for the pitcher of water and the morsel of bread which a cruel mercy would allot to Him.

Our Lord was in the dark. Midnight brooded over His spirit. He said—"Now is my soul troubled." "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." His was a pit of gloom, the region of the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself! When a man is shut up in a pit he is, of course, full of distress. If you were, any of you, to go into one of the solitary cells of our own jails, I guarantee you a short sojourn in it would be quite enough! These cells, some years ago, were thought to be wonderful cures for all sort of evil dispositions in men, but probably they have more often destroyed reason than conquered depravity. Go in, if you dare!

Ask the warden to shut the door and leave you in the dark all alone, that you may try the solitary system for yourself. No, I would not advise you to try it even for five minutes, for you might, even in that short time, inflict such an injury upon your nervous system as you would never recover. I believe that many of the gentler ones here would be quite unable to bear total darkness and solitude even for the shortest time. In the grim gloom the soul is haunted with phantom fears, while horror peoples the place which is empty of human beings! The heart is worried with evil imaginations and pierced with arrows of distress. Grief takes hold of the spirit and alarm conquers hope.

In our Lord's case, the grief and sorrow which He felt can never be described, nor need it be conceived. It was something tantamount to the miseries of damned souls. The holy Jesus could not feel the exact misery which takes hold on abandoned rebels, but He did suffer what was tantamount to that at the Judgment Seat of God. He gave a quid pro quo, a something which in God's esteem, reckoning the dignity of His mighty Person, stood instead of the sinner's eternal suffering. He felt woe upon woe, night blackening night! Do not try to realize His agony—He wills that you should not—for He has trod the winepress alone, and of the people there were none with Him, as if to show that none could understand His sorrows and that we can do no more than speak of His "unknown sufferings."

But I must add, to complete the figure, that shut up in such a pit there might be a great tumult above, like to the tramping of armed hosts. Or there might be a rush of waters underneath the captive deep in earth's bowels. He could not tell what the noise was, nor from where it came and, therefore, he would often be in terrible fear while he sat alone in the thick darkness. Our Lord had His fears, for we read that He was heard in that He feared. Torrents of sin rushed near Him! Floods of wrath were heard around Him and cataracts of grief fell upon Him. Besides, there was a mystery about this anguish which intensified it—a mystery not to be written or explained. Our Redeemer's spirit was cast down within Him far beyond anything that is common to men. In that horrible pit, that pit of destruction, He lay with none to pity or sustain.

But, oh, change the strain, and sing unto the Lord awhile, as we read the verse, "He brought Me up out of a horrible pit." The Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up from all sorrow of spirit at that moment when He said so bravely, "It is finished," and though He died, yet was He lifted up from death, as it is written, "You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." His Spirit ascended to God and, by-and-by, when the third day had blushed with morning light, His body rose from the tomb, to ascend, in due time, to Glory! He came up out of the pit of the grave, delivered from all fear of corruption, pain, or defeat! Now His sorrow is ended and His brow is clear from care. His visage is marred no more! He bears the scars which do but illumine His hands and feet with splendor, but—

*"No more the bloody spear,
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore.*

Sing you unto the Lord, you saints of His, as you behold your Master brought up again from among the sorrowful, the despised, the deserted, the dead!

A second figure is, however, used here to express our Lord's grief and deliverance from it—"Out of the miry clay." Travelers tell us that wherever pits are still used as dungeons, they are damp, foul and utterly loathsome, for they are never cleansed, however long the prisoner may have been there, or however great the number of victims shut up within them. You know what the prisons of Europe were in Howard's days—they were even worse in the East in periods further back. The imprisoned wretch often found himself sinking in the mire! He found no rest, no hope of comfort and when extricated he needed a hand to drag him out of the thick clay.

Our blessed Lord and Master found Himself, when He was suffering for us, where everything appeared to give way beneath Him. His spirits sank, His friends failed Him and His heart melted like wax. Every comfort was taken from Him. His blessed Manhood found nothing upon this earth upon which it could stay itself, for He had been made sin for us, made a curse for us—and so every foundation of comfort departed from Him. He was deprived of visible support and reduced to a sad condition. As a man who has fallen into a slough cannot stir so as to recover himself, so was it with our Redeemer, who says in the Psalms—"I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing." Some morasses are so destructive that if a man should once fall into them, he might give up his life for lost unless someone came that way to drag him out.

So did the Savior sink in the miry clay of our sin and misery until the Lord Almighty lifted Him out! The clay of sorrow clung to Him. It held to Him while He was performing the great work of our redemption. But the Lord brought Him up out of it. There is no mire upon His garments now! His feet no longer sink! He is not held by the bands of death! He slides not into the grave, again! He was dragged down, as it were, by bearing our sin, but that is over and He has ascended on high—He has led captivity captive and received gifts from men! All honor be unto Him and to His Father who delivered Him.

As we read our text we pursue this story of our Master's deliverance and we are told that He was brought up out of the lowest deeps. Say the words or sing them as you choose—"He brought Me up." God raised up His obedient Son from the depths into which He had descended on our account. He was brought up, like Jonah who went to the bottom of the mountains and yet was landed safely on the shore. He was brought up like Joseph, who rose from a pit to a palace; like David, who was led up from the sheepfold to the kingdom. "The king shall joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have you laid upon him. For you have made him most blessed forever: You have made him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance."

Then we are told He was set on a rock, and oh, the Glory of our blessed Lord in this matter, for now He stands on a firm foundation in all that He does for us! Judgment and truth confirm His ways and the Judge of all the earth approves His doings. Christ has no sandy foundation for His work of mercy or His word of comfort. When He saves He has a right to save—when He puts away sin—He does it on indisputable grounds! When He helps and delivers His people, He does it according to Law, according to the will of the Highest. As Justifier, Preserver and Perfecter of His people, He stands upon a rock! This day I delight to think of my Lord as settling His Church with Himself upon the immutable foundations of the Covenant, on the decree of God, on the purpose of the Father, on His own work and on the promise of God that He would reward Him in that work!

Well may we say that His feet are upon a rock, for He is Himself, by another figure, the Rock of Ages, the Rock of our salvation! And now the goings of our glorious Christ are established. When He goes out to save a sinner, He knows that He can do it and has a right to do it! When He goes up to His Father's Throne to make intercession for sinners, His goings are established and the desire of His heart is given Him! When He comes in among His Church, or marches forth with His people to the ends of the earth, His goings are established. "For the King trusts in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High He shall not be moved." He shall surely come a second time without sin unto salvation, for so has the Father decreed—His glorious goings are as surely established as were those of His labor and suffering.

We shall never be without a Savior! We shall never have a fallen or a vanquished Savior, for His goings are established for continuance, certainty, and victory. Such honor have all His saints, for, "the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." And again, "None of his steps shall slide." Best of all, there is a new song in the mouth of our Well-Beloved. It is grand to think of Jesus singing! Read the 22nd Psalm and you will find Him doing it, as also in the Hebrews—"In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto You." Toward the end of His earthly career, you hear Him bursting into song. Was not that a grand occasion just before His passion, when He was going out to die? We read that "after supper they sang a hymn."

If we had been bound to die that night, as He was, we should rather have wept or prayed than sang. Not so our Lord. I do not know what Psalm they sang—probably a part of the great Hallel, usually sung after the Passover—which consists of those Psalms at the end of the book which are so full of praise. I believe the Savior Himself pitched the tune and led the strain. Think of Him singing when near His hour of agony! Going to scorn and mockery, singing! Going to the crown of thorns and the scourge, singing! Going to death, even the death of the Cross, singing! For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame! But now, what must that new song be which He leads in Heaven? "They sang, as it were, a new song before the throne." But it is He that leads the heavenly orchestra!

How greatly He excels Miriam, the sister of Moses, when she took her timbrel and led forth the women in their dances, saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and His rider has He thrown into the sea." This is called, "the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb," so I gather that the Lamb's new song is after the same triumphant fashion—it is the substance of that which Moses' song foreshadowed! In Christ Jesus, the Lord our God has led captivity captive. Let us praise Him on the high sounding cymbals! Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The powers of darkness are destroyed! Sin, death and Hell are drowned in the atoning blood—the depths have covered them—there is not one of them left. Oh, "sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" "Ascribe you greatness unto our God." **SALVATION UNBELIEVERS**

III. Such is the exalted condition of our Lord at this hour. Let us turn and look upon the Lord's reward. The Lord's reward for having gone down into the horrible pit and having sunk in the miry clay for us, is this—that "many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord. "Many!" Not *all* mankind, but "many" shall look to Jesus and live. Alas! Vast numbers continue in unbelief, but "many" shall believe and live! And the Lord's "many" means very many. As I was thinking over

my text, I thought, “I hope there will be some at the Tabernacle this morning that belong to the ‘many’ who shall see and fear and trust in the Lord.” “Many shall,” for the Lord has promised it.

But, Lord, they will not. “But they shall,” says God. Oh, but many refuse. “But they shall,” says God and He has the key of men’s hearts and power over their judgments and their wills. “Many shall.” Do you, oh you unbelievers, think that Jesus shall die in vain? Oh, Sinners, if you will not have Christ, others will! You may despise Him, but He will be none the less glorious! You may reject His salvation but He shall be none the less mighty to save! He is a King and you cannot pluck a single jewel from His crown! If you are so foolish as to provoke His iron rod so that He shall break you in shivers with it, yet He will be glorious in the sight of God and He will save His own! Notwithstanding your hardness of heart, be this known unto you, oh House of Israel, that, “many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord.”

What shall the many do? They shall “see.” Their eyes shall be opened and they shall see their Lord in the horrible pit and in the miry clay—and as they look, they shall see that He was there for them! What joy this will create in their spirits! If they do not see the Lord Jesus as their Substitute, they shall, at any rate, be made to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. If when Jesus only takes *imputed* sin and has no sin of His own, yet He must be cast into the horrible pit and sink in the miry clay—then what will become of men who have their own sins about them, provoking the fierce anger of the Lord? If God thus smites His Well-Beloved, oh Sinner, how will He smite you! Beware, you that forget Him, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you!

By the suffering Surety, all covered with His own gore, I do beseech you, provoke not God, for if His Only-Begotten must suffer so, you must suffer yet more if you break His Law and next reject His Gospel! “Many shall see.” Do you wonder that it is added, “and shall fear?” It makes men fear to see a bleeding Christ and to know that they crucified Him. It makes men fear, however, with a sweet filial fear that is akin to hope when they see that Jesus died for sinners, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God. Oh, when they see the Lord of Love acting as a scapegoat and bearing their sins away into the wilderness of forgetfulness, they begin to hate their evil ways and to have a reverent fear of God, for so says the Scripture, “there is forgiveness with You that You may be feared.”

But best of all—and this is the chief point—they come to “trust in the Lord.” They build their hope of salvation upon the righteousness of God as manifested in Christ Jesus. Oh, I would to God that some of you would trust Him at once. Beloved Friend, are you trying to be saved by your own works? That is a delusion! Are you hoping to be saved by your own feelings? That is a lie! But you can be saved, you *shall* be saved if you will trust yourself with that Blessed One who was alone in the dark pit of noises for the sake of sinners—and slipped in the miry clay for the ungodly! You shall assuredly be saved from wrath through Him! Trust Him, and as surely as He lives, you shall be saved, for He that trusts in Him cannot perish! God’s truthfulness were gone if the Believer could be lost. Has He not said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”? The Throne of God must rock and reel before the Cross of Christ shall lose its power to save those that believe!

IV. Fourthly, let us see the Lord’s likeness in His people. This whole passage, as I said in the beginning, has often been used by individual believers as a description of their own deliverance. It is a true picture, because we are made like unto our Head and all the Brethren are partakers of that which the Head has endured. Do I speak to any of my Master’s servants in sore trouble? Dear Friends, are you made to wait, though your trial is sharp and severe? Is it so that your prayer has not yet been answered? Then remember the waiter’s place was once occupied by the Lord Jesus, for He says, “I waited patiently.” If the Lord keeps you waiting for a certain blessing, year after year, do not despair. He will give it at length if it is truly for your good, for He has said, “no good thing will I withhold from those that walk uprightly.”

He kept His Son waiting and He may very well keep you in same posture, for how long did you delay and cause the Lord of Grace to wait on you! “Blessed are they that wait for Him.” I have seen people very uppish when they have called on a public man and have had to wait a little. They feel that they ought not to be kept in the lobby. But suppose some young man said to them, “I am his own son and yet I have been waiting an hour.” Then they are more patient! So when God keeps you waiting, do not be proud, and say, “Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?” But remember, “It is good for a man both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.” Jesus waited— “waited patiently.” Seek to be like He and in patience possess your soul.

“I cannot see how I am to be delivered.” Wait. “Ah, this is such a heavy burden.” Wait. “But I am ready to die under this terrible load.” Wait! Wait on! Though He tarry, wait for Him—He is worth waiting for. “Wait” is a short word,

but it takes a deal of Grace to spell out its full meaning—and still more Grace to put it in practice. Wait: wait! “Oh, but I have been unfortunate.” Wait. “But I have believed a promise and it has not been fulfilled.” Wait, for you wait in blessed company—you may hear Jesus saying, “I waited patiently.” Blessed be His name, He is teaching us to do the same by His gracious Spirit.

Next, the Lord may send you, His dear child, a very heavy sorrow. You may fall into the horrible pit and see no light, no comfort and no one may be able to cheer you or help you. Some that have a touch of despondency in their nature have been brought so low as almost to despair of life. They have sat in darkness and seen no light—they have felt the walls of their prison and have not discovered a crack or cranny through which escape was possible—they have looked up and even then they have seen nothing to console them. Ah, well, here is a word I commend to you—the Savior says it—“He brought Me up.”

The Lord God can and will bring up His troubled ones. You will have to write in your diary, one of these days, “He brought me up.” I was in the dark, I was in the dungeon, but, “He brought me up.” I can personally say this with gladsome gratitude, for, “He has brought me up,” again and again! My heart is glad as I reflect upon my past deliverances. I have often wondered why I am so often shut up in prison and bound as with fetters of steel. But I cease to wonder when I think of the many among you who are called to wear the same bonds. This is my portion, that I may be a witness-bearer for my God. And that I may be able to speak to the experiences of God’s tempted people and tell how graciously the Lord delivers His servants who trust in Him. Faith shall never be shamed or confounded, world without end! God can and will hasten to the rescue of the faithful.

I set to my seal, also, that, “He brought me up,” and, beloved Brothers and Sisters in tribulation, He will bring you up. Only rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. “Ah,” you say, “But I do not know how to stand, for I sink as in miry clay, through faintness of heart. I cannot find the slightest foothold for my hope.” No, you are sinking in the miry clay like your Master, but in answer to prayer, the Lord will bring you up out of your hopeless state and He will set your feet upon a rock and establish your goings, give you joy peace and delight. Therefore see, and fear, and trust in God, and give Glory to His blessed name!

Lastly, do I address any seeking one who finds no rest for the soles of his feet? Dear Friend, are you sinking in the deep mire of your guilt? The Lord can pardon you, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Are you shut up by conscience in prison under a just sense of deserved wrath? Jesus will give you immediate rest if you come to Him! Do you feel as if you cannot kneel to pray, for your very knees slip in the mire of doubt? Remember, Jesus makes intercession for the transgressors! Do you seem as if, every time you move, you are burying your hope and slipping deeper and deeper into ruin? The Lord has plenteous redemption! Do not despair! You cannot deliver yourself, but God can deliver you—you cannot stand of yourself, but God can make you to stand. You cannot go to Him nor go abroad among your fellow men with comfort, but the Lord can make you to run in His ways.

You shall yet go forth with joy and be led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Only see Christ, and fear and trust your God, and you, too, shall sing unto Jehovah your Deliverer, and this shall be your song—

*“He raised me from a horrid pit,
Where mourning long I lay,
And from my bonds released my feet,
Deep bonds of miry clay.
Firm on a rock He made me stand,
And taught my cheerful tongue
To praise the wonders of His hand
In a new thankful song.”*

OUT OF EGYPT

NO. 1675

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 20, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was
spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of
Egypt have I called My Son.”
Matthew 2:14, 15.*

*“When Israel was a child, then I loved Him,
and called My Son out of Egypt.”
Hosea 11:1.*

EOD EGYPT occupies a very singular position towards Israel. It was often the shelter of the seed of Abraham. Abraham Himself went there when there was a famine in the land of His sojourn. To Egypt Joseph was taken that He might escape from the death intended for Him by His envious brethren, and become the foster-father of the house of Israel. Into Egypt, as we all right well know, went the whole family of Jacob, and there they sojourned in a strange land. There Moses acquired the learning which was so useful to Him. It was out of the spoils of Egypt that the furniture of the Tabernacle was made, as if to show that God intended to take out of heathen hands an offering to His own Glory, just as afterwards the timber of the Temple was hewn by Hiram the Phoenician, that the Gentiles might have a share in building the Temple, in token that they would one day be made fellow heirs with Israel. But while Egypt was for awhile the shelter of the house of Israel it became afterwards the house of bondage, and a country fraught with danger to the very existence of the elect nation. There was a very useful purpose to be served by their going down into Egypt for awhile, that they might be consolidated into a nation, and might acquire many useful arts which they could not have learned while they were wandering about in 576 Palestine the lesson was valuable, but it was learned in much misery. They had to smart beneath the lash, and faint beneath their labor: the iron bondage entered into Israel's soul, so that an exceeding great and bitter cry went up unto Heaven. Yet, when the heaviest burdens were laid on their shoulders, the day of liberty was dawning: when the tale of bricks was doubled, Moses was born. When man had come to His extremity of persecution, then God took His opportunity of salvation, and led His Israel out of Egypt in the teeth of their tyrant master. It had been at first a Goshen to them, a place of great abundance in the Delta of the Nile; but afterwards it became a Mizriam to them, for that is the Hebrew word for Egypt, and it means a place of straits and tribulations. The point that is meant to be brought forward by the Prophet is that they were called out of Egypt, for it was not possible for them to mingle with the sons of Ham and lose their separate existence. They were on the banks of the Nile, and at first dwelt there in much comfort, but this seductive ease was not allowed to hold them: full soon they were heavily oppressed, and their existence was threatened; yet both from the comfort of Egypt and from the captivity of Egypt they were called, and at the call of God they came forth. The living seed may go into strange places, but it can never be destroyed. The host of God may walk through fire, but it shall not be burned. God has made the living seed immortal, and it cannot die, for it is born of God. Out of deadly lands, where every breath is disease, they shall be called by the eternal voice. Those whom God has chosen may be east far, but they shall never be cast away; they may dwell among a people like the Egyptians, most superstitious and debased, a nation of whom even the heathen Juvenal made sport when He said, “Oh, happy people who grow their gods in their kitchen gardens,” for they worshipped leeks and onions, and all kinds of beasts and fowls, and creeping things; but the children of the Lord cannot be suffered to remain among such a people, for the Lord desires to make of Israel, and of all believers, a people separated unto Himself. Out of the midst of guilty Egypt the Lord called His people, whom He had formed for Himself, to show forth His praise. The abundance of superstition, though it be like the

sea, shall not quench the spark of the divine life in the living family of God: it shall burn on amidst the waves until the God who first enkindled it shall by His own right hand pluck it from among the billows, and set it as a light upon a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house. Neither Egypt of old, nor Babylon, nor Rome can destroy the seed royal; out of all dangers the church must emerge the better for her affliction. “Out of Egypt have I called my son,” is a text worthy to be 577 made a proverb, for it is true all through the history of the chosen seed. They are called out from amongst the surrounding race of rebels, and when the call comes none can hold them back. It were easier to restrain the sun from rising than to bold the redeemed of the Lord in perpetual servitude. “The Breaker has gone up before them, and their King at the head of them”: who shall block up their road? God is still calling them out, and until the very last of His elect shall be ingathered it shall still stand true, “Out of Egypt “-and out of anywhere else that is like to Egypt, out of the worst and vilest places, out of the places where they are held fast in bitter bondage, out of these-“have I called my son. At this time I shall first call your attention to the text in Hosea according to the sense in which the Prophet first uttered it. He speaks of the natural seed called out from the sheltering world, for Egypt was a sheltering world to Israel, the natural seed, and they were called out of it by the omnipotent power of God. Secondly, we shall notice the divine seed called out literally from a sheltering Egypt, and brought up from it into the laud of Judea, that He might be the Glory of His people Israel. Thirdly, we shall spend a little time in considering the chosen seed, those who are given unto Christ of the Father: these also must come out from the world, whether it be friendly or hostile. The Lord has said to them, “This is not your rest, for it is polluted”: He is saying the same to-day. Still is it true of the spiritual seed as of our Lord Jesus and of the natural seed, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” May the Holy Spirit be our teacher while we handle this great subject. **I.** Let us think of THE NATURAL SEED of Israel, as called out of Egypt, for with them this wonderful text began to be expounded. It is well worth considering, for this constituted one of the loftiest lyrics of Hebrew poetry. The deliverance of the people of God out of Egypt “with a high hand and with an outstretched arm” is a song which the nation never wearied of singing, and which we ought never to weary of singing either, for at the close of all things we and all the spirits redeemed shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb. The great redemption of the Exodus shall always be so eminent type of the greater redemption upon the cross that the two may be blended together, and words that were sung concerning the first deliverance may be readily enough used as expressions of our joy in our salvation from death and Hell. 578 *“From Egypt lately come, Where death and darkness reign, Seek our new, our better home, Where we our rest shall gain. Hallelujah! We are on our way to God.”* While speaking upon this natural seed I want you to notice, first, that if they are to be called out of Egypt they must first go down into Egypt. They cannot come out of it if they have not first gone into it. I do not know of anything that could have tempted them down into Egypt, for it had nothing to offer which was better than Canaan; but the fathers of the tribes were driven there by a famine which troubled the whole world. The Lord sent a man before them, even Joseph, who laid up in store food for the seven years of famine, and Israel went down into Egypt that they might not die, but might be cherished by Joseph, who had become lord of the land. The Lord may, in order to prevent His people falling into a worse evil, permit them to go into that which seems hopeful, but ultimately turns out to be a great trial to them. Suffering is infinitely preferable to sinning; the Lord may therefore send us sorrow to keep us from iniquity. Dear friend, the Lord who reads your heart may know that it is absolutely necessary for you to be tried, and so spiritually to go down into Egypt. He may send a famine to drive you there; He may place you under great tribulations, and so He may bring you down both mentally and spiritually into a sad condition, where you shall sigh and cry by reason of bondage. Do not look upon this as a strange thing, for all God’s gold must pass through the fire. It is one of the marks of God’s elect that they are afflicted. The Lord Jesus says. “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” Depend upon it that if you are one of the true seed you must go down into Egypt: for the Lord said to Abraham, “Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.” The escutcheon of the chosen bears the emblem of a smoking, furnace and a burning lamp. Even if the world shelters you, it will sooner or later become to you the house of bondage: yet into that house of bondage you must go, for there is a great educational process going on in affliction to prepare us for the land which flows with milk and honey. Egypt is one of the early lessons; strangely early with some; their religious life begins with a cloudy morning and threat of storm. This will work them lasting good. “It is good for a man that He bear the yoke in His youth;” therefore we have “When Israel was a child, then I loved Him and called my son out of Egypt.” The earliest days of Israel were in Egypt, the 579 nation in its infancy was called from thence. While the divine life has not yet attained to maturity

we meet with straits and troubles, and have to go down into Egypt and feel the weight of the yoke upon our shoulders. This is one of God's ways of preparing us for freedom, for He that has never tasted of the bitterness of bondage will never be able to appreciate the sweets of the liberty with which Christ makes men free. So Israel must first go down into Egypt; He descends that He may rise to greater heights. Note next, that it was while in Egypt, and at the worst time of their bondage in Egypt, that they received the first notification that the nation was to be called the son of God. Israel is not called a son until Moses comes to Pharaoh and says, "Israel is my son, even my first-born: and I say unto you, Let my son go, that He may serve me." God had been with Abraham, and, called Him His friend, but I do not perceive that He called Him His son, or that Abraham addressed the Lord as "Our Father which are in Heaven." Neither do I find similar sweet words flowing from the lips of Isaac or of Jacob; but when Israel was in bondage, then it was that the Lord revealed Israel's adoption, and openly declared, "Israelis my son, even my first-born." He scourges every son whom He receives, and He receives them even while the scourge is sorely bruising them. They were a poor down-trod nation—a nation of slaves begrimed with brick-earth, and bleeding beneath the lash of their taskmasters! The Egyptians must have utterly despised a people who yielded so readily to all their exactions: they looked upon them as a herd of slaves, who had not the spirit to rebel, whatever cruelties they might endure. But now it is, while they are lying among the pots, and their faces are stained with tears, that the Lord openly before proud Pharaoh owns the nation as His son, saying, "Israel is my son, even my first-born." I think I see Pharaoh's grim, sardonic smile as He seems to say, "Those slaves, those wretched brickmakers, whom the lowest of my people despise—if these are Jehovah's first-born, what care I for Him or them?" Learn therefore, dear brothers and sisters, that God is not ashamed of His children when they are in their worst estate. We are told concerning our Lord Jesus, "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren," Yes, and not when they put on their beautiful array, and when the jewels are in their ears, and when they are led forth with music and dancing, and when they shout over Egyptian chivalry drowned in the Red Sea, will they be more the Lord's children than they are in the house of bondage. The Lord God speaks of their adoption for the first time when they are still under the oppressor, and when it seems impossible that they 580 can be rescued. The Lord speaks very plainly to the haughty Pharaoh, "Let my son go that He may serve me; and if you refuse to let Him go, behold I will slay your son, even your first-born." Oh, but is it not a blessed thing to go down into the Egypt of tribulation if there for the first time we learn our adoption of the Lord? Is it not a sweet thing even to be under the heaviest bondage if you are by such means made to understand better than ever you did before what it is to be a son and a heir, a joint heir with Jesus Christ? The first-born of every creature is He, and we are the church of the first-born whose names are written in Heaven. The heritage of the first-born belongs to Jesus, and to us in Him; and we often know this best when our heart is broken for sin, and when our troubles are overwhelming our spirit. "Fear not," says He, "I will help you." "Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel." Yes, it was in Egyptian bondage that they received the first witness of the Spirit that they were as a people the sons of God. When it became clear that they were really the sons of God, then they suffered persecution for it. A place which, as I have said, was at first their shelter, now became the iron furnace of oppression. Their hard labors are doubled, their male children were ordered to be east into the river, and edicts of the most intolerable kind were fulminated against them. Now, brethren, Satan soon knows the man that God has owned to be His son, and He seeks to slay Him even as Herod sought to kill Jesus. When the manchild was born, the Dragon knew who that man-child was, and sought to destroy Him, and vomited forth floods to sweep Him away, until we read that the earth helped the woman, and there were given to her wings of a great eagle that she might fly into time wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished from the face of the serpent. No sooner is the child of God really acknowledged to be such, than at once the seed of the serpent will hiss about Him, and if they can will cast their venom upon Him: at any rate, they will bite at His heel, till God has taught Him in the name of Jesus to break the serpent's head. Rest assured that this is another mark of the election of Grace. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. In Ishmael's case it was seen that He that is born after the flesh persecuteth Him that is born after the Spirit, and so it is now. You cannot expect to pass through this Vanity Fair without exciting the jeers and sneers of the ungodly; for the Lord's inheritance is unto Him as a speckled bird: the birds round about her are against her. Every David has His Saul, every Nehemiah His Sanballat, and every Mordecai His Haman. 581 But now comes the crown of the text, that is, "I have called my son out of Egypt," and out of Egypt Israel must come. For Egypt was not Israel's portion: it was "a land that was not theirs." My brethren, we are not citizens of "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom

and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified"; and the best thing in this present evil world is not your portion nor mine. Friendly Egypt, sheltering Egypt, was not Israel's inheritance. He gave them no portion even in the land of Goshen by a covenant of salt. They might tarry there for awhile, but out of it they must come, as it is written "you have brought a vine out of Egypt." The best side of the world when it seems warmest and tenderest to us is not the place whereon we may lie down with comfort. The bosom of our God—that is the true shelter of His people, and there we must find rest. If we are dwelling in the world, and are tempted to be of the world, and to take up with the riches of Egypt, we must by Grace be taught to cast all this behind our back, for we have not our portion in this life, neither can we have our inheritance until we enter upon the life that is to come. Jacob said on His death-bed, "Bury me not, I pray you, in Egypt," and Joseph gave commandment concerning His bones that they should not remain in Pharaoh's land. Even so the saints of God are weary of the world's dominions; they tremble like a bird out of Egypt. Not in Egypt would God reveal Himself to His people. What says He? "Come you out from among them: be you separate, and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters." When He called Israel His son it is in connection with this coming out. "Out of Egypt have I called my son." And you and I must be fetched out from the world and all its associations, and truly severed from it, if we are ever to come to know the Lord our God. In Egypt God was not known, but "in Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel." His people must not permanently reside in a strange country. The land of tombs was no fit home for a living people whose God was the living God: therefore it is written, "Out of Egypt have I called my son"; and the heathen knew it, for they said one to another, "Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt." There were many difficulties in connection with this calling of Israel out of Egypt. Perhaps one of the chief obstacles was their own wish to stop there; for, strange as it may seem, though it was a house of bondage to them, they did not wish to stir from it at the first. Their spirit was broken by their sore bondage, so that they did not receive Moses and Aaron as they ought to have done, but they even chided with them. Ah, brethren, the chief work 582 of God with us is to make us willing to go out, willing by faith to follow Jesus, willing to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. He did make them willing, and they went out at last right joyfully, marching in rank, like a trained army; not needing to be driven, but hasting to escape out of the enemy's country. Moreover, the Lord made them able to go, as well as willing, for it is very beautiful to think that there were no sick people in the whole nation of Israel at that time of the going out. We read— "There was not one feeble person in all their tribes." What a splendid thing for a whole nation to have no weaklings! There was no need to carry any in the ambulance, but they all went marching forth with steady foot out of the dominions of Pharaoh. O child of God, has God given you the will to get out of the bondage of the sin and the corruption of this crooked generation. He that gives you the will, will give you the power. Perhaps you are crying, "Who shall deliver me? To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would I find not." Rest assured that God the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will, will also give you the strength, and you shall come marching out of Egypt, having eaten of the Paschal Lamb. The Lord stunned their enemies, so that they begged them to be gone, and bribed them to make haste. With blow upon blow He smote the Egyptians, till on that dreadful night, when shrieks of pain went up from every house in Egypt, the Egyptians hastened them to go. "We be all dead men," said they, "unless you go"; and even their taskmasters urged them to immediate flight. Our God knows how to make even the wicked men of the world cast out the Christian: they cannot endure Him when once His adoption is made known; they grow tired of His melancholy presence, tired of His convictions of sin, and of that gloomy face which He carries about with Him, and they say, "Go out, go out, we cannot endure you." They perceive something in Him which is foreign to themselves, and so they thrust Him out. Egypt was glad when they departed, and so even the world itself seems glad to be rid of the Lord's elect when God's time is come to set a difference between Israel and Egypt. The spiritual meaning of all this is that from under the power of sin, of Satan, and of the world God will certainly call His own redeemed. They shall not abide in the land of Egypt; sin shall not be pleasant to them; they shall not continue under Satan's power, but they shall break His yoke from off their neck. The Lord will help them, and strengthen them, so that they shall clean escape from their former slavery. With a high hand and an 583 outstretched arm brought He up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and with that same high hand and outstretched arm will He save His own elect, whom He has loved from before the foundations of the world, and whom He has purchased with His most precious blood. They, too, shall sing as Israel did, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," in the day when God shall deliver them. So far we have spoken of time natural seed. **II.** Now we turn with pleasure to THE DIVINE SEED, the man Christ Jesus. He had to be called out by an angel

from the sheltering Egypt into which Joseph and His mother had fled with Him. I dare say when you have read that passage in Hosea, you have said, "I cannot see that it has anything to do with Christ." The passage in Hosea is about Israel evidently, for God is speaking of Israel both before and after the verse; but look you: the natural seed of Israel is the shell of the egg of which the divine seed is the life. God calls Israel His son. What for? Because within that nation lay that seed which afterwards was known as the Well-beloved, the Son of the Highest. They were the shell, and therefore to be preserved for the sake of the Blessed One who, according to the flesh, lay within the race. I do not think the Lord would have cared about the Jews more than for any other nation, if it had not been that in due time He was to be born of them, even He in whom is His delight, that choice one of the Father, the Son whom He loves. So when He brought His son out of Egypt, it means first that He rescued the external, nominal, outward sonship; but the core, the living core within, is this Son, this true Son, of whom the Lord said, putting all others aside, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And the passage, if I had time to show you, could not be limited to Israel, for if it had been it would lose much of its accuracy. Why, think you, was the passage made so obscure, for it is obscure confessedly, and anyone reading it without the spiritual teaching which Matthew received would never have perceived that Christ was going down into Egypt to fulfill that word? I take it, the reason of the obscurity was this—that its fulfillment might be of the Lord alone. Suppose His father and mother had known these prophecies, and had purposely set themselves to fulfill them, there would have existed a kind of collusion which would have beclouded the wonderful wisdom of God in bearing testimony to His Son. Mary and Joseph may have known of this prophecy, but I greatly question whether they perceived that it referred to their son at all, or to the Son of the Highest: but now they must do the very thing that God says shall be done, without knowing that they are fulfilling a Scripture. One of the worst 584 things you and I can ever attempt is to try and fulfill a prophecy. Good mistress Rebecca wanted to fulfill a prophecy, and what a mess she made of it! She endeavored to make her second son the heir, and in the attempt she brought upon Him and herself a world of sorrow. Had she not better have let the prophecy alone? Surely, if a prophecy is made of God, God will see that it comes to pass. It is a Chaldaic prophecy, a prophecy of soothsayers and magi, no doubt they will try to make their own oracle true; but the Lord, who sees the end from the beginning and ordaineth all things, can speak positively of the future. If any of you set up for prophets, beware of prophesying till you know that you can make it good. God does not need such petty provision: He wants no help from us: His word will surely be established. Mary and Joseph did not try to fulfill the prophecy, for they could not have understood it to mean what it did mean. It was purposely put in a dark and cloudy form, but still the Lord knew what He was doing: "That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Oat of Egypt have I called my Son." Remember one thing, that all the words of God in the Old Testament and the New refer to Christ; and what is more, that all the works of God have an opened window towards Christ. Yes, I say that in the creation of the world the central thought of God was His Son Jesus, and He made the world with a view to His death, Resurrection, and glorious reign. From every midge that dances in the summer sunbeam up to the great leviathan in the sea, the whole design of the world works toward the seed in whom the earth is blessed. In Providence it is just the same: every event, from the fall of a leaf to the rise of a monarchy, is linked with the kingdom of Jesus. I have not time to show this, but it is so; and if you choose to think it over, you will clearly perceive it. He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel, and everything that has happened or ever shall happen in the outside world, all has a look towards the Christ, and that which comes of the Christ. I love to find Jesus everywhere—not by twisting the Psalms and other Scriptures to make them speak of Christ when they do nothing of the kind, but by seeing Him where He truly is. I would not err as Cocceius did, of whom they said His greatest fault was that He found Christ everywhere; but I would far rather err in His direction than have it said of me, as of another divine of the same period, that I found Christ nowhere. Would it not be better to see Him where He is not than to miss Him where He is? The pattern of the things on earth is in Heaven; is, in fact, in Jesus, the Son of God. He is the pattern according to 585 which the Tabernacle and the Temple were builded; yes, and the pattern according to which this brave world was made, and worlds which are yet to be revealed. All the treasures of the wisdom of God are hidden in Christ, and in Christ they are made manifest.. I do not wonder therefore that this passage in Hosea should point to Him. It is certain that our blessed Lord is in the highest sense the Son of God. "Out of Egypt have I called my son," Write the word SON in capitals—and it must mean Him: it cannot with emphasis mean anyone else. I would rather give up the idea that Hosea even thought of Israel, than think that the Holy Spirit did not intend that we should see Jesus in those memorable words,

“My son.” It came to pass that our Lord must find no room in Israel, and so must go down into Egypt. There was no room for the young child in the inn; and now the Edomite, the child-devouring Herod, has risen, and there is no room for the new-born King anywhere in Palestine. Alas, how sad a picture of the visible church, where Christ, at times, can find no room! What with contending sects, Pharisees and Sadducees, there would seem to be no more room for Christ in the church to-day than there used to be. By fear of Herod His parents are made anxious, and by angelic direction they must go down into Egypt, where Herod’s warrant would not run. Heathen Egypt will shield while hypocritical Judea will slay. Jesus, like another Joseph, must be carried down into Egypt, that the young child’s life may be preserved. Here He has a foretaste of His life-trials, and early begins His life of affliction. The King of the Jews flees from His own dominions, time Lord of all must know the heart of a stranger in the land of Egypt. The poet represents His mother as saying- *“Through the desert wild and dreary, Following tracts explored by few, Sad at heart, and worn, and weary, We our toilsome march pursue. Israel’s homes lie far behind us, Yet we pause not to look back, Lest the keen pursuer find us, Lest grim murder scent our track. “Eagles o’er our heads are whirling, Each careering towards her nest; E’en the wolf and fox are stealing To the covert of their rest; 586 Every fowl and noxious creature Finds on earth its lair and bed But the infant Lord of Nature Has not where to lay His head.” “Yes, my babe, sweet sleep enfolds you On your fainting mother’s arm; God in His great love beholds you, Angels guard your rest from harm. Earth and Hell in vain beset you, Kings against your life conspire; But our God can ne’er forget you, Nor His arm that shields you, tire.”* Mark well, that, if the Lord Jesus Christ had willed it, even though but a babe, He might have blasted Herod as He did another Herod in after days, and He might have made Him to be eaten of worms. The glorious Jehovah could have sent a legion of angels, and have driven the Idumaeen dynasty from off the throne, if so it had pleased Him; but no violence was used-a gentler course was chosen. When Jesus stands up to fight He wars by nonresistance. He says, “My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.” He conquers by flight rather than by fight. He taught His people when persecuted in one city to flee to another; and never did He bid them form bands, and battle with their persecutors. That is not according to Christ’s Law or example. A fighting church is the devil’s church, but a hearing and enduring church-that is Christ’s church. His parents fled with Him by night, and took Him down into Egypt, that He might be sheltered there. Traditions tell us wonderful stories about what happened when Jesus went into Egypt, but as none of them are inspired, I need not waste your time with them. The only one that might look like fact is, that His parents sheltered themselves in a temple wherein idol gods were ranged, and when the child entered all the images fell down. Certainly, if not actually true, it is a poetical description of that which happens wherever the Holy Child puts in an appearance. Every idol god falls before Him. Down He must go, whether it be Dagon, or Baal, or Ashtaroth, or whatever the god may be called; yes, and He that wears the triple tiara on the seven hills, and calls Himself the vicar of God on earth, must come down, and all His empire must sink like a millstone in the flood. We do not know how the young child and Joseph and Mary lived in Egypt, except that they had received gold from the Magi, and that being a carpenter, not a hedge carpenter, but 587 one skilled in joinery and wheelwrighting, Joseph could find plenty of work in Egypt, where vast multitudes of Jews were already settled. Whether our Lord was carried to Alexandria or not we cannot tell. The probability is that there He was housed, for it was the great rendezvous of His nation and the center of their learning: there and the Bible been translated into the Greek tongue by the seventy, and there flourished schools of Jews much more liberal than those in Judea. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the Prince of Peace went to that region where we have most unhappily illustrated Christianity with cuts-not all of wood, nor all innocent of blood. But Jesus could not stop in Egypt. “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” His parents by a brave act of faith went back at the command of the angel to the Holy Land: your land, O Immanuel! Jesus could not stay in Egypt, for He was no Egyptian. He did not come to exercise a ministry among the Egyptians. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, in His public working. Being called out of Egypt the heavenly vision was not disobeyed. His foster-parent Joseph took Him back, and they settled in Nazareth. Yet remember He had been in Egypt, and this was a prophecy of blessing to that land; for wherever Jesus goes the air is sweetened. Every plot of land that His foot has ever trod on shall be His for ever. What said God to Jacob? “The land whereon you liest will I give you.” And the same is true to Jacob’s great descendant. Jesus has slept in Egypt, and Egypt is His own. God has given it to Him, and His it shall be; Glory be to His blessed name. **III.** Let us turn to think of THE CHOSEN SEED that shall be brought out of Egypt. Here I would remark that this passage may be taken, and should be taken literally. God has a chosen people who shall assuredly come out of the very Egypt which

now exists. It is remarkable that early in the Gospel day the truth was gladly received in Egypt. Egypt became the land of saints and divines, and as it had once been the source and home of civilization, so it became an active camp for the soldiers of the cross. Under the successors of Mahomet all this was swept away, and now the Crescent's baneful beam falls where once the heavenly sun shed out its infinite Glory, and scattered health among the sons of men, Egypt (lid turn to God, and it will turn again. Let me read you this passage (Isaiah 19.): "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 shall 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 Savior, 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; yes, 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 a 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." So that we feel clear that our God has yet a son to call out of Egypt, and He will call Him. There shall be a seed to serve Him even in the midst of the down-trod people who live by the Nile-floods, for God has said it. There is one passage to which I should like to refer you, because it is so full of comfort. (Jeremiah 43:12): "And He shall array Himself with the land of Egypt,"-think of that-putting it on as Joseph put on His coat of many colors—"as a shepherd putteth on His garment; and He shall go forth from thence in peace." Yet shall Christ wear as a robe of honor this land of Egypt, and again shall it be true, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Let us learn from this that, out of the strangest and oddest places God will call His son. Certain brethren among us go the lodging-houses in Mintstreet, Kent-street, and other places. Can any good thing come out of them? Assuredly, it can, for "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Out of Thieves' Acre and Ketch's Warren saints shall come. Some of you perhaps know of holes and corners in London where a decent person scarcely dares to be seen: do not pass by these abominable haunts, for out of such Egypts will the Lord call His sons. The worst field is often the most hopeful. Here is virgin soil, unploughed, untilled. What harvests may be won by willing workers! Oh you brave hands, thrust in the ploughshare and break up this neglected soil, for thus says the Lord, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Many of you who live in the midst of Israel, and hear the Gospel every day, remain disobedient; but some from the lowest and vilest parts of the earth shall yet be called with an effectual calling, and they shall obey, for it is written, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." 589 But we will take the text, and conclude with it, in a spiritual sense. All men are in Egypt spiritually, but God calls out His own sons. Sin is like Pharaoh, a tyrant that will not yield: He will not let men go; but He shall let them go, for God says, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." We are in a world which is the destroyer of Grace as Pharaoh was the destroyer of Israel's little ones. You do not think a good thought but what it is laughed out of you: you scarcely catch a word of Scripture, but as soon as you get home you are compelled to forget it. Nevertheless out of that—"Out of Egypt have I called my soil." You shall be delivered yet. Put you your trust in Jesus Christ, for "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," and out of Egypt will He call every son of His. Perhaps you are in the dark, as the Egyptians were during the plague, or as when God turned the dark side of the pillar to Egypt. Ah, but if you are one of His, if you will but trust Jesus, which is the mark of being God's elect, out of darkness will God call you; out of thick Egyptian night will He fetch you, and your eyes shall be made glad with the light of the Gospel of Christ. Perhaps you dwell in the midst of superstition, for the Egyptians were horribly given to superstition, but yet out of that will God call His people. I look to see priests converted. I hope yet to see leaders of the Gospel found among men that were once steeped to the throat in superstition. Why not? "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Where did Luther come from but from the monastery, and He preached the word with thunder and lightning from Heaven, and God blessed it to the emancipation of nations. He will bring others of that kind; out of all sorts of ignorance and superstition He will fetch them, to the praise of the Glory of His Grace. I feel encouraged to pray for those who appear to be hopeless: I feel as if I must cry to God, "Bring them out of Egypt, Lord, the worst, the vilest." You here that know what Egypt is, and are in it, and know you are in it, oh, believe that the Emancipator has come, the Redeemer has appeared; with an offering of

blood has He stood before God, and given Egypt for a ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Oh, that He might win those with power whom He has bought with price, and to Him be Glory, world without end. Amen, 590

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DESPAIR DENOUNCED AND GRACE GLORIFIED

NO. 1676

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 27, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then He said unto me, Son of man these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves.”
Ezekiel 37:11, 12, 13.

I HAVE read to you the vision of the Resurrection of the dry bones: keep it in your minds that you may understand the text. The figure is a very apt, instructive, and impressive one. It is not, however, a mere figure: it is a parable based upon a remarkable representation of the Resurrection of the dead. Although the children of Israel at that time knew little enough concerning the Resurrection, yet the Lord, the Holy Spirit, knew all about it, and He used it as a striking picture of the salvation of Israel from that national death which had come upon them. We may with equal accuracy see in it a vivid representation of the work of Grace upon the hearts of all those who are quickened into spiritual life by the power of divine Grace. Men by nature are dead in sin till they hear the voice of God and feel the quickening breath of the Spirit, and are made to live according to that 591 word, “He that believes in me, though He were dead, yet shall He live: and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” Such a metaphor as this before us drops with teaching as a honeycomb with honey, and it will be our own fault if we are not taught by it. The salvation of men by the Grace and power of God is as great a wonder as the general Resurrection. The putting of spiritual life into a natural man is a marvel of marvels, and should excite as much wonder as the raising of Lazarus, or of Jairns’ daughter, or of the young man at the gates of Nain. Even the uprising of the dead at the last trump is not a greater prodigy than the bringing of dead hearts unto the life of God. I shall not, however, detain you by fuller observations upon spiritual Resurrection, for I have work to do of another kind, upon which we will spend the bulk of our time and the whole of our energies. If you thoughtfully consider the text you will see that it divides itself thus: first, there is a true word- “Behold, they say, our bones are dried;” secondly, there is in it an ill word, which goes beyond the truth- “Our hope is lost.” God is the sinner’s hope, and He is not lost, so that the word of despair is not warranted. Thirdly, there is a gracious word, a word of mighty love- “Thus says the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.” **I.** Let us begin with that solemn confession which I have styled A TRUE WORD: “They say, our bones are dried.” It matters not how badly men speak of themselves, for what they say of themselves is never worse than the truth. I have never heard of any sinner who too much depreciated His own righteousness. It is not possible to repent too much, nor to have too lowly an estimate of one’s deservings or of one’s spiritual power. It is a grievous fault when mourners depreciate the power and fullness of God’s Grace, and when despondency casts a doubt upon the possibility of their salvation; but while the depreciation is confined to themselves it is not possible to push it too far, or to exaggerate the evils of an unregenerate condition. The sinner’s natural estate is as deplorable as words can describe: He is, in fact, much worse than He thinks He is even when He is most bowed down under a sense of His guilt and danger. I believe that Luther was quite right when He said that if a man could see His own sin as 592 it really is He would lose His reason. The condition into which we have fallen by our transgressions is terrible to the last degree. Observe, first, that they describe themselves as dead, as dried, and as divided. They speak of themselves as dead; for a man does not imagine His bones to be scattered about on the plain while He thinks Himself to be alive. These people spoke of their

bones, and therefore conceived of themselves as dead; and so the sinner may without exaggeration conceive of Himself as devoid of spiritual life. He knows not the life of God, for He is dead in trespasses and sins. The Apostle speaks of the unregenerate as “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” And again we read, “They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that does good.” When men are corrupt they have gone a stage beyond death, and are receiving the full harvest of sin; as it is written, “He that soweth to His flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Alas, sinner, you are as one that is dead, only your condition is far worse, for your responsibility and your guilt remain, and your death to righteousness is blameworthy, and will bring punishment upon you. They were divided, too. These Israelites were scattered abroad in every place; and perhaps you, dear friend, feel that, as Hosea says, your heart is divided, and you are found wanting. You cannot get your thoughts together, you cannot concentrate your affections: you are “as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth,” a broken, shivered thing: you cannot rally your mind to confidence in God; your mind is dead to that which is good, and your heart is divided by a thousand delusive devices. Perhaps you go further with the figure, and seem to be dried, sapless, useless, hopeless. A bone is dried when every particle of marrow is gone out of it, when it looks as if it never could have been covered with flesh, or have been part of a living body. Are you lamenting because you seem to be devoid of spiritual hunger, desire, or regret? Do you mourn that you cannot feel, cannot will, cannot repent, cannot love, cannot even fear? Do you groan because you cannot find in yourself anything which is good or looks that way? Do you ever groan out that mournful miserere- *“Your saints are comforted, I know, And love your house of prayer! I sometimes go where others go, But find no comfort there. 593 I hear, but seem to hoar in vain, Insensible as steel; If anything is felt, ‘tis only pain To find I cannot feel.” “My best desires are faint and few, I gladly would strive fur more! But, when I cry, ‘My strength renew,’ Seem weaker than before.”* Truly, you are as a dried bone that has long been bleaching in the sun, out of which all trace of life and feeling and power has departed. This is a very sad description of a man’s soul, and yet how many of us have had to subscribe to it for ourselves. It is just what we felt ourselves to be while we were without God, and without hope; and yet the Spirit of God was convincing us of our guilt. Further, these bones could by no means raise themselves. We never heard of such a thing as a dead man restoring Himself to life, though He be but newly buried, if He be indeed dead: He cannot lift a hand towards His own reviving. These bones were without trace of life. The flesh was gone, devoured of kites and jackals, or rotted and scattered in impalpable powder to the four winds of Heaven. How could these carcasses raise themselves? There was no trace of moisture left upon them; they could not give themselves life or motion; it were a fool’s hope to look for such a thing. Is that the dreary fact which forces itself upon you? Do not try to forget it. You are discovering the truth. You are in a lost condition already if you have not believed in Jesus Christ. You are not, as some do vainly talk, in a state of probation: your probation is over, and you are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God. In you there is is spiritual power to stir towards God until His Spirit moves towards you. You will remain cast out in the open valley, unless God’s Grace shall come to you, and unless His Spirit shall put breath into you. For you to be saved will be as much out of the common course of nature as any other miracle; and in it you will have no finger, so as to be able to boast; for the Lord alone must save you, or you are lost for ever. It is a terrible word for a man to say, but it is the truth, and nothing more than the truth, that He is ruined by sin and “without strength” to repair the damage. There seemed to be before these bones no prospect but the fire. When they that cleansed the valley came along and found these bones they would 594 gather them up as offensive objects and cast them into the fire of Tophet to be consumed. This is the only lot that remains unto dry bones, and the like awaiteth those who are spiritually like unto them. Has the Holy Spirit been dealing with any of you till you feel as if there were nothing for you but a certain looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation? Do you begin to feel in your own conscience the first burnings of the fire which never shall be quenched? Ah, whatever may He your gloomy apprehensions they are none too gloomy. It is a fearful thing to have sinned; it is an awful thing to He called to judgment; and a more terrible thing still to be under that judgment now, and only to be waiting until that sentence shall be carried out, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire.” Oh, if you cannot sleep at night, and if all enjoyment of earthly comforts seems to be taken away from you; if you begin to sting yourself and make your own life wretched. I shall not wonder at it. It is marvelous that a man can live and be quiet, and yet be under the wrath of God. It is a strange thing that He can walk this earth with a smile upon His face while yet His sin is unforgiven, and the sword of the Lord is furbished to work His destruction. Oh, that the sinner knew the jeopardy under which He lives, and the frail barrier that

divides Him from eternal misery. Does He not know that if His breathing should cease He is gone to the place where hope is a stranger? I say if a man mourns and sighs over His terrible future, so that a dreadful sound is in His ears, He only nets reasonably, and His fears are based on solemn truth. Moreover, these people felt that they were cut off from healing agencies. They say, "We are cut off for our parts;" that is, each bone is cut off from its fellow, and the whole thing is cut off as to its parts from every hope and comfort. These banished Israelites were cut off from the land of Canaan, cut off from the Temple, cut off from the priesthood, cut off from the sacrifices, cut off from all hope of approaching to God. Many poor souls have been made to feel as if they, too, were cut off. Their Sabbaths are no rest to them; the house of prayer brings no delight; the preaching of the Gospel yields no consolation. They turn to their Bibles, and every page seems to flash a threat, while no gentle shower of mercy drops from above. They fall on their knees, but even prayer seems to be a hollow mockery; they cannot pray as they would. They associate with godly friends, but they gain nothing by their converse. Go where they may, they think themselves like a dry bone which meets its fellow dry bone, and is none the nearer to eternal life for such dreary communion. The man is a 595 nuisance to Himself, and His very existence is a weariness. Ah, you think, perhaps, I am describing an extreme case, but I know that I am picturing some whose eyes are looking upon me at this moment. Happy they who have been delivered from this wretched state; but I had almost said, happy they who are experiencing it, for those who feel their sinfulness are on the road to better things. Brother, I hope your extremity will be God's opportunity. When your bones are dried then will God come in as the Resurrection and the life and make these dry bones live. When you appear to He beyond the possibility of mercy, then God, with whom all things are possible, will deal with you in a way of extraordinary Grace, and cause you to rejoice in His salvation. It seemed to these poor people as if they were quite given over, for when bones are cast out in the field and left to be bleached by the wind and the sun, when nobody gives them burial, but there they lie, the refuse of the charnel house, then they are according to all likelihood left for destruction. I have heard of persons who have felt in their spirit as if they were for ever banished from the light; so that they have cried, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Is the throne of Grace closed against the mourner? Will nothing avail? Will not cries and tears bring an answer?" By such downcast ones a whisper has been heard inwardly saying, "There is no mercy for you: you are cast out as reprobate silver." It is the whisper of Satan in the spirit, and it comes with piercing power. The devil often uses the conscience to be the hack on which He rides in His errands of torment, Yet there is a measure of truth in the insinuation. Apart from Christ, we are cast off: apart from Christ, God cannot look upon us except in anger: apart from the atoning blood our sins protest against the entrance of mercy, and there we lie self-condemned and helpless, abandoned in our own judgment to condemnation swift and sure, Here, then, is language full of misery, and yet sadly true. We are sold under sin by nature, and led captive by the devil, driven by our iniquities to endless misery, from which ignorance and wickedness will not permit us to escape. **II.** Now, I turn to that point upon which I desire to struggle with some of you this morning, that you may be fetched up by the Spirit's power from the depths of despondency. Here is AN ILL WORD in the text: "Our hope is lost." It is a good thing if our false hopes are lost; but true hope is still to be had. Hope is not denied to any man: if He will believe in Jesus He may yet be saved. They said of old in the Latin, Dum Spiro spero, while I breathe I hope; and I turn the proverb over, and say, Dum spero spirowhile I hope I breathe. To render the sentences rather freely will suit me well: "While I live I hope, and while I hope I live." Sinner, your life lies in hope, and while you have hope you have life. To despair is an unwarrantable thing, a thing full of sin, and fraught with mischief, besides being false and unreasonable. Despair, which is the mind's declaration that there is no hope, is not so much a sickness of the understanding as a sin of the soul, It is a crime against the truth, a high offense against the Lord of love. God is "the God of hope," and those who are without hope are also without God. No mortal has a just pretense to perish in despair, and if He does so, despair is a form of suicide, a form of willful self-destruction. No man has a right to despair; no man can be right while He is despairing. Let me just speak about this, and keep to the point. Despair is a high insult to God; it casts dishonor upon His chief attributes. In the first place it is most derogatory to the truth of God. If a man says, "I cannot be saved," He contradicts the divine voice, "Look unto me, and be you saved." God has sent the Gospel to men, and it is no other than good news to them; but despair virtually says it is no Gospel, it is no good news, God has set up a throne of Grace, and promises there to meet with the sinner; but this man professes that there is no throne of Grace, for He denies that there can be any Grace for Him, He refuses to come to the loving Father because He feels sure that He will show no mercy, though He has declared that He will do so. God has given a thousand precious

promises, such as this “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The despairing sinner says He does not believe this: His sin is too scarlet to be made white, the crimson of His guilt is too ingrained ever to be washed away. Thus He gives God’s promises the lie, and this is a daring thing to do. “He that believes not God has made Him a liar; because He believes not the record that God gave of His Son.” It would be an exceedingly heinous offense for me to stand up and say to the Great Physician, “You say, ‘I can heal you,’ but it is an empty boast: my wound is incurable. Great God, you say, ‘I can forgive you,’ but it is false; my sins are such as you can never pass by.” Mark you, brethren, the Lord our God is very jealous of His truthfulness. His name is “God that cannot lie,” and He that dares to say that He will break His promise has done Him sore despite. I need not surely 597 show the infamy of this crime. Let your own hearts condemn the treasonable thought. He that despairs insults God’s power. He does in effect tell the Lord that He pretends to a power which He does not possess. God says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”: the man says He will not trust in Christ, for He does not believe that God can save Him He declares that He has gone beyond the bounds of mercy, and so He tells the ever gracious One that He has no power to save Him. The Lord loves not that His omnipotence should be thus denied. He is grieved with those who thus limit the Holy One of Israel. They that would restrain His power shut out one of the brightest beams of His Glory. But despair abundantly casts dishonor upon God’s mercy. Know you not that His mercy endures for ever? “The Lord God merciful and gracious” is one of the ways of His manifestation. Has He not told us that He “delights in mercy”? Yet if you say, “He will not have mercy upon me, I have outsinned His Grace, I have gone beyond all possibility of forgiveness,” you do as much as lies in your power spit in the face of the God of love. Have you ever thought of this? Grieve to think that you have ever grieved Him in this fashion. This is the cruellest of sins; it aims its dagger at the heart of the Lord; it pierces the Redeemer’s hands and feet. The Lord glories in His power to save, and He has plainly declared that He will save all those who confess their sins and put their trust in Him; and do we doubt Him? Dare we so derogate from the Glory of the Most High as to say that there remains no hope of Grace for us? Shame on such insulting falsehood! Mark you, while it does this, which is bad enough, despair brings out the devil and crowns Him in Christ’s stead. Despair says to Satan, “You are victorious over the mercy of God; you have conquered Christ Himself.” Christ says that He is revealed that He may destroy the works of the devil, and you stand up and say, “Here are certain of the devil’s works which Jesus cannot destroy, namely, my sin and my sinful inclinations.” You wave the flag of the devil in the face of an insulted Savior; and whereas He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, you in fact tell Him that He has not half the power to save that Satan has to destroy, that Satan can be more successful in destruction than Christ can be effectual in saving. What, have you again chosen Barabbas and given up Jesus? and is Barabbas in this case the fiend of Hell? Will you believe Him and not believe God? Can you assert that He, the father of lies, is more worthy of belief 598 than the Christ who died that men might live? Yet despair says as much as this, and says it in the most offensive manner. It prefers Beelzebub to Jesus; for it believes the lie of Hell and rejects the word from Heaven. I go a little further, and I say, with a deep feeling of solemnity, that this heinous sin of despair tramples on the blood of Christ. Christ has died and shed His blood, and we know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. We have God’s Word for it; yet here is a man who says, “It cannot cleanse me from my sin.” If we look deep into the essence of actions we shall see that despair despises the atonement and denies its efficacy. We tell the man that there is forgiveness, but He mutters, “It is not for me”: we tell Him that Jesus Christ has emptied His veins to fill a sincleansing fountain, and He answers: “It may be true; He may be able to save all others, but not me.” Now what you have a right to say other people may also say; and if all united with you it would be tantamount to declaring that the crucifixion is an empty show, that the Redeemer’s atonement is a mere pretense, and that Christ is powerless to save. You reduce the Savior to an impotent pretender; and can this be done with impunity? We preach in vain if this be so; we preach a Savior who cannot save, an atonement which cannot cleanse. Will not God deal with you for this, if you persist in this provocation? Perhaps you think it is very humble of you to talk so, but it is not: it is the height of arrogant impudence. Despair is highly insulting to the dear Redeemer, the Glory of whose person is involved in His power to forgive. Remember, Judas who despaired was damned, while the men who crucified Christ were led by Peter’s sermon to believe and live. Great sinners who believe shall find mercy; but far less offenders who despair shall find misery. God save you, then, from the Judas sin of despairing, and enable you to believe in Jesus Christ at once. I must go a step further. Despair has something in it of sinning against the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit brings you rich cordials in the promises of God, which will raise your spirits and will

restore you from death; and what do you do with them? You take them and dash them against the wall; as if this almighty medicine, devised by infinite wisdom, were the deceitful nostrum of a quack, and you could not receive it. It seems to me a great and horrible offense to deny the testimony of the Spirit of God, even of Him who gives to the Holy Scriptures inspiration and certainty, and this you do when you refuse to believe for eternal life. Jesus has put it before you Himself, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." How can you think that He will cast you out? The Prophet cries, "Ho, every one that is thirsty, come you to the waters, and He that has no money; come buy wine and milk without money and without price." But despair answers, "There is no wine and no milk for me," and it denies that Grace is to be had without price. In the teeth of Scripture it declares that there is no pardon, no mercy, no salvation: thus it denies the witness of the Spirit of God. Oh, take heed, despairing one, lest it be said to you, "You have not given the lie unto men, but unto God." It is a master sin, this sin of despair. God save you from it if you are in danger of falling into it, or if you are already its prisoner. When a man gives way to despair, there comes upon Him usually a habit of wrangling against God and His truth. Oh, see Him at it. He is very low, and He comes to see the minister, and the minister's compassionate soul would comfort Him in a moment if it were possible, and therefore He begins to talk to Him about the Gospel. "But," says the other, and He introduces a tough question which throws the Gospel out of sight. "Oh," says the minister, "but God hears prayer." "No, no," says the man, and He begins quarrelling about prayer, and its disagreement with divine decrees, and so forth. The man snarls like a dog, not to keep His bone, but as if He begged to have good food taken away from Him. He does not want it. His soul abhorreth all manner of meat. The minister sets before Him a precious promise which He thinks will certainly meet His case, but the perverse mind strives against it, and fights with the promise as if it were His direst enemy. It is not a promise that suits His case at all; there is a word in it which He does not understand, and off He goes at a tangent, beclouding the word, and eclipsing its light, so that He may, if possible, keep Himself from being comforted. If God's people come and try to cheer Him with their experience, He fights against their experience tooth and nail: it may be theirs, but it never can be His: there is something particular and peculiar about them why they should have mercy, and something equally particular and special about Him why He should not have mercy. He has the key of the door of hope, and locks it on the inside, and then murmurs, "I am shut up, and cannot come forth"; whereas He fastens the door Himself. Sometimes the despairing one gets into such a nasty, ugly temper against everything that comes to Him from the Bible and from the ministers of God that you begin to think that He must be half mad. So perhaps He is, but it is not a madness that saves Him from responsibility; it is a madness which will be laid to His charge in the great day of account, because it is self-inflicted and he willfully persisted in. Oh, what a wrangling, contentious spirit will despair breed, so contrary to receiving the kingdom of Heaven as a little child! Worse than this, despair makes a man ready for any sin, for there are many that say, "I can never go to Heaven, therefore I will take a good swing here, and get what pleasure I can while it is within reach." Have I not heard them say, if not in words yet in their actions— "There is no mercy for me, and I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. I will go the whole hog now I am at it; I will, at least, know the heights and depths of sin, as there is no chance of mercy for me"? Ah, and when Satan takes a man in another temper, He tells Him that God will never forgive Him, and the poor creature sits down in sullen rebellion, murmurs, thinks hard things of God, wishes He had never been born, and curses the day in which it was said that a manchild had seen the light. Then He will be filled with blasphemous thoughts, and it may even come to pass that He rushes into self-destruction and takes a leap into sure perdition. How many have been driven by despair to the knife, and to the halter, or to a watery grave I cannot tell! But this I know, that if Satan can once fill a man's mind with that, and make Him say that God is not true, that the Gospel is not true, or at least not true to Him, then the enemy glories and cries, "I have Him, body and soul. I can do anything with Him now." It was said of the Russian soldiers that they would not go to the battle till they were drunk with raki, and certainly some men are champions for the devil when they are drugged by despair of pardon. Captain Pastrope is a fierce leader of bandits, and will do and dare the blackest crimes. With all my might I cry to you—above all things shun despair, never say your hope is lost. There is salvation for you yet. God has not cast you away. Oh, do not cast away yourself! What are you at? The Lord has not given you over to the tormentors, but you are writing your own sentence. You sit down and seem to think that you cannot be happy till you are thoroughly unhappy, and cannot rest till you are driven from all peace. I must still plead with you over this matter. Let me say further, despair degrades a man, degrades Him below the brute beast; for brutes do not despair. See how an insect will struggle, even when it is cut in halves. Look at a poor bird: what

hope it has even in its worst state of yet escaping the fowler's net; still it flutters, and does its best to get away. Will you despair where ants and wasps and birds still hope? Have you never seen a dog that had done something wrong, and has been beaten by its master? He tries to lick the hand that has beaten Him, and He cannot be happy till He is 601 forgiven. Poor creature, how it looks up for a smile! You have been chastened, you are smarting under it now, but you do not turn to God, nor seek His favor. You think worse of God than your dog thinks of you. Instead of crouching to His feet, as your poor dog does to you, to try and get a gracious word, you growl at the great Lord- "It is of no use for me to be humble: there is no hope." You slander the Almighty, you calumniate the name of Jesus Christ, you deny the power of the Spirit of God, and so you degrade yourself below the beast that perisheth. Oh this despair-avoid it, I pray you, as you would avoid death itself, for it will render all means of Grace useless to you. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. If you fall into despair, the songs of Zion will be dolorous ditties in your ears, and the preaching of the Gospel might as well be the preaching of the Law. See how a despairing man shuts His ears, like the deaf adder that will not hear, charm you never so wisely; it matters not what the theme may be-if it be infinite mercy, free forgiveness, and everlasting love, yet as long as the soul is despairing you do but make it the more wretched. The hopeless hearer rejects all consolation, His soul refuseth to be comforted, and His despair embitters every morsel He eats and every drop He drinks. Despair, too, is certainly vain and wicked, because it has no Scripture whatever to support it. "Oh," say you, "but there are many dark Scriptures." I know there are, but I have not time this morning to take them up one by one, and show that they need not lead any man to despair; but there is one text in the Bible which covers all texts, be they black as they may. I do not mind what the passages of Scripture are, nor what they testify: I am sure they speak the truth, and therefore I know they cannot speak contrary to other parts of divine revelation. Here is the famous text: "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." If you come to Christ you cannot be cast out anyhow. "Oh, but there is a text - "I do not care about your text: you misunderstand your text, but there is no misunderstanding this one: "Him that comes to me I will in no wise east out." "Oh, but He will cast me out because - "Stop now: are you going to contradict my Lord Jesus Christ? I cannot have patience with you. You will greatly provoke the Father. "I will in no wise cast out;" that means, for no sort of reason, under no circumstances, under no possible conditions will Christ ever cast out a man that comes to Him. " Oh, but do listen to me." No, I shall not listen to you, and I wish you would not listen to yourself. You must listen to me as I repeat the Lord's words— "Him that 602 comes to me I will in no wise cast out." You are not to be listened to when you want to make out God to be false. Oh intolerable sin! Jesus says He will not cast you out. Again He cries: "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does Christ mean that, or not? Look the Crucified One in the face: look at His wounds, and after having looked at them, say, "I do not believe Him: Christ lies unto me!" Will you dare to say it? Can you thus defame Him? I tell you, there is nothing within the covers of this Book that ought to lead a man to have any doubt about the infinite mercy of God to Him, provided He will just come and trust Himself with Christ. There is no God at all if a soul that trusts in Jesus can be east away, for the essential of Godhead is truth. I am an atheist if the God in whom I have believed casts away those that trust in His Son Jesus. He must be true, if every man be proved a liar. What say you, then, to that blessed word, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out"? Now, listen, you desponding one, on the border of desperation! Have you never heard of the freeness of God's mercy? Dost you not know that everything that He bestows on sinners is given freely and graciously? The ground of God's love is God's love, and nothing in us. When He made His eternal choice there was a remnant according to the election of Grace. It is free Grace that chooses for its love, and then loves for its choice. When Christ redeemed us He did it freely-He freely delivered Himself up for us all: when He pardons sins, He is "exalted on high to give repentance," and there is nothing freer than a gift— "to give repentance and remission of sins." I tell you, man, the very spirit of the Gospel is this, that there is no worthiness nor desert wanted in you in order to your immediate forgiveness and acceptance with God. All you have to do is to own to the truth that you have sinned and deprived yourself of all claim upon God, and then believe what God declares to you, that He is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Do but accept this word of reconciliation, and you are a saved man as sure as you livest. The moment you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the moment you do trust your soul wholly and entirely in those dear hands that were pierced for you, you are a saved man. What right have you to doubt that God can save you when everything is prepared and given of free Grace? I tell you the Lord Jesus has saved many others like you. Art you a harlot? Did He not save the harlot Rahab? Art you exceeding wicked? You are not worse than Manasseh, who is said to

have cut Isaiah 603 in halves with a saw, and filled the streets of Jerusalem with blood; and yet the Lord saved Him. I know that even though you be the worst that has ever lived, still you can not outrun my Master's wing-footed Grace. Paul said He was the chief of sinners, but He obtained mercy to be a pattern to you. Why talk, then, of sullenly lying down in despair. You sigh-ah, if you mindest not what you are at, what you say in your despair will come true through your own making it so. If a man says, "I shall die, I shall die of starvation," and there is a dish before Him, and He will not eat, I am afraid that the probabilities are that He will die of starvation, and it will serve Him right. If another person cries, "I shall die of thirst," and there is a cup of drink before Him and He will not put it to His mouth, I fear that He will die of thirst; and (I come to where I was before) He will die a suicide. He that refuses to eat, and therefore dies, is as much a suicide as if He stabbed Himself to the heart; and He that will not believe God's mercy, and will not accept it in Christ, is a soul-suicide as surely as if He plunged into debauchery, and gave Himself up to every lust. Oh that God the Holy Spirit would overcome some of you this morning who have yielded to this great and grievous sin. **III.** We shall now, close by meditating upon the Lord's promise, which we have styled A GRACIOUS WORD. I want you to notice this, poor troubled hearts: I want you to suck in this part of the text even if you forget all the rest. "Thus says the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." Notice, God meets us upon our own ground, and takes us up where we are. They said, "We are as dried bones." "Yes," says God, "and I will quicken you;" but the Lord even goes beyond anything which they have felt or said, for they did not say they were buried. No, they were as bones scattered in the open valley, unburied; but the Lord knows they are worse than they think they are; and so He goes further in mercy than they thought they had gone in misery. He says, "I will open your graves," and that looks as if they were finally laid in the sepulcher; but the Lord adds, "and cause you to come up out of your graves. Hark you, sinner, you have described yourself in a very distressing manner, but God accepts it as true, and deals with you as being such as you describe, or even worse. He regards men not only as dead, but as entombed, in as hopeless a case as corpses pent up in the sepulcher, and forgotten as dead men out of mind. O the mercy of the Lord! There is no bound to it. 604 Now, observe how the word brings comfort by introducing another actor upon the scene. You are like a dried bone, good for nothing, and able for nothing; but the Lord comes in Himself, and He says, "I will, I will." Oh, that grand "I will!" "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." "I will." Now, listen. If God will save you, cannot you be saved? If it is all of Grace from top to bottom, cannot you be saved? If there is no merit wanted of you, no previous goodness to qualify you, cannot salvation come to you? If Christ died for the ungodly, cannot you have a share in His death? If He came into the world to save sinners, then why not you? If the Gospel is not another shape of Law requiring something of us, but if it be all free, free, free, sovereign Grace, why should not you have it as well as I? What should shut you out? If anything could have shut you out it could have shut me out, for I am just the same as you are by nature; yet I have obtained mercy, and why should not you? Come along and have it. It is freely given to all who seek it trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. But recollect that God comforts us here by depicting the completeness of His working. He does not merely say, "I will open your graves." That is something; but if they are dead, what is the good of opening the graves? I have known careless ones drop into this place on a Sabbath day as dead in sin as dead could He, and buried too: you never would have thought that they would listen to the Gospel, hilt there has crept into their ear some such sweet word as this- "He that believes in Him is not condemned," and they have said, "Dear me, how sweet it is: how precious that is." Glory be to God, the grave has begun to open! But they felt they could not get a hold of the Savior for themselves; and then the Lord has opened their hand and closed it on the promise, and when they get it they will never give it up, but they have cried, "He loved me; He loved me. I will risk my salvation on it: I will trust Him; I will trust no one else." Thus the Holy Spirit has fetched them out of the grave though they were dry bones before. He will do the same with you. Oh that you may have Grace to believe what God here says. Lastly, notice the feeling which is produced by it. "And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves." Ah, what a feeling a man has that there is a God when God has saved Him; when He begins to dance for very joy of heart because He is fully forgiven, then He knows Jehovah is God; when His heart feels restful and full of peace, when He can say, "God is mine, Christ is mine, Heaven is mine," He does not need evidences of the existence of 605 God, or arguments to prove the power of God. He carries a demonstration of the truth within His own heart, and tells of it to others with tearful eyes. "Oh," says He, "there is no mistake about it: there is a merciful God, for I have obtained mercy: there is a refuge for sinners, for I have fled to it: there is pardon, for I have obtained it: there is rest, for I enjoy it: there is

a Heaven, for I begin to hear its bells ringing in my heart.” Then shall you know that God Jehovah is God indeed when He has opened your graves and brought you out. O God, bless this poor word to the troubled ones, for Jesus’ sake. Amen. 606

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A GREAT MISTAKE AND THE WAY TO RECTIFY IT NO. 1677

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”
Revelation 3:17, 18.*

THESE words were spoken, not to the outside world, but to the church of Laodicea. They relate to persons who were in a church state, who had been baptized on confession of their faith in Christ, and who were thought to be in a fine spiritual condition. They had a singularly high opinion of themselves, and probably considered that of all the seven churches in Asia they were the first in power and influence. The words before us are as sharp as they are true, and they demand the earnest attention of all professors of our holy faith, for to persons like ourselves they were addressed, and moreover we have the special note of attention- “He that has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.” Here the axe is laid to the root, not of the oaks of the forest or the pines of the mountain side, but to the root of the trees of the vineyard, and the choice trees of the garden of the Lord. By this the Lord showed His love to the true ones in Laodicea, according as He says, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” While reading the text I feel forced to cry, “O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!” Truly the flail must first be used upon the heap 607 that is gathered in the garner. It is all in vain to p reach to the outside world unless matters be true and right within. The kingdom cannot come nor the Lord’s banner be lifted high if the soldiers of His own army prove false and turn back in the day of battle. The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God. The word to the slaughtermen in Ezekiel was, “Begin at my sanctuary.” The stout heart of the king of Assyria will not be punished till the Lord has performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem. Behold, the Lord Himself comes to deal with His church; for His fire is Zion, and His furnace is in Jerusalem. “His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” As for them that are without, God will judge them in His own time: but now by His blessed Spirit. He speaks to those of us who are within the church, and make profession of His name. The solemn words which make up our text were also spoken by the Lord Jesus under a most special title: “These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness” (verse 14); as much as to say that, though the Laodicean professors were false, mistaken, and deluded, He who now addressed them by His servant John was true and faithful. He is the Amen, the Verily, Verily of God; He judges not according to the outward appearance, but looketh at the heart according to truth. He is “the faithful and true witness,” who does not flatter, nor keep back any of the terrible truth; but speaks out that which He perceives with His eyes of fire, and warms men of their condition with all sincerity. Instead of crying peace, peace, where there is no peace, and letting them be like Moab at ease from their youth, and settled upon their lees because not emptied from vessel to vessel, He stirs them up that the sediment of their falsehood may be seen and their evil case be made manifest. Oh for Grace to hear this word at this time as from the Lord Jesus, and as from Him under the weighty character of a witness faithful and true, speaking as the Amen of God. It seems to me that my text accounts for the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans. They were lukewarm because they imagined themselves rich when they were poor. Two conditions will help us to escape lukewarmness. The one is to be really rich in Grace; for they that have much Grace will not be lukewarm. Grace is as a fire in the soul, and He that has much of it, so as to become an advanced Christian, cannot but have a heart boiling with earnestness. The other way is to have but little Grace, but to be painfully aware of it, to be deeply conscious of soul-poverty, to sigh and cry because you are not what you should be. There is no lukewarmness 608 in a strong desire caused by a bitter sense of need. The poor man, poor in spirit, conscious of His imperfections and failures, is never a lukewarm man, but with sighs and cries coming out of a heart that is all on

fire with a desire to escape out of such a sad condition, He besieges the throne of God that He may obtain more Grace. These Laodicean people were unhappily in such a state that you could not get at them. They were not so poor that they knew they were poor, and therefore when the poverty-stricken were addressed, they said, "These things are not for us: we are increased in goods." They were blind, but they thought they saw; they were naked, and yet they prided themselves in their princely apparel, and therefore it was hard to reach them. Had they even been outwardly worse, had they openly sinned, had they defiled their garments with overt transgression, then the Spirit might have pointed out the blot and convicted them then and there; but what was to be done when the mischief was hidden and internal? Had they been utterly cold and frost-bitten, then He might have thawed them into living warmth; but such was their puffed-up notion of themselves that one could not convince them of sin, or awaken them to any sense of fear, and it seemed likely that after all the Lord must needs spue them out of His mouth as things He could not endure. How far this may be true of any one of us may God of His infinite mercy help us to judge each one for Himself. Whether it be true or not, it will not matter as to the usefulness of the discourse if God the Holy Spirit will bless it to our souls in His own way. Two things in the text call for our notice. The first is their saying: "You say, I am rich"; and the second is Christ's counsel: "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see." I. First, let us think of the church in Laodicea and listen to THEIR SAYING; it may prevent us from reaching such a height of pride as to speak as they did. The spirit of self-congratulation expressed itself in a manner strikingly unanimous. If all the members did not say so in words, yet, as a whole, they were so self-contented, that the great Amen spoke of them as one person, "Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Doubtless a few wept and sighed before God, but they were so inconsiderable that they did not mar the apparent unanimity of the church in its conscious self-respect, nor divide the united utterance of 609 its open boasting. "You say, I am rich, and increased with goods." It would seem that their minister was of the same opinion. Good easy man, He felt that His church was in a splendid state, for the Spirit of God here speaks to the "angel of the church," who is, no doubt, the minister of the church, and He says to Him, "You say, I am rich, and increased with goods." The self-complacent man had probably gathered together a wealthy congregation, wealthy as compared with the general run of the people of God, who were usually the poorest of the poor. Among these were persons of considerable talent, and as a body they were intellectual and educated. They were so rich in all sorts of endowments that they had "need of nothing." Perhaps they hardly needed a minister at all, but were able to become every man His own teacher, and so the timid man was quiet and smooth-tongued for fear they should dispense with Him. They might perhaps prefer an open meeting, and then what would become of Him? The proverb says, "Like priest, like people" and under the preacher's lukewarm addresses the church became lukewarm too. They were so rich in gifts that they did not need to economize, and send out their brethren to preach one by one. They could afford to let a dozen attempt to do what one could have done a great deal better. They had grown to be such a leading church that other churches looked up to them. They were noted and celebrated all over the country. A member of the Church of Laodicea was recognised at once as a remarkable person, so that wherever He went the people would ask Him to get up and speak; for coming down from Laodicea, that famous church which had "need of nothing," surely He could not open His mouth without precious things dropping from them; for was He not one of those who were "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing"? It was a first-class church, and their prudent and kind minister thought so too, and He took occasion often to say as much. When He spoke to the good people of Philadelphia, at their anniversary meeting, He told them that He hoped they would do their best although they had but a little strength, and could not expect to equal His people who were so much richer and so much better educated. Of course, all churches could not be so strong as Laodicea; it was not likely that everywhere, in those little places, they could gather congregations such as He was proud to look on every Sabbath -day in the Tabernacle at Laodicea. It was the general, unanimous feeling, from the minister down to the latest convert, that they were a most wonderful church. They were heartily at one in having a high estimate of themselves, and this helped to keep them together, and stirred them to attempt great things. 610 This saying of theirs was exceedingly boastful, for it divides itself into three parts. They were "rich," that was their present state: and "increased with goods,"-that is they could look back upon years of great prosperity and progress in their past history; and at that present time, if they were not absolutely perfect, they were getting close to the edge of it, for they had "need of nothing"; they did not know of anything which the church lacked; they had the best deacons, the best elders, the best members,

always ready to do anything and everything that was proposed to them. They were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. The present was all right, the past was eminently satisfactory, and they had reached a point of all but absolute perfection, for they needed nothing, and when people have need of nothing they can go no further; they have ascended to the highest point; their sun has reached its zenith; their path has been like the path of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day. Truly I do not know that they could have opened their mouths any wider. They gave forth about as fine a piece of brag as one is likely to meet with in any ancient record. Here is a church which is a city set on a hill that cannot be hid; is it not a candle that gives light unto all that are in the house? and the candle wants no snuffing, it is burning at its very best. Think of a church which has need of nothing! Now, notice once more that they were sincere in this glorying. When they said it they were not consciously boasting, for the text says, "And you know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They did not know the truth. They were not hypocrites: when they thus spoke with such self-conscious complacency they really thought it was so, and their minister thought so too. The angel of the church thought that it was an angelic church. There was no insincerity in what they said: in fact, I dare say they said to themselves, "We really speak below what we might say. We are a wonderful What we do could hardly be put in print or people! Thoroughly described in words. Our existence is an extraordinary fact." They did not know the real truth of the matter, but they sincerely believed the flattering tale which their ignorance told them, How readily do we believe a lie when it fosters in us a high opinion of ourselves. But now see what was their actual state: they were altogether mistaken. Their mistake was founded upon ignorance— "You know not." These intelligent persons, these wealthy persons, these instructed persons did not know themselves, and that is the grossest kind of ignorance. A man may know all about Africa, and the sources of the Nile and the Congo, and yet He may not know what is going on in certain regions of the home department. He is ignorant indeed who does not know His own condition in reference to the most weighty matters. In our church there are many members who know shamefully little about it; they go in and out among us, and they have not enough concern about the church to make its spiritual state a matter of enquiry. I grieve to say that there are members who, I fear, do not know their own spiritual state, who take it for granted that everything is sound, and say, "No doubt it is all correct." If their conscience is touched, and they are troubled, they call it unbelief; though it is quite another thing, and may be praised as godly fear. If they are driven into a corner by conviction, they say, "I must not get into this state; I must hope for the best." They make the best of everything, and shut their eyes to all storm-signals. These Laodicean people were mistaken through ignorance; they had not searched, they had judged the surface of the matter, and never looked below the top-soil; but "the faithful and true witness" makes them see the naked truth. He says, "You know not that you are wretched": that is to say, they were in a sad and undesirable state; there was nothing about them that could please God, and nothing about them that would have pleased themselves if they had seen things in a true light. "You are wretched." Oh, what a change from the distorting glass of self-flattery to the clear mirror of truth! How these men that had need of nothing are shown up when Christ begins to describe them! They seem to need everything. The next word, "miserable," conveys the same idea to us in the English, but the original had better, perhaps, have been translated "pitiable." There was nothing about them to admire, but everything to pity; for everything that seemed to be good was really false; everything that was apparently useful was a mere matter of display. As Jesus Christ looked at Laodicea He said of the church, "Pitiable! Pitiable!" He does not use fine expressions, does He, towards this respectable church, this church with so much wealth and so much strength? He does not flatter it, for He says of it, first, "Wretched!" and then "Pitiable!" Then He goes on to say, "Poor!" poor in the choice things in which they thought they were rich; so much Grace they thought they had, but He says they have exceedingly little, and calls them "poor." Oh, but they had such riches of faith! "No," says He, "poor!" Oh, but they had such abundance of energy. "No," He says, "that is only a pretense. They are poor." He searches the members through, and looks into their hearts, where their precious things are stored up, and He 612 says of them all, "Poor." There is a sense in which the Lord cries, "Blessed are you poor," but these were poor in quite another sense. Think of it! Here are a people that were "rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing," and yet the verdict of the Savior is, "They are poor!" And then He goes on to say they are "blind." Blind? Why, they had among them men of the greatest possible discernment, who could see as far into a millstone as any people: they were able to split hairs over points of doctrine, and they had discernment of spirits, so they thought, and could tell who was and who was not sincere; but Jesus Christ says, they have no discernment, they are "blind." They are not merely shortsighted and weak about the eyes, but altogether blind. And mark you, this is

no exaggeration: it is not a hard speech meant to sting them into repentance, but the “Amen, the faithful and true witness” says this calmly and deliberately, and says it about that admirable church of Laodicea concerning which we heard so much when we commenced our discourse; they were poor and blind. And now He adds that they were “naked.” No, surely, not that! Will the Savior say as much of us that? Yes, He says so. They are not dressed in the righteousness of Christ: they are dressed in their own cobwebs of conceit; and therefore they are naked. They are not resting upon Christ, but relying upon their own strength and wealth, and therefore He says they are “naked.” Yes, these same people who “have need of nothing,” yet have need of a rag with which to cover the shame of their nakedness. They are “naked” before God. Had a storm come upon them suddenly they would have found it out. We are such poor creatures that we need to be covered from the sun and from the wind, from the wet and from the drought, from the cold and from the heat. Such is our weakness that we have need of garments against all outward surroundings; and so it was with these Laodiceans; not only for the common decency of their appearance did they need to be robed in the righteousness of Christ, but they needed the most ordinary kind of covering. Though they did not know it, they were open to have been scattered and destroyed as a church had anything happened out of the common way. Oh, this mistake! May the Lord of truth prevent us from making it about ourselves individually, and prevent every church from making such a mistake about itself, and being unanimous in it. These professors were poor and proud: they were conceited, and therefore they were not likely to be converted. They thought they were making progress, but they were going backward; and because they did not know their true condition it was hard work to help them. You remember the Tay 613 Bridge disaster. There is no doubt whatever that the bridge was not fitted for its position, its ordinary strain was all it could bear; but nobody thought so. Undoubtedly the engineers reckoned it would stand any test to which it might be put, and therefore there was no attention given to it to make it any stronger and to provide against sudden disaster; and consequently when a specially fierce hurricane was out one night it swept it all away. That is just the picture of many a church and many a man, because He is thought to be so pious, and the church is thought to be so correct and vigorous, therefore no attempt is made for improvement, no special prayer, no cries to Heaven, no repentance because of backsliding, and so when there comes an unusual pressure, a night of terrible temptation, the whole fabric falls in ruin. How much better is the condition of the man who feels that He is weak, and therefore goes to the strong for strength! I know a railway-bridge at this moment which is showing signs of danger; there are cracks in the brickwork and other mischiefs: in all probability it would soon have come down if let alone: but it has been noticed by the railway people, and they are as busy as possible trying to repair it and prevent accident. Is not this much better than a delusive belief that all is safe? If there is a crack in the substantial part of your religious structure, what a mercy to see it! If the supporting pillars begin to give way, what a blessing to perceive the fact! “Oh,” says one, “you make us feel uneasy.” Yes, it is often a great blessing to be uneasy, and that blessing I pray the Holy Spirit to confer upon you. It is infinitely better to be uneasy and to get right than to be perfectly serene and all the while to be wrong. How many a house is built upon sand, and only waits till the floods shall come and the winds shall beat upon it, and then the whole fair fabric will vanish like a vision of the night: will it not be well to let the tenant know His peril? I think so. Now I leave this saying: may we never use it ourselves. We have looked underneath the surface, and we have seen the mud which lies at the bottom of what seemed a glassy pool. **II.** Now we come to think of OUR LORD’S BLESSED COUNSEL. “I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.” I call your attention first to the amazing Grace which is here displayed. Ask a schoolmaster what kind of pupil is most objectionable, and I think He will reply that He cannot hear a youth who knows so much already that He will learn nothing correctly. It is very hard to deal with the conceited, We can 614 instruct persons who are conscious of ignorance and willing to learn, but those who “have need of nothing,” what can you teach them? They are up to the mark in all points: they are models: they can teach you, and therefore what can you say to them? But here our blessed Lord seems to single out this puffed-up church, though pride is always obnoxious to Him, and He draws near to it and begins to speak to it in love. He does not use a peremptory tone, but in words of great affection He tenders His advice. He does not say, “I command you,” but “I counsel you.” It is tantamount to that other blessed text, “Come now, and let us reason together.” He puts it so softly, as if He said, “I offer a little kindly advice to you: will you listen to me? I might speak in harsher tones: I might condemn, I might command; but instead of that I stoop to you, and counsel you. See whether my counsel be not good. Am I not the Wonderful, the Counsellor? Is not the wisdom of God in

me? Therefore I am come to speak to you,” says Christ, “and counsel you.” Note how He begins- “I counsel you to buy.” Is not that singular advice indeed? Just now He said that they were “wretched” and “poor.” How can they buy? Surely it suggests to us at once those blessed free Grace terms which are only to be met with in the market of divine love: “Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” The chapmen of Vanity Fair have great difficulty to bring people up to their price, but the Lord Jesus Christ’s difficulty is to bring people down to His, and so He begins by counselling the poor to come and buy on such terms as this: “Without money and without price.” But why is it called buying? If you have nothing to give, why does He not say, “Come and take it”? No, it is buying, because God would have us make business of it. If any of you have backslidden, and yet dream that you have not declined; if there creeps over you now the cold thought that perhaps it is so; then rouse yourselves and make a business of recovery. Come to Christ and buy; not merely act the beggar’s part, but come and act the purchaser’s part, with thoughtfulness, with desire, with judgment. Come now, and give an estimate; do as you would if you were buying a valued article. Estimate the value of Christ and see how richly He is worth having. In a purchase, there is consent on both sides: the one consents to sell, and the other to receive by purchase; therefore the word “buy” is used, for God does not force the gifts of His Grace upon any man, but He first teaches Him His need of those gifts, and then He bids Him come and buy, though it be without price, by exercising thought, making an estimate, having a strong desire, being willing to give anything if 615 He had anything to give, and then taking the blessing with joyful willingness. Christ gives them counsel to buy. But next, what does He say? “I counsel you to buy of me.” Ah, they had been dealing with one another: they had been chaffering and bartering amongst themselves. One brother had brought this talent, another, and they had grown rich, as they thought, by a mutual commerce. “Now,” says Christ, “compare yourselves with yourselves no longer: give up seeking of man, and buy of me.” It is the very foundation of Grace—to be willing to buy of Christ. Have you a religion which you received of me? It is not worth a pin. Have you in possession a religion which you received of your mother, and father, and Sunday-school teacher, and neighbors, and friends? It is worth nothing. All true Grace must be bought of Christ on free Grace terms: “I counsel you to buy of me.” Do you not know that Jesus is a great monopolist? Nobody else has anything to sell of this kind. The articles He speaks of are entire monopolies in His hands: no one else can sell you the gold tried by fire, or white raiment that you may be clothed, or eyesalve that you may see; but the whole stock of Grace is vested in the person and offices of Jesus Christ, and therefore He says, “I counsel you to buy of me.” Do you wear a spiritual vesture which you bought elsewhere? Do you use an eyesalve which you purchased of another physician? Do you hoard up gold which you procured of some pretended goldsmith? Throw the imaginary gifts away; for there is no genuine article in the market except that which comes of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Him alone. “I counsel you to buy of me.” Oh, that every Christian here would lay hold upon this advice, and say, “I will go and buy of Christ again.” Have I been living on past experience? Have I been living on a profession which I have maintained these last twenty years? I will do so no longer: I will buy of Jesus anew: I will get my manna fresh from Heaven: I will seek all my provision day by day from the person of my blessed Lord and Master, for He counsels me to buy of Him. Now see the goods which He describes. “I counsel you to buy of me”- what? Everything. It is true that only three wants of these people are here mentioned, but they are inclusive of all needs. First, the Lord says, “Buy gold.” The man who can buy gold has bought everything, for money answereth all things. He who has gold has the medium with which He can procure whatever He needeth. In Christ there is a fullness of all good things, and in the gold of His Grace there is an adaptation to every need. You cannot have a necessity, nor even think of a necessity which is a real 616 one, but the Grace of God, which is like fine gold, will be sure to meet it. Your free will, your unaided efforts, your wisdom, your knowledge, your strength—all this you can get something for in such and such a market; but in God’s market there is nothing current but this precious gold, and if you get the gold of Grace, then you can get whatever your soul needs. “I counsel you,” says He “to buy of me gold.” Then next He brings forth raiment rich and rare; perfect coverings, such as do really clothe a man so that the shame of His nakedness will never appear. I like that expression. It is very plain, but what suggestions there are in it! for our sin is our shame, and it is well that the Lord has found a complete covering for it. Sin brought nakedness upon us, and shame is the result; but He who has Christ has lost both sin and shame, for the blood of Jesus removes guilt from the soul and terror from the conscience. Man was naked, and is still naked apart from Christ, but in Christ He is covered, and has become comely before the Lord. Even those eyes of God which see everything cannot see that which does not exist, and God has said of His people’s iniquities, “They shall not be.” God has cast the sins of His people behind His back, therefore He cannot see

them. “If they are searched for, they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord”; and if they shall not “be” or exist, then are they gone from His sight. What a covering this must be. What a purchase this is for a man to buy white raiment of Christ! Imputed and inherent righteousness make up the double garment of righteousness, worked out for us by the Lord Jesus, and in us by the Holy Spirit. This is a fair garment in which to stand among men, and it will fit us to appear at the judgment-seat of God. Jesus says, “I counsel you, buy this of me” no one else has this sacred apparel to dispose of. The fig-leaves of earth are a mockery, and the cobwebs of conceit are soon blown aside, but the covering which adorns and comforts is with Christ alone, whose name is “The Lord our righteousness.” Next our Lord recommends them to buy an eyesalve of Him. That is a very curious recommendation, is it not? For they were blind; and can an eyesalve give blind men eyes? Many salves are useful for eyes when they are weak or inflamed, but what salve is of any good to a blind man? He says they are blind, and yet recommends them to buy eyesalve of Him. Strange counsel! But there is no setting forth Gospel principles by human similes without endowing the emblems with something above nature. We must strain that which is human to set forth by it that which is divine. O you that have no heavenly discernment, that have no eyeballs upon which the 617 light might fall, Christ Jesus counsels you to come and buy of Him the true collyrium, that ancient salve of high renown, or something more marvelous still, which will open your eyes so that you shall see that which is invisible, and shall behold the face of God. This is glorious. No other physician has such eyesalve. None else can pretend thereto. The Savior has the whole stock of this sovereign remedy; He is the sole dispenser of it, one can make the like: go then to Him who sells, and buy for yourselves. The counsel of the Lord is not only that we buy of Him everything, but that we buy the best of everything of Him. Laodicea had made the mistake of buying second-quality articles, which turned out to be good for nothing. Our Lord says, “I counsel you to buy of me gold.” Gold is the most precious metal, but He would have them buy the best of it, “gold tried in the fire,” gold that has just passed through the assay and has the mint mark upon it; gold that will endure all further tests, having survived that of fire. O brothers and sisters, our wisdom is to buy what we do buy from Christ, for from Him comes Grace which will endure to the end. I have lately been looking through some of the sufferings of the Waldenses for Christ, and the sad spectacle has produced a most painful effect upon my mind, but I trust also a beneficial one. When I read of the horrible cruelties worked upon them by the Papists, and of the firmness of feeble women and children, as well as men, I asked myself, Could I endure such torments? I did not dare believe that I could, for they suffered agonies which scarce even the devils of Hell could have invented. Suppose that you and I should possess a sort of Grace which would not endure such tests, will it be the right sort of Grace? If we are never dragged at the heels of horses, or set up as targets, or dismembered, or burned at a slow fire, yet we ought to have that same kind of Grace which made these gracious ones more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. It is true we may never have to suffer martyrdom, but a man must be prepared to give up house, and lands, and wife, and children, yes, and His own life also, sooner than forsake Christ. Look at the saints in the first days, the young, brave church of Christ, when the world sought to stamp out our holy faith. They defied the world, and Pliny writes to Trajan to know what to do, for the Christians come crowding to the judgment seat to avow their faith, Instead of shunning the conflict they seemed to court it; knowing that to avow themselves Christians was speedy death, they were yet eager to do it: knowing that torments unutterable awaited them, they offered themselves willingly to bear anything for their dear Savior. Could we act in this fashion, think you? 618 Yes, if we have bought the true “gold tried in the fire,” but not else. Is our gold of this sort? Do not begin talking about how you could endure martyrdom: how do you endure the ordinary trials of life? In those lesser pains that come upon your body—are you patient? Those little disquietudes in the domestic circle—do you keep your temper over them? Those words that sometimes drop carelessly, not meant to be unkind, but which grate on your feelings—can you forgive them for Christ’s sake, and think no more of them? If not, what kind of gold is this which cannot bear the touch of the acid? Such metal would hardly do to lie on the hob, much less to be put in the flame: if it begins to melt in such mild heat it would utterly vanish in the furnace. Oh to have gold which has been tested in the center of the flame, such as God Himself will own in the Last Great Day, when He shall come to separate between the precious and the vile. Christ counsels us to buy the best, and we can only get it by buying it of Him, “without money and without price.” Remember the raiment too, for that is of the best; our Lord calls it “white raiment.” That is a pure color, a holy color, a royal color. We put on the Lord Jesus as our joy, our Glory, our righteousness. To walk with Him in white is real honor, and sure acceptance: it marks us out as victors through Him that has loved us. This robe is the true wedding dress, a holiday robe, and yet a serviceable garment

arraying a man from head to foot. Are you wearing it? Is your sin hidden? Does it not at times appear? Does it not come before your own conscience?. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, but if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” Have you this covering so that you will not be afraid to die in it, nor afraid to stand before the blazing judgment seat in it? Are you sure, certain, positive that your sin is put away in Christ Jesus? This is what you need, and you must not. be content with less. If you must play at haphazard do it with your estates, do it with your lives, but never leave your soul affairs to be a matter of chance. Make sure work for eternity. A man likes to be quite positive about the title deeds if He buys a farm; but what is that? If I wish for Heaven, I want to be sure that I have it; sure that I have Christ who is the Glory of it; sure that I am pardoned and renewed, which is my fitness for it. One single note of question upon that matter will banish all peace and joy out of your heart. God grant us Grace to buy the white raiment through which nothing of sin can be seen, for all guilt is gone. 619 And as to the eyesalve, it is the best possible one, for Jesus says, “Anoint your eyes with eyesalve that you may see.” Eyesalve that can make a blind man see stands in the front rank of all the medicaments that ever can be sold. Oh, for Grace to get it, so that we may see and know spiritual things. Can you say, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see”? Are you the pure in heart who see God? Is God about you wherever you are? Can you see your own sin and hate it? Can you see the power of Christ’s blood and delight to be washed in it? Can you see the spiritual kingdom, or do you only see the things of your trade and business, the things which blind worldlings can perceive? O God, give us real sight that we may see Heaven and delight in it, see Hell and flee the sin that will bring us there, that we may see Christ and rejoice in Him evermore. He counsels us to do this. So I must come to a close by noticing that all this is the counsel of Christ, and the counsel of Christ to a people that were proud and self-conceited. He gave those counsel who thought they needed none. Does not this reveal infinite Grace, that He should come to such and sit. down by them and say, “Come now, put your case into my hand; it is a very bad one, and I advise you to come to me for help”? Oh, how tenderly would I try to speak this morning in imitation of the soft tones of Jesus. O you who have thought of yourself other than the truth, I do not counsel you to despair. At the sight of the truth I do not counsel you to say, “I will give it all up; there is no hope.” “No,” Christ says, “be advised; take counsel; I counsel you to come to me now and get in very truth all that which you only had in fancy. All things are ready for you. You have not to search for the gold and dig it up from the mine: here it is: come and buy it.” “Lord, I have not a penny to buy it with.” That does not matter; buy it without money and without price. These are the easy terms of the gracious Savior. Believe, and be rich. When Satan tells me, or conscience tells me, that I am not a Christian, that I am not saved, then I find it wise to say, “I will begin now. If I have made a mistake, if I have been presumptuous, if I have not truly believed, then I will believe at once, and lay hold upon Jesus at this good hour. I recommend you who are not puffed up to take Christ’s counsel, for when He counsels these proud ones to come I am sure His advice is good for you too. It is always wise to get gold when you can buy it for nothing. I warrant you if the Bank of England put up a notification that they would sell any quantity of pure bullion for nothing to-morrow morning, our Stock Exchange men, instead of turning into Capel Court, would take the other 620 side of the street, and dispose at once of the Bank’s surplus. There is a ready market for pure gold at this extraordinary minimum. Come, then, and accept the gold of free Grace. It is sure to be useful; therefore come along, you that love Christ, and you that are afraid you do not love Him. Come along, all of you: come and buy this “gold tried in the fire.” You have never made a better investment in all your lives. May the good Master sweetly lead you so to do. But what a rebuke this is to all boasting. The Lord does not say to us, “You have been very foolish in talking about your riches,” but He convicts us by saying, “I counsel you to buy gold.” He does not say, “You are stupid to Glory in your dress,” but He convicts us by saying, “Buy raiment.” He does not condemn us for pretending to be able to see when we are blind, but He cries, “Anoint your eyes with eyesalve.” Is not this a sweet way of making us feel our error? Perhaps you would turn away from stern rebuke, but you cannot turn from love. Come now, members of this church and members of no church, come, buy these three precious things, “without money and without price.” You cannot take better counsel than that of the Son of God; therefore, do as He bids you, and buy at once. 621

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THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND HER MISSION

NO. 1678

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman, yet no man said, What do You seek? or, Why are You talking with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him.”
John 4:27-30.

Behold our Lord and Master with divinely skillful are seeking after a single soul! We must have large Congregations or we are disinclined for soul-winning. The habit of the age is to do nothing but what is ostentatious; every work must be with beat of drum or sound of tambourine. I pray that the Lord may work in us the steadfast desire to do good on the quiet, by stealth, when no one looks on, when not a single disciple is near, Oh that we may have such an estimate of the value of a single soul that we count whole days well spent to bring one fallen woman or one drunkard to the Savior's feet. Blessed is He who works on though He is never heard of, and looks for His reward from His Master. In the heat of the day the Lord Jesus found rest and refreshment in speaking to one whom many would scarce look upon, except with eyes of scorn. Blessed Savior, we do not marvel as the disciples did that you did speak with the woman, but we do wonder with a higher kind of astonishment that ever you did speak to the like of us, who have so sadly fallen, and done you dishonor, and grieved your heart. We are amazed that He who is the Glory of Heaven, “Light of light, very God of very God,” should shroud Himself in the likeness of sinful 622 flesh, and being found in fashion as a man should seek after us unworthy ones. Oh, the compassion of the Redeemer's heart! Read this chapter through carefully, and see the skill which that compassion taught Him. How sweetly ready He was to converse with her and take up her questions. Never imagine that the thirty years of retirement at Nazareth were wasted. I would gladly go, if I were young, for thirty years to learn how to talk as He did, if His own Spirit would teach me the lesson. He was a perfect teacher, because as man He had lent a willing ear to the heavenly instruction of the Holy Spirit, and therefore grew in knowledge and fitness for His work; as says that notable Scripture, “The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to Him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.” By communion with God in private, and by watching men in seclusion, He learned both the mind of God and the nature of man, so as to know how to handle the human mind. Men are “kittle cattle,” and can only be managed by a wise hand. Many an earnest fool has driven a soul to Hell in His endeavor to drag it to Heaven by force; for human wills yield not to such rough force, but rebel the more, Souls have to be brought to salvation by a gentleness and wisdom such as the Savior used when He fascinated the Samaritan woman into eternal life, and enticed her to the truth: so only can I describe that wonderous power which He exercised over her in the few short but blessed sentences with which He addressed her. Now turn a moment from that glorious One, that perfect man and yet infinite God, whom we would lovingly adore before we look away from Him. Here come His disciples! They have been into the city to buy food—an errand most necessary—that they and their Teacher might live. But see! When they perceive Him talking with a woman they marvel, each in His own way. Some are dumfounded, and cannot explain the phenomenon; others look as if they would interpose it, they dared, and would cry to the woman, “Away, you vixen: what right have you here, speaking to such a One as our Leader, whose shoe-laces even we are not worthy to unloose? Your approach dishonors Him: take yourself away.” They did say so with their eyes, though awe of their Lord restrained their tongues. For these disciples of Jesus were steeped in the customary antipathies of the age. First, it was sufficiently offensive that the person with whom Jesus was conversing was a woman. My beloved sisters, you owe much to the Gospel, for it is only by 623 its agency that you are raised to your proper place.

For what said the Rabbis? “Rather burn the sayings of the Law than teach them to women “; and, again, “Let no man prolong conversation with a woman; let no one converse with a woman in the streets, not even with His own wife.” Women were thought to be unfit for profound religious instruction, and altogether inferior beings. My sisters, we do not think that you are superior to us, though some of you perhaps fancy so; but we are right glad to own your equality, and to know that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. Jesus has lifted you up to your true place, side by side with man. Even the Apostles were tainted at first with that horrible superstition which made them marvel that Jesus openly talked with a woman. Moreover, they wondered that He could talk with such a woman! I do not suppose they knew all about her character, but there is a look about the fallen which betrays them; they cannot conceal the boldness which a course of vice usually produces. They may have thought “If He had talked with an aged matron, a saintly mother in Israel, it might not have been surprising; but how can He converse with such a woman?” They did not as yet understand His mission to rescue the perishing and save the lost. This poor woman also had the misfortune to be a Samaritan, and above all things Jews hated Samaritans, as aliens and heretics, who dared to call Jacob their father and to believe themselves orthodox. Jews and Samaritans were much alike, and you know the sects that approach nearest to each other usually reserve their bitterest hatred for their next of kin. They will tolerate those who are far removed from them, because they are altogether in the darkness of error, and so are somewhat excusable; but those who have so much light they detest for not seeing eye to eye with themselves. We pity a dumb man, for He cannot speak at all, but we are indignant that one who can say “Shibboleth” will not take a little more trouble and pronounce it “Shibboleth,” as we do. Surely He might go that other inch and be quite right. This woman was one of those Samaritan heretics who had dared to set up an opposition temple to the one at Jerusalem, and say that they also were the people of God; so the disciples shrank from her, and marveled that Jesus did not do the same. How could so good a man mix Himself up with such people? I have, myself, heard a great deal of foolishness spoken about mixing up with certain people, because we dare to meet with them upon some common ground to accomplish a right purpose. I have sometimes wondered whether people ever read of Abraham when He fought for the cause of the king of Sodom. A horrible man, I have no doubt, that monarch was, yet when His country had been plundered by the 624 invading kings, Abraham marched out on behalf of the King of Sodom; not that He cared for Him, but that He desired to deliver His nephew Lot. For that reason He is found in some measure of association with Sodom’s king; but when the object upon which they were united was achieved, then see how the princely Abraham washes His hands of the man. He says, “I will not take of you from a thread even to a shoe-hatchet, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abraham rich.’” Thus there may be a temporary union among men, between whom there is the widest difference, and this apparent unity may be lawful and expedient because the end to be gained is altogether good. Our blessed Lord was seeking the good of this unholy woman, and therefore He was fully justified in talking with her. Thereby He rebuked the superstition of His followers more effectually than by words. There is another side to the question. How could these disciples marvel that He spoke with anybody, after having chosen them and called them. Surely, when they frowned on others they forgot the dunghills where they grew. If they had only remembered where they were when He found them, and how often they had grieved Him by their perverseness, they would have reserved their surprise for their own cases. Ah, brethren, ever since the Lord spoke with me, I have never marveled that He spoke with anybody: it has not crossed my mind to make it any subject of wonder that He should stoop to the lowest and meanest now that He has stooped to me; yet I fancy I have seen in certain brethren evident signs that they forget that they were themselves once strangers in Egypt. They forget that Grace washed and cleansed them, or else they would have been filthy still, for Paul truly says, “such were some of you.” I am sorry when saved ones affect superfine purity and marvelous spirituality, and turn away from such as Jesus would have welcomed. Alas, such disciples have little of the tenderness of their Master! Our divine Lord has more tenderness for sinners than the whole of us put together. There is more love in His soul towards lost ones than there is in all these thousands of believers here present, though I hope that many of your hearts beat high with a loving desire that the guilty may be delivered from the wrath to come. But look at the disciples! See, yonder is John, that sweet-souled John, and yet He marvels: and there is Peter, good but faulty, and He marvels: and there is Thomas the thoughtful, and He marvels. They are all good men, and yet they are marvelling that Jesus is gracious to a poor woman. Oh, Peter, and John, and James, and the rest of you, look into your own hearts, and let a glance of the Holy Spirit lighten up the darkness of your spirits, and you will renounce this self-righteous marvelling which grieves the woman, and you will enter into deeper sympathy with your Lord’s love. Dear

Friends, let us never disdain the worst of men or women, but seek with all our might to woo and win them for our Lord. Oh, to have bowels of mercies as Jesus had! This will well become the followers of the compassionate Son of man. See, as the result of this conduct of the disciples, one of the sweetest conferences that was ever held was broken up, and brought to a close at its very climax. Just when Jesus had said, “I that speak unto you am He,” then it must end, for here they come, these cold, unsympathetic ones. Yet they were disciples, were they not? Oh, yes, and true disciples, too; but, alas, no breakers of communion are more blamable or more frequent in the offense than Christ’s own disciples when they are out of sympathy with their Master. You see, they are thinking about the meat, and about the Savior’s need of it: and these thoughts were most proper, but not very elevated or spiritual; and they come wondering that Jesus speaks with a woman, and so the holy conference ends, and the woman must go. Oh, when any of you draw near to Christ, and He is just lifting the silver veil from His dear face, and your eyes are beginning to behold Him, mind that you keep your door shut. “Oh, but it is a good man at the door.” Yes, but He will be just as likely to mar your fellowship as anybody else. The best of men may sometimes intrude between you and the Well-beloved, and fellowship which seemed as if it must mellow into Heaven itself will come to a speedy and sorrowful close. I do not blame Peter that He wanted tabernacles in which to remain upon the top of the mount; for He was pretty well aware of what He might meet upon the plain. Do you not often wish that you could sing- *“Sequester’d from the noise and strife, The lust, the pomp, and pride of life; For Heaven I will my heart prepare, And have my conversation there.”* Although the conference was thus broken up, the consequence thereof was the Lord’s Glory, even as often out of evil He works good. Since the woman cannot sit and gaze upon the divine face of her Lord, nor hear the strange music which flowed from His blessed lips, she will give herself to holy activity: she goes her way to the city, and she speaks to the men. This is well: there is little to deplore when men’s hearts are so right that you cannot take them off from glorifying Christ, do what you may; when if you disturb their private communion they are ready at once for public service. Driven away from sitting, like Mary, at the Master’s feet, let us rise to play 626 the Martha, by preparing a table for the Lord. Always reckon, dear Friends, whenever you are taken off from your usual course of life, as it were by a jerk, that the Lord has some special work for you to do. Do not fret, or try to buck the engine to get on the old lines again. No, if the switch is turned by the divine hand, go on; He that has the management of all the railroads of your life knows better which way your soul should go than you yourself can know. I have observed Christian people jerked out of a pious family where they were extremely happy, and placed in the midst of ungodliness, a situation not of their own choosing or seeking, but appointed of the Lord, that they may bring godliness into that house, and shed light in the midst of the darkness. Friend, you, too, may be taken away from this church where your soul has flourished, and you may feel like one banished and bereaved. Well, never mind. If you are sent to some church where everything is dreary and dead, go there like a firebrand to set them on flame. Your Lord would not have permitted the breaking up of your peace unless He had some high service for you. Since you are His servant, find out His will, and do it. God will thus honor Himself in you, and by-and-by He will honor and comfort you also. Observe that the woman now becomes a messenger for Christ. She has to quit conferring with Him to go and testify about Him. She did not go unbidden though, for she recollected that the Lord had said at an early period of the conversation, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” So she goes to call her husband. It is well to have a warrant for what we do. Observe, she interprets her orders very liberally. She thought as the Christ had said, “You have had five husbands, and He whom you now hast is not your husband,” He could not have limited her errand to one who was not her husband except in name, and so she might as well call any of the six men with whom she had dwelt, and therefore she might speak to all the men who were loitering about the public square, and tell them what she had seen. Remember how our Savior gave a large interpretation of His own prophetic mission. He was not sent as a teacher except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He went to the very edge of His diocese, if He did not go over it. He went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and when a woman came out of those parts He had healing for her daughter; though He did sow most of His seed upon the acres of the Holy Land, yet He made it fly over the boundary; in fact, He sowed all the ages, and on this once barbarous island there have fallen blessed handfuls which are bringing forth fruit to His Glory. Always go to the verge of your commission, never stop 627 short of it. Try to do more good than you can, and it is very possible that you will be successful. Indeed, if you only try to do what you can do you will do little; but when in faith you attempt what you cannot alone accomplish, God will be at your back, and in your weakness His strength shall be made clear. Notice that the woman leaves her waterpot. The Spirit of God thought well to record this circumstance, and therefore I think there

must be a measure of teaching in it. She left her waterpot, first, for speed. Perhaps you have got it into your head that it was an ordinary English waterpot, such as you water the garden with; possibly you so picture it, rose and all. Nothing of the sort: it was a big jar, or large pitcher of earthenware, she had to carry on her head or her shoulder, quite a load for her, and so she left it that she might run the more quickly. She was a wise woman to leave her waterpot when she wanted to move rapidly. Others think she did so because she was so taken up with her errand that she forgot her pitcher. It is blessed forgetfulness which comes of absorption in a holy design. When the King's business requireth haste it is wise to leave behind everything that would hinder. Our Lord Jesus Himself forgot His hunger in His zeal to guide a soul to peace, and it is said of Him in the Psalm, "I forgot to eat my bread." He was so absorbed in His heavenly work that He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." A man has hardly felt the power of eternal things unless at times He forgets some earthly matters. If a man is called to rush for His life through a room full of crockery there will, probably, be a number of breakages. You cannot think of everything at once; your mind is limited, and it is not advisable that you should divide the strength of your thoughts by having two or more aims. So she left her waterpot. Without thought she hit upon as good an action as thought would have suggested. The waterpot would have hindered her, but it might be useful to the Christ and His disciples. Thus they could give Him to drink. He was thirsty, and probably so were they, and with her pitcher they could help themselves. Besides, it was a pledge that she was coming back. She said thereby, "I am running away on an errand, but I shall come back again. I have not listened to the great Teacher for the last time. I shall return, and hear Him further, till I know Him better and trust Him more fully." So it was significant that she left her waterpot. Sometimes you will have to leave your shop to win a soul. You will cast up a row of figures wrongly, and wonder why; and the reason will be that before your mind there fluttered the soul of a swearer or the figure of a drunkard, or the image of a fallen woman, and your heart was filled with the longing to find the lost sheep. Never mind. I dare say the woman had her waterpot again, and you will get back to business again, and rectify your blunder, and attend to the shop, and set all matters right; and if a soul is saved you will have made a profit by any loss you have sustained. We have started the woman on her mission; now I want you to observe particularly her mode of address, for there is teaching here. She said to the men, "Come, see a man, that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Observe first, when she did go back to the men she had but one aim, and that was to bring them to Jesus. She cries, "Come, see." She did not tell them anything about their sin at the time, nor try to reform their habits; she called them at once to Him who could set them right. She knew that if she could bring them to Christ all things would come right inevitably. It is good for you to shoot only at one target. Choose your design and aim at it, and not at two objects. Drive away at the souls of men in the name of God to get them to Christ, and nothing short of Him. Labour for this; He willing to live for this, and to die for this, that men may be saved by Immanuel's love, and blood, and Spirit. This Samaritan woman aimed at this object and tried to gain it by an exceedingly earnest address. I warrant you she said it very prettily "Come, come, come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did": perhaps with all her charms, with all the softness of her winsome tongue, with all the entreaty of her bright eyes, she cried, "Come, every one of you; come, see for yourselves, a man which told me all things that ever I did." If you go upon the Lord's errands take your heart with you; speak every single syllable earnestly; and if you are thoroughly alive you will not need to be taught the way of doing it. The way comes naturally to those whose hearts are set upon the end. She spoke self-forgetfully: she seemed entirely to have forgotten herself, and yet she remembered herself—a paradox, but not a contradiction. She said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did." She quoted herself, and yet if she had thought of herself she would not have said a word on the subject of her own life. She might have feared that the men would have replied— "A pretty story that must be!" They knew her well, and might have turned round and said, "You are a beauty, to come here and talk to us in this style!" No; she let them talk of her as they pleased. "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did." That putting aside of all affectation, that genuine simplicity, was part of her power. Never try to be otherwise than you are. If you have been a great sinner, be ashamed of it, but do not be ashamed of that love which saved you from it, so as to refuse to bear witness to its power. Put away the thought of what people will think of you, and only look to what they will think of Jesus for having forgiven and renewed you. Note how short she was. Ralph Erskine calls her the female preacher. I am not so sure of the correctness of the title. If women preached just as long as she did, and no longer, no one could find fault with them; her testimony lies is all in one verse, and is just an invitation and a question. There needed no more words; no, not another half a word. She said exactly enough; for she was successful in leading the men to Jesus, who

could do the preaching far better than she could. I cannot call her words a sermon; at any rate, you would not care for me to preach so briefly. However, brevity is a great virtue. Do not crave to be fluent, only ask to be earnest. Then, how vivacious she was. “Come, see a man.” The words are all alive, and very far from being dull and heavy. “Come, see.” It is almost as laconic as Julius Caesar’s famous dispatch: “I came, I saw, I conquered.” “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” Then, it was so sensible. There is a dispute about the exact force of what the woman said, but most of those who give us precise translations differ from our common version. It is what she meant and believed, but not exactly what she said. She probably said, “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: Can this be the Christ?”-or, “This is not the Christ, is He?” She did not say He was, but she suggested it with great modesty for the men to examine. She believed that Jesus was the Christ, but she knew that men do not like to be taught by such as she, and so she humbly threw it out for their examination. “Can this He the anointed One whom we are expecting? come and judge.” She did not express all she believed, lest she should provoke them to opposition; she was adroit and wise. She fished after the manner of her Master, for she could not but feel how dexterously He had fished for her. She was an apt scholar, and humbly copied the Friend who had blessed her: “Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this possibly be the Christ?” This led them to come, if it was only to set the woman right. Possibly they thought her a poor, mistaken body; but in their superior wisdom they would look into the matter, and so the thing she desired was granted her. Oh, to have our wits about us for Jesus 630 But the argument is exceedingly strong, let her put it how she may. This man has told me all things that ever I did.” She might have said, if she thought it wise to say it, “He must be the Christ;” and that is my last point, namely, the grand argument drawn from herself, and adapted to the men. Observe the force of her reasoning. His power to read her heart, and manifest her to herself, was conclusive evidence to her that a special anointing was upon Him. But before I get at that I must have you examine more fully the whole of the woman’s little message, of which it was a part. It divides itself into two parts. You have been looking for firstly and secondly all this while, and now you shall have them. There are two parts in her sermon. The first is the invitation “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did”: the second is the argument: “Is not this the Christ?” **I. Consider at once THE INVITATION.** It is a clever as well as a genuine and hearty invitation. She says, “Come, see.” This was putting it most fairly, and men like a fair proposal, and the Holy Spirit works by means which suit the mind. She does not say, “You must and shall believe what I say.” No, no; she is too sensible: she says, “Come and see for yourselves” and that is exactly what I want to say to every unconverted person here this morning. My Lord Jesus is the most precious Savior that I ever dreamed of. Come and test Him He is altogether lovely, and He has blessed my soul unspeakably but I do not want you to believe because of my saying: come and see for yourselves. Can anything be fairer? Seek Him by prayer: trust Him by faith: test His Gospel for yourselves. It is an old-fashioned exhortation: “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good,” and, again, “Prove me now, says the Lord of hosts.” In fact, this is Christ’s own word to the first disciples,” Come and see and they used it when pleading with others, saying to them, “Come and see.” Moreover, this woman’s invitation throws the responsibility upon them. She says, “Come and see.” Thus would I say to you—If you do not come and see, I cannot help it, and I cannot help you either. I cannot stand sponsor for you: use your own judgments and clear your own consciences. Come and see on your own accounts. If you do not, then the blame must rest with you. If you do, then your personal investigation will be sure to end in a blessing. O dear Hearers, I may preach the Gospel to you, but I cannot go to Christ in your stead. It is mine to entreat and persuade, and to use every kind of means by which I may get you to the Savior; but it is a 631 personal matter with each of you. Oh that the Holy Spirit would lead you to come yourselves to Jesus; for it must be your own act and deed through His blessed working upon your nature. You must come, you must repent, you must believe you must lay hold on eternal life for yourselves. Nothing but personal religion can possibly save you. The woman’s call was a good exhortation in that respect. Then, is it not pleasantly put, so as to prove the sympathy of the speaker? She does not say, as she might have said, “Go, see a man.” No; “Come, see a man,” as much as to say, “Come along; I will go with you and lead the way. You shall not say I have seen enough of Him and do not care to go again, and now want to send you packing there alone because I am tired of Him. No; come! Come along; come with me—we will all go together. The more I have seen of Him the more I want to see. Come, see the wondrous man.” Dear Friends, when you try to win a soul do not try the “go” system, but use the “come system. When man cries, “I cannot go to Christ,” or, “I will not go to Christ,” look at Him through your tears and cry out, “Friend, I am a sinner like yourself, and have no hope but in the precious blood of Jesus. Come, let me pray with you: let us go to Jesus together.” Then, when you pray,

do not say, "Lord, I am one of your saints, and come to you bringing this sinner." That may be true, but it is not a wise way of speaking. Cry, "Lord, here are two sinners that deserve your wrath, and we come to ask you in your pity to give the Savior to us, and renew our hearts by your Spirit." That is the way God helps soul-winners to draw others. When we say, "Come," let us lead the way ourselves. What you wish another to do it will He wise to do yourself, for example has more power than precept. How would you like the sinner to turn round upon you and say, "You may well give away advice when you do not intend to use it yourself." No; but "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." A sister's heart spoke out in that word, "Come." Again, what a blessed vanishing of the speaker there is. I have heard of brethren whose preaching is spoilt because they are so self-conscious. The man wishes you to feel that He is speaking in first-rate style, and is an eminent divine. When He has finished, the common exclamation is, "I never heard such a clever man." But He was not so wise as He might have been or should have been, for He who preaches rightly makes you forget Himself; in fact, the observation about Him, if it comes out at all, is in this fashion- "I did not detect any eloquence; anybody might have talked like that, but somehow I have felt as I never felt before." The fish knows little about the 632 angler, but He knows when He has swallowed the hook. When the truth has gone right home to the hearer's heart the form of speech is of little consequence. This woman does not say anything to make the Samaritan men admire herself, but she draws to Jesus with the exhortation, "Come, see a man." What she does mention about herself is with the design of extolling the Savior. That is a grand sentence of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Less, less, less of John, that there may He all the more of Christ. There is but one great universe, and Christ and you are in it. The more space you occupy there must be so much the less for Jesus. When you get less and less there is more for Jesus; and when you reach the vanishing point then Jesus is all in all; and that is exactly what you should aim at. This sensible woman's invitation deserves to be copied by every worker. **II.** Now for THE ARGUMENT, with which I close. An argument lies concealed here, and if you look at the text a minute or two you will discover it. She conceals it because she is persuaded that they have already agreed to it. It is this: "If Jesus He the Christ, the Anointed, then it is fit that you should come with me and see Him." She does not argue that point, because every Samaritan agreed to it. If Jesus be the Christ then we ought to go and listen to Him, look at Him, and become His followers. Alas, my dear Hearers, I am obliged to urge that argument with many of you, because you are not so practical as these Samaritans. You believe that Jesus is the Christ; I suppose every man and woman of you does that: why, then, do you not believe in Him as your Savior? You never had a doubt about His Godhead: why is He not your God? "If I tell you the truth," says Christ, "why do you not believe me?" If this be the Anointed One whom God has sent to take away the sins of men. why have you not sought Him that He may rid you of your sins? If this be the propitiation which God has set forth, why have you not accepted this propitiation? If this be the fountain wherein sin can be washed away, why are you not washed? There is no reason in your course of action; it is illogical and irrational. If there be a Savior, the man who is taught right reason vows that He will have Him: if there be a fountain that can wash away sin He resolves to be washed in it: if He can get right with God by any process He hastens to be rectified. I say, this woman did not argue the point, because it did not need arguing. It goes without saying, and there let it stand. 633 But what she did argue was this: "This man who was just now sitting on the well, is He not the Christ?" How did she prove it? First, she did as good as say, "He must be Christ, because He has revealed me to myself: He has told me all things that ever I did." The words are wide. Stop, dear woman; surely He has not revealed all your life, certainly not in words. He has revealed your unchastity, but nothing else. But she was right. Were you ever out in a black and murky night when a single lightning-flash has come. It has only smitten one oak in the field, but in so doing it has revealed all the landscape. It struck one object, but all around you was light as day for the moment. So, when the Lord Jesus Christ revealed this woman's lustfulness, she saw clearly the whole of her life at a single view, and the Lord had indeed told her all things that ever she did. Do you wonder that she said, "Is not this the Christ?" Beloved, no one proves Himself to be truly anointed unless He begins by showing you your sins. If any teacher leads you to hope that, without repentance, or any sense of sin, you may be saved, He is not of Christ. I charge you fling away any hope which is not consistent with your own entire hopelessness apart from Jesus. If you have not known yourself a sinner you cannot know Christ as a Savior. Some are preaching up nowadays a dry-eyed faith, and men seem to jump into assurance as if there were no new birth, no conviction of sin, and no repentance. But it is not so: "You must be born again." That birth is not without pangs. Trust in Christ brings a hatred of sin arid a mourning because of it. A man cannot hate what He does not know; but this woman was made to see her sin, and that sight proved that the Messiah was dealing with her. The

nonrepentance prophets cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace: they film the sore, but Jesus puts the lancet into it, lays it wide open, and makes the patient see the gangrene of the wound, and then He closes it up, and with His heavenly ointment makes a sure cure of it. There is no binding up the heart that was never broken: there is no comforting a man who has always been comfortable: there is no making a man righteous who always was righteous: there is no washing a man who has no filthiness. No, and this is what the Messiah does: He lays bare the disease, and this is a proof that He is sent of God, because He does not adopt the flimsy, flattering mode of deceivers, but goes straight to the truth. Her argument is—He must be the Messiah, for He revealed me to myself. Secondly, He must be the Messiah, for He has revealed Himself to me. “No sooner did I see my filthiness than I saw at once that He was every way 634 ready to cleanse me.” A sinner’s eye is never ready to see the Savior till first it has seen the sin. When the man sees despair written across the face of human strength, then He turns and sees hope mildly beaming from the kind eyes of the Son of man: but not till then. Jesus bus revealed Himself, and now she says, “I see that He knows me, and knows all about me.” Wonderful it is how the Gospel robe exactly fits a man: when He gets it and puts it on He feels that He who made this garment knew His form. Perhaps you have some special weakness or singular deformity; but you soon perceive that Jesus knew all about it, for His salvation exactly meets the lack. There is a bath: ah, He knew I was filthy. There is a robe: ah, He knew I was naked. There is eyesalve: He knew that I was blind. Here is a ring for my finger: He knew I wanted a forget-me-not to keep me in memory of mercy received. Here are shoes for my bare feet, and a banquet for my griping hunger. Every want is forestalled, and this proves the omniscience of my Savior. “Therefore,” said she, “He knows all about me: He must be infinitely wise; He must be the Christ.” This is good arguing, is it not? Then she seemed to say to them too, “This is more to inc a great deal than it can be to you; for ho has dealt personally with me; therefore I abide in my assurance that He is the Christ: but go and learn the same arguments for yourselves.” Brethren, if the Lord Jesus Christ had told this woman all that ever her third husband did it would have had far less power over her than telling her all she had done herself. When conviction comes personally home, and the discovery is all about your own state and character, it has a special power over your heart and mind to make you say, “This is the Christ.” Also, my brethren, at the remembrance of my Lord’s surgery when I was wounded and sore broken, I am ready to cry, “See how He handles me. Never was a hand so strong and yet so tender: never a physician with such a lion’s heart and such a lady’s hand. I can feel His strength as He upholds me and I can feel His tenderness as He embraces me. Surely He is the Anointed, and sent of the Lord to bind up the brokenhearted, for He has bound up my broken heart. The case is proved to me: come and experience the like conviction within yourselves.” Moreover, and perhaps there is force in this which has not been noticed, she says, “Come, see,” as much as to say, “You may come, I know, for when I came to the well He did not look daggers at me; and when I did not give Him water He did not grow hot with me and say, ‘Disrespectful woman, I will not speak to you.’ No, but I was at home with Him in a moment. Come, see a man who made Himself so at home with me that He 635 told me all that ever I did. I am sure He must be the Messiah. The Messiah is to come to open the blind eyes, and He must needs be among the blind to perform the miracle. He is to fetch prisoners out of prison, and they are the lowest class that are in prison, and yet He goes to them. So, come along. I will go first, and introduce you to Him.” That is the woman’s little speech, and how good it is! I am going to add a bit to it which she did not know, but which we know. I wish I knew how to say something that would make you unconverted ones hurry to Christ, but if anything ought to do so it is this. Suppose you never do come to Christ in this life, and die without Him. God grant you may not die without having listened to Him and received Him; but if you do you will be wakened up at the last day from your grave with the blast of a terrible trumpet, and with the cry of “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!” Whether you will or not, you will have to come, and see a man sitting upon the Great White Throne, judging the nations; and do you know what He will do with you then? He will tell you all things that ever you did, and as the scenes pass before your mind’s eye, and as your own words go ringing again through your ear, you will be sore distressed. Perhaps this morning’s scene will be revived before you, and conscience will tell you, “You were at the Tabernacle that morning: the Gospel was put plainly to you, by one who in His heart longed for you to be saved; but you did despite to all those entreaties, and turned away.” I tell you it will be your Hell for Jesus to tell you all things that ever you did, and you then will see the argument: “Is not this the Christ?” But, alas, He will be no Savior to you, for you refused Him. He will then tell you, “I called, but you refused; I stretched out my hands, but no man regarded.” Still shall proceed that awful tale of all things that ever you did, concluding with this—you refused mercy, you rejected Jesus, you turned away from salvation, you would not have this

man to save you, and therefore have you come to have your past made the fuel for your everlasting burning. God grant that no one here may ever come to that. No, if I had the task to select one man out of this congregation that would have to spend an eternity in having His life rehearsed to Him, where should I find Him? No, I cannot see one that I dare to pitch upon, not one— not one—not even the worst man or woman here. I would not if I could. O God, of your mercy suffer no one here to know the terror of being driven away for ever from your presence and the Glory of your power, for Jesus' sake. Amen. 636

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ONE WAR OVER AND ANOTHER BEGUN

NO. 1679

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto you; fear not: you shall not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom.”
Judges 6:22-24.

These Midianites were wandering Bedouins from Arabia, and from the East country round about the Holy Land. They were masters of the art of plundering, and knew no bowels of compassion. They generally lived a hard life themselves, and when they had an opportunity to feast on the spoils of others, they rioted without stint, and left a famine behind them. Most fitly does the Scripture compare them to grasshoppers, for both in number and in destructive force they were like those terrible devourers. God had brought them upon Israel to scourge that nation because it had been so foolish and so ungrateful as to set up the gods of the heathen, and to forget the one mighty God who was so specially and graciously their patron and defender. They were impoverished and ground down to the very last degree by these plunderers, who left no food either for men or cattle. The poor Israelites, creeping forth from their dens and caves, attempted to carry on the work of husbandry, and sowed the land; but when the time came for reaping, the marauders came forth once more, took away their harvest, and despoiled their pastures again. Then, as usual, Israel cried unto Jehovah, and His ear was open to their groaning. Their afflictions made them weary of their idols, and caused them to say, “We will return unto our first husband, for it was better with us then than now.” God in His great mercy raised up for them a deliverer, Gideon, a mighty man of valor, who distinguished Himself in various skirmishes with the foe! His name was already a terror to Midian, for He who dreamed of the barley cake which smote the tent, and it lay along, said to His fellow- “This is none other than Gideon, the son of Joash.” His character has never been sufficiently admired: Scripture names much less bright than His have been preferred before Him by the general ministry; yet He deserves far better treatment. He was a man gentle and yet strong, cautious and yet venturesome; a searching inquirer, and an intense Believer. While He was a sort of foreshadowing of David, He had much of the afterglow of Joshua. He was a truly great man, though His latter days were overshadowed by a grievous religious error, and a sad moral fault. Despite His failings He was one of the greatest of the heroes of faith. He was not in a hurry to venture upon a pitched battle, but waited His time, and then by a sudden and unexpected attack He struck the whole host with panic, so that they fled at once, and Midian was smitten as one man. The leaders flee; two of the minor ones, Oreb and Zeeb, the raven and the wolf, are first captured, and by-and-by the greater generals, who had fled first of all, are taken by the victorious band. The leaders were ahead of all others in flight. In after days the destruction of their mighty ones became a proverbial curse, “Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yes, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.” Let us think for a while of Gideon, in order that we may see that we ourselves are or may be somewhat parallels with Him. We may not have to smite the Bedouin as He had, but unto a spiritual warfare God has called many of us: and though He intends to use us, and to get unto Himself victory by us, yet it may be that at this moment we are in fear. We are now passing through the same mental processes as those which educated Gideon, and we are being prepared thereby for future conflict and conquest. I shall begin by asking you to dwell for a minute upon Gideon’s sigh for peace; for He loved not war, but pined for quiet. He called the name of the altar “Jehovah-shalom,” which the margin reads, “The Lord send peace.” You see therefore that deeper down in His spirit than any desire for warlike honor there was a yearning after peace. He wanted not the spoils of princes; He only desired to plow, and sow, and reap in peace. 638 And do you wonder at it, when the ills of war were all around? He had for a long time seen in the cases of His friends and neighbors the desolating effects of war: their property was taken from them, their bread was stolen out of their mouths, their children were slain, and themselves made to hide

away upon the tops of mountains or in caverns among the hills. Life became intolerable amid such privations and dangers. Gideon must have felt His heart swell with grief and indignation as He looked upon the remnant of Israel hunted like partridges upon the mountains, though once they had dwelt safely, every man under His vine and under His fig tree. The Bedouin styled the valley of Jezreel “the meadows of God”: how grievous to see those fat pastures trod down by the feet of the invaders! Ah, little can you and I imagine of the horrors of war. We read of it, and our sympathies are touched, but we know not the multiplied murders, the painful wounds, the desolating rapine, and the fierce crimes which attend the track of armies. If we saw battle with our own eyes, we should with burning fervor cry, “Send us peace in our days, good Lord.” Moreover, He had not only seen war, but He sighed for peace, because He was Himself feeling the mischief of it. The dread of the conflict had come to His own mountain farm at Abiezer. There He was Himself, threshing wheat by the wine press, in an unusual place, in an inconvenient place, that He might hide a little grain, for winter’s food, from the Midianites who were eager to devour it. Aye, and when carnage smokes at your own door, and rapine is at your own gate, when you yourself are straitened and are hiding for fear, then comes from the deep recesses of the spirit the cry, “Oh, that God would send us peace, for this is a weary oppression; these ravens and wolves devour us utterly.” The way of peace was sufficiently well known to Gideon: the Prophet of the Lord had indicated to the people that the only way of peace was for Israel to return unto Jehovah, her God. The great sin of departure from the glorious living God was set before them, and they could readily draw the inference that they would never have peace from their enemies till first of all they had made their peace with God. They must surrender to their sovereign, and renew their loyalty, and then He would drive out the foe from their land. They must confess their transgressions and renew their covenant, and then they would obtain deliverance. Then would the ancient promise be fulfilled, “One should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.” Gideon probably knew this before the Prophet came; it was deeply imprinted on His thoughtful spirit, and as He was a man of faith 639 in God, He did not doubt but that if Israel returned unto Jehovah then peace would follow. While Gideon is meditating and working, an angel appears to Him and gives Him the assurance that with Him at least God was at peace. The covenant angel said to Him, “Jehovah is with you, you mighty man of valor.” Methinks His spirit ought greatly to have rejoiced at that assurance, and perhaps it did; for what better thing can happen unto any man than to receive such a token for good? If God be for us, who can be against us? We know how sweet is the assurance that being justified by faith we have peace with God. It is well with us when we are assured that the Lord is with us, our helper, our shield, our portion forever and ever. But there arose in His mind a grave anxiety. His was a very careful, thoughtful soul, for He was a man of prudence, large-hearted, far-seeing, and given to look at things coolly and steadily; and there arose in His heart a question serious and vital, “Is this the voice of God to me, or am I deluded? Is God at peace with me, or am I like the rest, plunged in a horrible warfare against the living God?” Therefore He puts a question, and He asks a sign that He might make sure of what He was about. Brethren, in spiritual matters you and I had need be sure. If we have peace within our spirit, let us make certain that it is the peace of God; for still are there voices that cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. Still do siren songs charm men to ruin with their dulcet notes; still does the fatal river flow most smoothly as it approaches the dreadful cataract. Beware of that word of the Lord, “When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” None are more quiet than the ungodly when they are given up to a strong delusion. The Psalmist says of them, “There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” It was no so with Gideon: His anxiety made itself visible. He was not the man to leap at a shadow: He sought for substance. If He was to have peace, He must have it from God: if He was to be delivered, He longed to have victory plain and permanent. The favor which He asked was requested because anxiety troubled Him, and He wished to make assurance doubly sure. He desired to know from God Himself that His mission was authentic and His success certain. 640 I believe that many of us have been, and perhaps are, in Gideon’s position. Of course we have not His errand, but we have one of our own, and we are troubled because we are not personally sure of our peace. We are grieved by our past sins and their consequences. This is the lot of many men. “Conscience does make cowards of us all,” and when the mighty Spirit of God convinces us of sin then sin becomes a second sorrow; no, worse than that, for if sorrow do chasten us with whips, sin does scourge us with scorpions. We are consumed by God’s anger, and by His wrath we are troubled. The mind is tossed to and fro and is confounded, but even in its confusion it seeks the true rest, and longs to gain peace in God. Like the needle in the compass, it is agitated and disturbed, yet still it knows its pole, and trembles

towards it. It will never be still till it reaches the point of its rest. Have you ever been in that condition? I know you have if the Lord has loved you and ordained you to His work. Has God at such a time sent you a message of mercy? Have you searched the Scriptures and found a precious promise? Have you heard a faithful servant of God preach under His Master's anointing, and have you been comforted? Even then I should not wonder if the darkening thought has arisen like a cloud, "Is this the right comfort for me? May I really enjoy it? Will it be presumption or assurance?" There is often a fine line, thin as a razor's edge, between the two, and woe unto Him who makes a mistake about it. O God, save us from carnal security. Prevent our crying "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." Better that we write bitter things against ourselves, if they be true, than that we say smooth things and flatter ourselves to destruction. Therefore, I should not wonder if you are asking the Lord to give you a token for good. You are praying to Him and saying, "I will not be comforted except you comfort me: your dove shall find no rest for the sole of her foot except it be in the ark with the true Noah, in whom is rest." As for me, I will take no cup of consolation except that which Jesus proffers when He gives it me with His own pierced hands. If washed, it shall be in Jesus' blood: if clothed, it shall be in His righteousness. From Gideon's longing, panting desire to obtain peace with God and then peace for His country we turn to look a little further into Gideon's fear which He met with in the way of peace. "An angel" appeared to Him-so says the text in the Authorized Version; but in truth it was the Angel of Jehovah, and this should have comforted Him, even as it has comforted us. One would have thought that Gideon would have leaped for joy when He beheld His God veiled in angelic form, but instead therefore the shadow of 641 death fell upon Him. Here was a man panting for peace, and firmly following the way of peace, and yet afraid with a deadly fear. Peace cannot be had except by our drawing near to God and the Lord's drawing near to us; but as soon as this process commences poor humanity shrinks from the interview, and is melted with fear. "When Gideon perceived that He was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." It usually happens that when God is bringing men into peace with Himself, while the operation is going on thoroughly and soundly, there is a degree of trembling in the soul. I suspect that conversion which has no trembling in it: note the prodigal's cry, "I am not worthy to be called your son." Note Peter's bitter weeping, and the three days' darkness of Saul of Tarsus. Even to believers the visitations of God are not without overwhelming awe: Jacob cries, "How dreadful is this place," Job abhors Himself, Moses does exceedingly fear and quake, and Isaiah cries, "Woe is me." Why was Gideon afraid? Not because He was a coward-you will scarcely meet with a braver man in all Scripture than this son of Joash-but because even brave men are alarmed at the supernatural. He saw something which He had never seen before, an appearance celestial, mysterious, above what is usually seen of mortal men; therefore, as He feared God, Gideon was afraid. When the living God draws very near to a soul, even though it be in the person of Christ Jesus, that soul is struck with awe, and trembles before the Lord. It cannot well be otherwise. Recollect how it was with the beloved John. "When I saw Him," says John-that was, His own dear Master, upon whose breast He had leaned His head- "when I," the disciple whom Jesus loved, "saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." You do not wonder, therefore, if a poor soul full of doubt and anxiety, vexed with a sense of sin, and greatly troubled by affliction, is full of fear when Jesus draws near. Though He comes with no feeling but of love, no thought but of mercy, no sentence but of free forgiveness, yet the heart is awe-struck at the wondrous sight. Alas, some of you know not what it is to have the Lord drawing near to your spirits. If you did you would not think it strange that certain awakened ones have acted in a singular way, and for a while have forgotten to eat bread. Daniel says, "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." When this glorious God 642 comes near to the soul it is a solemn visitation, and the mind is bowed under it. Moreover, Gideon had been ill-taught by tradition. There was a rumor abroad which was derived from truth, and yet was false, namely, that no man could see a heavenly being and live. It is true that the Lord expressly told His servant Moses that He could not see His face and live; but He did not say, "You can not see an angel and live"; nor had He said, "You can not see my veiled presence and live." The tradition was an accretion to the truth and a corruption of it. We may not see the face of God, but we may see Jesus; in fact, we live because we see Him. Beware of the moss which grows upon a truth. Many a heart bleeds because it is wounded by its own imperfect ideas of God; and so when God does draw near, when the great Almighty overshadows it, there is a slavish dread for which there is no need. "I shall die," says He, "I shall die." He sees His sin, and therefore He thinks that God has come in anger to punish Him: He feels His weakness, and fainting under it He groans, "I shall die." No, soul, if God had meant to slay you He would have let you alone. Whom God destroys He first leaves to the madness

of His own conceit. He does not take the trouble to show a man His sin, and reveal to Him His transgression unless He means to pardon and save Him. If the Lord has taken to strip you, He will clothe you, if He makes your righteousness to fade like the leaves of autumn, it is because He has a glorious robe with which to array you: therefore be not afraid. Besides, Gideon was in a state of mind in which He could be easily cast down. He was a brave man, but long affliction had cast a tinge of sadness over Him. His usual conduct in life is well pictured by the two signs which God gave Him. When all the people around Him were, with excitement, like the threshing floor, heated and dry, He, like the fleece, was cool and composed: and then, again, when all around Him like the wet floor, were dampened with discouragement, He alone remained in His ordinary condition, with not a drop of cowardice within Him. That was the kind of man: calm, quiet, determined, brave. But at the moment recorded in our text He was smarting under a cruel oppression, conscious of God's anger for Israel's sin, and overshadowed by God's own presence, and therefore His mind was ready to rush from one fear to another. Only, see the beauty of it, that He always tells His fear to God, always goes to Him for comfort, and therefore always obtains succor. The brave man is not He who sees no fear, but He who, seeing the danger, rises superior to it. Such was this man, 643 tossed to and fro from one fear to another, but never tossed off from His God, and so always sure to right Himself. One thing is noteworthy, namely, that Gideon's greatest fear arose out of a sign which He had Himself asked for. He said, "Show me a sign," and when He had that sign, namely, God's coming to Him, then it was that He was afraid. Be very chary how you ask for signs; for they may work your discouragement rather than your comfort. I have known some say, "I shall not believe I am a child of God unless I feel a deep sense of sin," and when they have entered into that feeling they have exclaimed, "I will never again ask for this." I have heard of others who thought they could come to Christ if they were gently drawn; and the Lord has been gently drawing them, and then they have wished that they had been more troubled and distressed. They imagine that they could have believed more readily had their despair been greater—a strange notion certainly. We are every busy in manufacturing fresh doubts, and for raw material we use the very tokens for which we so earnestly besought the Lord. We cry aloud, "Show me a token for good," and when the token is given we are amazed at being heard, and fall to fearing more sadly than before. Therefore pray for such gifts with bated breath, and say twice over concerning such things, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." All this while Gideon had one truth before Him which ought to have prevented all His fears: for the Lord had spoken to Him, and said, "Go in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent you?" See, He goes home fearing that He will die, and yet that could not be. How could He die if He was to deliver Israel? He must be a live man to do that, and yet, you see, He forgets to reason for His own comfort, but takes care to argue for His fears. Have I never seen my Hearers doing this? I have often caught myself at it—refusing to use my logic for the strengthening of my faith, but perverting reason in order to assist my unbelief. Is not this foolish and wicked? Too often we are industrious in the fabrication of discomfort, and utterly idle in the search for joy. This is folly, and yet better men than we are have fallen into this fault. The Lord save us from it. In drawing near to God is our peace, and if in that process a sense of the presence of God casts us down and creates a more poignant sorrow than we left at the first, let us not therefore shrink from the process, but push on with all our might. As our safety lies in coming to God, to Him we must approach at all hazards. If He seem to stand before us with a drawn sword in His hand let us run upon the point of it. If even our God be a 644 consuming fire let us still draw near to Him, for this is indeed the high privilege of saints. "Our God," that is our God in Christ Jesus, "is a consuming fire." Who, then, shall dwell with the devouring fire? Now let us spend a few minutes in considering God's comfort of His servant. "The Lord said unto Him, Shalom—peace be unto you; fear not: you shall not die." The Lord would not have His Gideons disturbed in mind. If we are to trouble the enemy we must not be troubled ourselves. Notice, brethren, the great power of God in speaking home the truth. Suppose I salute you with, "Brethren, peace be to you." That would be a sweet word; but when the Lord says it, you feel the peace itself. Suppose Peter had stood up in that bark which was tossed upon the Galilean lake, and had said to the waves, "Be still": the waves would not have taken much notice of Him, and the whistling blast would have defied Him; but when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," the rampant lions of the sea crouched at His feet, and there was a great calm. "Peace!" the word is shalom, the word which Gideon borrowed and applied to the altar which He raised in obedience to the Lord's bidding. It signifies not only quiet, but prosperity, success, "good fortune," as the multitude say. When God spoke that word home to His dear servant's heart a great joy was born within Him to prepare Him for His great warfare. The Lord also cheered Him with, "Fear not." Oh, that charming word; as full as it is short—"Fear not." What is there to fear? If God is with you, of

whom can you be afraid? Gideon feared Himself, dreaded His own unfitness and unworthiness, feared in the awful presence of God; but the Lord said, "Fear not," and Gideon's heart grew calm. Then the Lord added, "You shall not die," thus meeting the special form of His dread. This is what the Lord says to every poor trembler who is holding to Him by the desperate grip of faith- "You shall not die. You shall not die the second death: you have no sin to die for, for I have laid your transgressions on my only-begotten Son. You shall not die, for Jesus died. Your spiritual life cannot expire, for your 'life is hid with Christ in God,' and because Jesus lives you shall live also." Let us now look at Gideon's memorial. His fears being banished, and being at perfect peace, Gideon now goes to work. Are any of you questioning whether you are saved or not? Do not go out preaching yet, for you may, perhaps, put others into bondage. Are any of you half afraid that you are not at peace with God? Be careful what you do! Strive after peace, lest you 645 weaken your testimony. I recollect the lesson which I learned from my Sunday-school class: I was taught, if the other boys were not. Though yet a youth, I was teaching the Gospel to boys, and I said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." One of them asked somewhat earnestly, "Teacher, are you saved?" I answered, "I hope so." The boy replied, "Teacher, don't you know?" As if He had been sent to push the matter home to me, He further inquired, "Teacher, have you believed?" I said, "Yes," "Have you been baptized?" I said, "Yes." "Well, then," He argued, "you are saved." I was happy to answer, "Yes, I am"; but I had hardly dared to say that before. I found that if I had to teach other people the truth I must know and believe its sweet result upon myself. I believe that you will seldom comfort others except it be by the comfort with which you yourself are comforted of God. God would have His people be at peace with Him, and know that they are so, for if they are fretted within, and worried in reference to their God, how can they fight the battles of life? When Gideon is fully at peace, what does He begin to do for God? If God loves you He will use you either for suffering or service; and if He has given you peace you must now prepare for war. Will you think me odd if I say that our Lord came to give us peace that He might send us out to war? Gideon's first work was to go and cut down His father's sacred grove, which stood on the top of the hill, and enclosed an altar to Baal. He could not effect this business by day, because the foolish worshipers would have rallied to the defense of their dumb idol, and have overpowered the reformer; therefore with His ten men He performed the work by night. I think I see Him and His people in the dim darkness, with their axes and saws, doing the work as quietly as they can, felling all those trees. A splendid clearance was made that night. "Now," cries He, "over with that detestable altar to Baal." Some people would have said, "Spare it as a fine piece of antiquity." Yes, and leave it to be used again! I say, down with it, for the older it is the more sin it has caused, and the more likely is it that it will be venerated again. I often wish the Reformers had been more thorough in their destruction of idolatrous images and Popish trumpery. In many a parish church of this land everything is ready for the restoration of the Roman idolatry. But see, by the Lord's bidding, He piles a new altar of earth, or unhewn stone; and when that is done, He fetches His father's bullock and slays it for a sacrifice. How steadily they went about this re-establishment of the pure faith! See, they use the wood of the grove for burning the sacrifice, and the 646 heavens are red with the blaze. I think I hear the gallant leader say, "Let them wake now; they cannot prevent our worshiping the Most High, nor can they cause the grove to grow again. By yon beacon-fire, Israel shall gather together to fight against Midian, and victory shall be ours." Beloved, if God has given you peace, go home and begin your reform. I would preach up the overthrow of every sin. Down with every idol. Have you one left? Over with it, and present a sacrifice to God. But to pull down is not enough. Plenty of people can do that. Gideon, as we have seen, builds an altar to Jehovah. When you are at perfect peace with God, think what you can do for Him: think of a new plan of work, or consider how to do the old work better: advance any part of divine truth that has been forgotten, any ordinance that has been neglected, any virtue that has been despised. Especially make prominent Christ Jesus, the altar and sacrifice so dear to God. When He had built His altar He called it "Jehovah-shalom," which was done by way of thanksgiving for peace received. The inscription declares that "Jehovah is our peace." Blessed be His name this day. We have entered on the battles of peace, for the Lord God is with us, and with His people we will go forth to win the peace which He has promised. It was a psalm in two words; it was a song of one verse, infinitely sweet. "Jehovah-shalom": the Lord our peace. Moreover, it was a prayer, as the margin puts it- "Jehovah, send peace." If you have peace with God, let your next prayer be, "Lord, give peace to all your people." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Work it, O holy Spirit of peace! Then ask for peace by conquest of an ungodly world for Jesus till the first Christmas carol shall be sung again, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men." See, brethren, and with that I finish, there may sit here this morning a young man who does not know what God is going to make of

Him. The capacities of service that God can infuse into a single individual are marvelous. At present you are disturbed in mind, afflicted in heart, ill at ease; you need perfect peace, but you have not found it yet. Rest not till you have it. At God's own altar, where Jesus died, you will find it, and only there. When Jesus' blood makes peace with God there is your peace. Rest not till you are assuredly at peace with the Lord of all, so that your soul lies down in green pastures, and is led by the still waters. 647

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BOCHIM—OR, THE WEEPERS

NO. 1680

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 10, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And it came to pass, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.”
Judges 2:4, 5.

LET me give an outline of the chapter, that we may put the text into its proper setting. God had brought His people out of Egypt, and divided Jordan that they might march through dry-shod into the land which He had promised to their fathers, He charged them to drive out the Canaanites, a race that had become so loathsome in God's sight that He decreed their destruction, and appointed the tribes of Israel to be their executioners. It was for the good of the universal world that this pest-house should be broken up, and that the filthy races should be destroyed; and God gave His people that charge to carry out. Those who quarrel with this arrangement should remember that this is not the only instance of aboriginal tribes being driven out by a superior race. Our Anglo-Saxon nation drove out the original inhabitants of this island, who survived only in the mountains of Wales and Cornwall, and in the highlands of Scotland. It certainly will not be wise on our part as Anglo-Saxons to condemn Israel for doing under divine command what our forefathers did for their own aggrandizement. Alas, in more modern times lands have been seized and nations extirpated by the white man without divine warrant or reasonable excuse. We do not justify all this; but if any complain of Israel for obeying the sentence of God, let them first raise their voices against the driving out of ancient races by colonists of our own race. 648 The order to slay the Canaanites had a second object, namely, that Israel might dwell alone in the land, and might keep themselves to themselves—the great nonconformists of the universe—separated from all the rest of mankind both by residence and by manners, not following the customs of the nations round about them, or falling into their sins. That they might be sanctified they were to be separated. “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Now, mark and note right well that it is an evil thing, under any pretext whatever, to depart in any degree from the commandment of the Most High God. Whatever may be the Law which God gives, either to the whole race or to His chosen, they will find their safety in keeping close to it. But Israel forgot this. Soldiering was bard work—storming cities and warring with men who attacked them with chariots of iron was heroic service. All this required strong faith and untiring perseverance, and in these virtues the Israelites were greatly deficient; and so, in certain places, they said to the Canaanites, “Let us be neighbors let us dwell together.” They thought, perhaps, that they had abundant reason for this easy mode of ending the dispute; for those who would correct infallible wisdom have usually a great deal to say for themselves. Certain persons thought in those days that the religious notion of God's requirements was too severe, that He was, after all, a mass of mercy, and that the best thing that they could do was to be kindly tolerant of these Canaanites and make the best terms they could with them. They said that perhaps, after all, it was a pity to be so old-fashioned and so rigid in carrying out the divine order, and it would be better to learn something of the civilization of the Canaanites, something of their arts and sciences, something of their theory of religion; for men ought to have liberal views, and believe that there is latent truth in all forms of worship. At any rate, it could do no harm to study their archaeology, and go to their temples, and see the gods they worshipped, and get a general acquaintance with the advanced thought of the period; for the Canaanites were a greatly advanced people, they were the advanced thinkers of the period. They had thought out He-gods and she-gods, Baal and Ashtaroth, and their lesser deities were many they were, in fact, a highly cultured people, always thinking out something fresh, So Israel said, “It were a pity to carry out the divine denunciation quite to the letter. Let us tone it down. There are many things to be learnt from these people. No doubt they have their fine points, and we must not be too hard upon their imperfections. Therefore let us enter into treaties with them and live with them.” They did live with them, and fell into their ways. Tolerance led to imitation, and

Israel became as 649 vile as the heathen whom the Lord had condemned, and the Israelites became a mixed race, in whose veins there flowed a measure of Canaanite blood. Yes; if you depart from God's Word by a hair's breadth you know not where you will end. It needs but a little to degrade the Christian into a Ritualist, and still less to turn the Ritualist into a Romanist. We shall go far if we once start on the downhill road. I would to God that in these degenerate times we had back again somewhat of the stern spirit of the Cameronians and the Covenanters; for now men play fast and loose with God, and think that anything they please to do will satisfy the Most High. The offal and the refuse will suffice for sacrifice for Him; but as to strict obedience to His word, they can by no means abide it. Mischief will surely come of this lax state of things to the churches of this day as surely as affliction came abundantly to Israel of old. Note, next, that whenever one sin is allowed we may say of it, "Gad, a troop comes." It seemed a pardonable sort of sin to be gentle to these people and not to obey God's severer word; but then, what came next? Why, soon they, the children of Jehovah, were found worshipping before the horrible Baal. Soon they had gone farther, and the unclean goddess Ashtaroth became their delight; and soon they forgot Jehovah altogether amid their deities and demons. With these errors in religion there had come in all sorts of errors in morals, for every fashion of immorality and lewdness defiled the worshippers of Baal-Peer, Baal-Berith, and Baal-Zebub; and the chosen people of God could scarcely be distinguished from the heathen nations among which they dwelt, or if distinguished at all, it was by their greater sin, inasmuch as they were transgressing against superior light, and holding down their consciences which God had rendered by His teaching much more tender than the consciences of those about them. I said before that if you turn aside from God's Words by a hair's breadth you know not where it will end. The rail diverges but a little where the switches are turned, but before long the branch line is miles away from the main track. Backslide a little and you are on the way to utter apostasy. The mother of mischief is small as a midge's egg: hatch it, and you shall see an evil bird larger than an ostrich. The least wrong has in it an all but infinity of evil. You cannot say to sin, "Up to now shall you go, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed." Like the sea when the dyke is broken, it stretches forth its band to grasp all the surrounding country. The beginning of sin is like the beginning of strife, and that is said to be as the letting out of water: no man knows what a 650 flood may come when once the banks are burst. So Israel went aside farther and farther from God because they regarded not their way, and did not in all things obey the Lord. But then comes in a truth which, though it may seem black in the telling, is bright in the essence of it. God did not leave His people without chastisement. Had he let them alone, to be given up to their idols, their case would have been hopeless. For mercy's sake they must be punished for their transgression; but this was a gracious punishment, that they might not lie and wallow in their transgression and become altogether like the swinish nations that surrounded them. God began to punish them by their own sin. He suffered the Canaanitish nations to grow strong, so that they grievously oppressed Israel. He put the Israelites under the yoke of those nations which they ought to have utterly destroyed. If they would not be conquerors they should be conquered. If they would not lead captivity captive they should be led captives themselves. The Lord laid His blows upon them thick and heavy. But, before He did this, He sent a messenger to rebuke them. It is ever the Lord's way to have space for repentance before He executes vengeance. The axes which were carried before the Roman magistrates by the lictors were bound up in bundles of rods. It is said that when a prisoner was before the magistrate the lictor began to untie the rods, and with these the culprit was beaten: meanwhile the judge looked in the prisoner's face and heard His defense, and if He saw reason for averting the capital sentence, because of the repentance which the offender expressed, then He only smote Him with the rod, but the axe remained unused. But if, when every rod was taken off, the culprit was still hardened, and the crime was a capital one and clearly proven, then the axe was used; and used all the more sternly because space had been given for penitence, and the rods had been used in vain. When the rod is despised the axe is ready. It is certainly so with God: He waiteth to be gracious, but when patience cannot hope for penitence then justice takes her turn, and her stroke is terrible. The Lord on this occasion commissioned a special messenger to rebuke these people, for He sent an angel. I leave it to your own judgments to discover who this angel was, if it be discoverable. It may have been an ordinary angel, but I think it must have been the angel of the Lord. He is so styled in the fourth verse, and, besides, He uses language which an ordinary angel could not have used. He begins, "I made you to go up out of Egypt." Note, He does not say that the Lord said this or that, but the angel Himself 651 says it— "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers." Who could this have been, then, but that covenant angel who, on other occasions, appeared to holy men, and who on this occasion preached a sermon to

the assembled multitude at Shiloh? My brethren, you know that our Lord was here among men many a time before He came in mortal flesh to suffer and to die; He was here “rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men.” He was with Abraham under the tree, with Jacob at Jabbok, with Joshua by the walls of Jericho, with Gideon at the threshing-floor, and with the three Holy Children in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace. Not in such a body as God had prepared for Him when He took upon Himself the form of a servant, but in such a form and fashion as seemed most congruous to His divine majesty, and to the circumstances of those He visited, this angel of the divine covenant whom we delight in came and spoke unto this people. Such is the judgment of many who have thought most upon it; but I leave it to you to decide. At any rate, it must have been grand hearing to hear an angel preach, and grander hearing still to hear the angel of the covenant plead with the covenanted ones. Oh, what a sermon! What a sermon it must have been! Scarcely ever was such a preacher seen on earth. And yet that sermon did not do its much good as when the seafaring man, Peter, preached at Pentecost. The sermon at Bochim, if I were to sum up its results, ended in disappointment. When our adorable Christ Himself preached to the men of Nazareth, they would have cast Him headlong from the brow of the hill, so that all His eloquent words had fallen upon dead ears, and no good result had come even from His instruction. Be not disappointed, servant of God, if sometimes you seem to fail. Do not say, “I will give it up.” Your bread has been cast upon the waters. Wait a while, for alter many days you may find it. If Israel be not gathered, God will reward you for your toil. It is your to labor; it is God’s to give the results; and He does not always grant pleasing results to us at once. He did not allot great triumphs to this angel of the Lord, as we shall have to show you. It was a great congregation; it was a great preacher; and it was a great sermon, and yet there was not a great ingathering. Read the sermon through; and note that though it is a short one it is all the greater for its brevity. Sermons may grow little by being long, and a sermon may He great through being short, if it be big with thought as this angelic sermon was. He began first by telling them what mercies they had received. Read the chapter. “I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto 652 the land which I sware unto your fathers.” Brethren, this subject should most readily lead us to repentance—that God should have dealt so well with us should make us grieve that we have behaved so ill to Him. Do I address a backsliding child of God? I do not think that any exercise is more likely to benefit your heart than to remember what God did for you in years gone by. He took you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock. He brought you out from the iron bondage of your despair and gave you liberty, He brake the yoke of sinful habits, and the chains of furious passions; and now are you wandering away from Him? Are you making something else to be the god of your spirit? If so, be ashamed of your ingratitude, and let this first head of the angel’s discourse have power upon your mind. “You use no other friend so ill”; and yet you have not a friend who can be compared with your God. “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice” unto your God, and sin no longer against Him. Then the angel passed on to mention the mercies guaranteed to them: “I said, I will never break my covenant with you.” Oh, that is a blessed theme. If indeed you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord has pledged Himself to make you perfect and to bring you home to Himself with exceeding great joy. You shall not perish. Christ has said, “I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” You see the two bands—one inside the other, and you inside the middle one, enclosed within the palm of omnipotent faithfulness. Jehovah says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” He will never break His covenant with you. Will you wander away from Him who passes by your iniquity, transgression, and sin, and does not let His anger smoke against you for ever—He to whom you are joined in an everlasting wedlock which shall never know a divorce? Oh, cruel heart! cruel heart! Can you offend against such love as this? Can you break with God when He declares that He will never break with you? The angel pleads this longsuffering, eternally-enduring love, and pleads it well. I know of no two greater arguments than mercy received and mercy promised. Let us not sin against these. May the Holy Spirit hold us fast with these cords of love. And then the angel came to close grips with them, and He said, “You shall make no league with the inhabitants of this hand; you shall throw down their altars; but you have not obeyed my voice: why have you done this?” He came 653 to their sin, He put His finger on their failure, their omission and their commission. He did not flinch from stating to them exactly what their transgression was, nor from demanding, “Why have you done this?” And oh! surely, this shall help to lead us to repentance when God “sets our iniquities before Him; our secret sins in the light of His countenance.” When we see our sin, we ought to be distressed by it and to flee from it, “hot foot,” as men say, and be

clean rid of it once for all. Oh, may the Spirit of God convince any wandering one here of sin, and may He then turn to God with a penitent heart. The angel expostulated in most chosen words, saying, “Why have you done this?” Why have you turned away from God? Why have you let your own enemies multiply upon you? Why have you been disobedient to the command which was given to you so positively? Know you not that cursed is He that does the work of the Lord deceitfully? You have acted disobediently, and you have brought upon yourselves a terrible retribution; but why have you done this? Backslider, are you here to-night? Have you gone aside from church fellowship and left the profession of religion? Why have you done this? Can you mention a reason which will bear the light? We know you cannot. There is no sense in sin, no justification for iniquity. Ungodliness is madness. Irreligion is irrational. Disobedience to God is a breach of every Law of common sense and logic. In God’s creation it is unreasonable, unnatural, monstrous for the creature to rebel against the Creator. Why have you done this? “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel? Then the angel completed His discourse by declaring to them that further chastisements would surely follow. He was not sent to preach the Gospel, and therefore mercy is not His theme. He was sent to preach the Law, and He did preach it. Listen to the judgment which He denounces: “Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be your ruin—so some read the passage. It was a just but terrible threat that He thus thundered in their ears. Notice it. They were to He punished by their own sin. The Lord as good as said— “You would not drive them out, and now I will not drive them out. Your negligence and time-serving shall come home to you, and place thorns in your suffering flesh. Your omission shall sting you where you will feel it. You have sowed thistles, and thorns shall stuff your pillows.” Then, next, He tells them how sharp and keen this sin should He to them. “They shall He as thorns in your sides;” pricking you in one of the tenderest 654 parts-in the very region of life itself Wherever you turn, these sins of yoursstheses enemies that you spared-shall prick you in the side, and their gods shall be your ruin. You dote upon their false deities, and think them your Glory, but they shall be your dishonor. The heathen may trust in them, but you shall not be able to do so. They shall He a snare and a mischief to you. What a sermon that was! As I have said, there was a great occasion, a great congregation, a great preacher, a great sermon, arid, as far as one could see on the spot, a great movement produced. Now I want you to notice what looks like a great result, and we shall talk of it under two heads. The people, when they heard this solemn discourse, lifted up their voice and wept, yet they continued as they were. How hopeful! How disappointing! **I. First, HOW HOPEFUL.** One could not desire anything better apparently than this. They were all attentive hearers. There was not one that. looked about Him, or that forgot the pointed words that were spoken. They all seemed to open wide their ears, and take in the divine admonition. There they stood before the Lord, all of them amazed and confounded, while the angel delivered His solemn message, and then returned to Him that sent Him. It is a great thing to win people’s attention, and it is not every one that can do it; for there are congregations that act as if the word had nothing to do with them, leaving the poor preacher to prophesy to dead walls. These Israelites took the warning and drank in the truth. They were attentive hearers, and anybody would have said, “Blessed be God, that sermon has done a great work. Blessed be God for such an attentive congregation: the nails are fastened in a sure place.” Moreover, they were very feeling people, for they felt what they heard. What would you think to-night if the congregation should suddenly cry out? “They lifted up their voice and wept”-wept aloud. Orientals, you know, are generally louder in their demonstrations than are we of a chillier clime, but still it must have been a solemn sight to notice men and women together loudly lamenting their transgressions. I have no doubt that many who were there at that time were right with God and said, “What a wonderful opportunity! Glory He to God for such a revival! That one sermon has stirred the people through and through. Thank God that He has sent such a messenger with so fitting a mess age, and blessed it so, for certainly these people are all converted, otherwise they would not cry out and weep.” 655 They were all sorrowful hearers as well as attentive and feeling hearers. Out of the whole company there was not one that laughed, not one that was indifferent, not one who scorned and disregarded the message; but, as far as the text goes, the statement is that all unanimously lifted up their voice and wept. Heaviness was upon them. Their souls were exceedingly sorrowful; they expressed their sorrow in a great and bitter cry, and meanwhile their tears flowed abundantly, even as when the rock was smitten in the desert and the waters gushed forth. They were all turned into weepers, and they called the name of that place Bochim, or the place of weepers. You would think, “Surely this is full of promise—every eye is filled with tears as they stand before God.” Alas! that such drops did not precede a shower of Grace, but passed away as the morning cloud. Yes, and they all became professing hearers; for as soon as ever that service

was over they held another, and “They sacrificed unto Jehovah.” They avowed themselves to be Jehovah’s servants, and they took the sacrifice which He had appointed and offered it for their sin, and outwardly they all of them became ardent worshippers of the Most High, and true penitents. Well, dear Friends, all this looks very hopeful, because it is what we may expect when God presses home the Law upon the consciences of men. When sin is laid before a man, should He not weep? Hope glitters in every tear. Oh that men were sane enough to weep for their transgressions! I wonder that some of you can read your Bibles with dry eyes. Unsaved, and rejecting the Savior, can you read the four evangelists without weeping? That Savior whom the Jews crucified you reject, and so, in fact, you crucify Him too: can you read the Ten Commandments without an aching heart? You know that these are ten great pieces of artillery, all aimed at you for your destruction, since you have offended God by the breach of His Law. Why, surely, you ought scarce to sleep at night, lest God’s mighty judgment should fall upon your guilty heads while you are asleep. It is not wonderful at all that people should cry out and weep; the wonder is that every sanctuary where the Law is preached, and where the Gospel is preached, should not become a Bochim, or a place of weepers. Oftentimes this deep emotion does come with true conversion—often, though not always, as I shall have to show you. Men convinced of sin may well weep. I have seen a strong man weep under a sense of His guilt weep as though the fountains of His eyes would be exhausted, and the eyes themselves would turn to coals of fire. Frequently people are unable to 656 restrain themselves, and wish to break out even in the midst of the congregation, and cry to God for mercy. It is not wonderful. It is what we should expect. It is not undesirable, for it is an effect which frequently accompanies real conversion to God. It may well go with sorrow for sin, and sorrow for sin is essential to eternal life. Repentance is an old-fashioned doctrine, which in these days has been despised; but, if I stand alone, I will bear testimony for it. They say that repentance is nothing at all, that it is merely, according to the Greek, a change of mind. That shows what a little Greek they know. A little of such knowledge is a dangerous thing. A pity that they do not learn more. Repentance is a change of mind;; but do you say that it is only a change of mind? That is a pretty big “only.” A change of mind, a radical change of mind, from the love of sin to the love of holiness, is that a small affair? It is always attended with sorrow and regret for past sin:: and, if there is a man here who thinks that He will get to Heaven by a dry-eyed faith, He will be mistaken. He that never mourned for sin has never rejoiced in the Lord. If I can look back upon my past life of sin and say, “I have no grief over it,” why, then I should do the same again if I had the opportunity: and this shows that my heart is as perverse as ever it was, and I am still unregenerate. Dear Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that faith and repentance were His daily companions as long as He lived, and that, if He had any thought of regret at entering Heaven, it would be to think that He might have to part with His dear friend Repentance as He went through the gate. Godly sorrow is a blessed grief. Let no man speak evil of it. “Repent, and be converted” is as much the Gospel as “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;” and it is not to be omitted in our preaching at the hazard of doing damage to men’s souls. He who has experienced holy sorrow for sin will continue to feel it. I should wonder if He did not often pull up the sluices and let His soul flow in a flood of loving regret. *“If tears of sorrow would suffice To pay the debt I owe, Tears should from both my weeping eyes In ceaseless torrents flow.”* A weeper in that sense, ever repenting, is also ever growing in Grace. So this place Bochim looks extremely hopeful, does it not? II. Now let me turn to the other side, and show you that there was nothing permanently good in Bochim’s sudden water-floods. These people were 657 made weepers through hearing the angel’s sermon, but their weeping was VERY DISAPPOINTING; I half suspect that their tears and lamentations were produced as much by the preacher’s person as by anything else. It was the angel of the Lord, and who would not be moved at His presence? God gifts certain speakers with the power of moving the natural feelings, and that gift abundantly rested upon the covenant messenger. Some men so preach that it were almost impossible to remain unsoftened. There is a pathos about them, or there is an earnestness so intense, so manifest, that for the heart of the hearer to be touched is a natural consequence. Now, I dread lest any of you should be so moved by myself when I preach that your feeling should arise from my tone or mannerism, or because you have an affection or esteem for me; for be sure of this, that which comes to you from a man will come to an end before long. A temporary cause cannot produce an everlasting change. “You must be born again,” not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but by the Spirit of God. Everything about the preacher’s choice words, or musical tone, though proper enough as an accessory, if it becomes the principle and the power that moves you, will end in failure. That which begins with wind will end with whirlwind: that which comes of words will evaporate in words by-and-by. It may be a great blessing to you to hear a very useful preacher, but if you depend upon Him in the least it will be mischievous to you. Go

and hear the Gospel from any of my Master's servants, and never depend in the least upon any one man, whoever He may be. Seek that your repentance may be a repentance which is worked by the Spirit of God in your heart and conscience; for if it be not so, it will one day curdle into greater depravity. Sham religion is an injury rather than a benefit. I suggest to you that you ask your heart many a question, and catechize it after the manner of Beddome's hymn *"Why, O my soul! why weepest you? Tell me from whence arise Those briny tears that often flow, Those groans that pierce the skies. 'Is sin the cause of your complaint, Or the chastising rod? Dost you an evil heart lament, And mourn an absent God? 658 'Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin, And after none but you. And then I would-oh, that I might A constant weeper be."* Again, I am afraid that the repentance of these people had a great deal to do with their natural softness. They were tender and excitable because there was little grit in their nature, their manliness was of a degenerate type. They feared to go to battle for God; they dreaded the noise and the slaughter. They were moreover easily moved by their fellow men, and took shape from those who lived near them; they went to worship Baal because their neighbors said "Come and worship Baal." And they worshipped Ashtaroth because their friends said, "Come, let us reverence the goddess." They were malleable, pliable, ductile. We have numbers around us of that kind. What shall I call them-men of wax? creatures of india-rubber? They go to be shaped even by your finger, like clay upon the potter's wheel, not yet hardened in the fire. No one knows what their shape will be when they leave the wheel. Some have been here for many years, and have often been moved and molded by the preacher, and yet they are not saved, while stout-hearted rebels have stood in the aisles with half a sneer, and God has brought the hammer down upon their flinty hearts, and broken them to pieces, and now they are saved by mighty Grace, and rejoice in the Lord. Some have a natural tenderness which hinders the attainment of spiritual softness. Now, mark you, that which is natural may be used of God towards that which is spiritual, but still it is not in itself spiritual. All that readiness to cry, all that readiness to receive the word with joy, and to leap at once into faith may be just nothing but mental weakness. Some men weep profusely because they have been drunkards, and that gives them a drop in their eye: this is a miserable business. I like the strong man who cries within, and is chary of the visible rain-shower. I know really tenderhearted men who could not shed a tear for their lives, but feel a far deeper anguish than those whose griefs are shallow and watery. It is very beautiful to talk of the tears streaming down their faces, but many converts have never shed a tear, and perhaps never will; but this does not prove that they are not converted; far from it, the tear is but a natural drop of moisture, and soon evaporates; the better thing is the inward torrent of grief within the soul, which leaves an indelible mark within. You know how we sang just now-659 *"Tears, though flowing like a river, Never can one sin efface; Jesus' tears would not avail you, Blood alone can meet your case; Fly to Jesus! Life is found in His embrace."* One grain of faith is better than a gallon of tears. A drop of genuine repentance is more precious than a torrent of weeping. There is another thing about the weeping of these people, and that is, that it was caused a great deal by threats of punishment I am afraid that they did not weep because they sinned, but that they wept because God said that He would not drive out any more Canaanites. They wished to conquer more of them-more of the most disreputable sort-but they did not wish to drive them all out; yet they mourned because those whom they had spared would now get the upper hand of them. The more comfortable sort of Cannanites they were willing to save alive; and when they found that they were to have them for thorns in their sides, then they brought out their handkerchiefs, for there was reason for selfish grief. Yes, and you may preach the fires of Hell till men are willing to abandon darling lusts of the more glaring sort. To such we would put searching questions. Is there any holy salt in your tears? Is it sin that you weep for? Is it sin that you repent of? Every murderer repents at the gallows, they say: that is, He repents of being hanged, but He does not repent of having killed others. He might do the same thing again if He had the opportunity. We ought clearly to discern between the natural terrors that come of vivid descriptions of the wrath to come and that real spiritual touch of God the Holy Spirit which breaks and melts the heart and then casts it into another mould. These people were deceived as to the depth and sincerity of their own feelings. Doubtless they reckoned themselves choice penitents when they were only cowardly tremblers, laboring under impressions which were as useless as they were transient. Their feeling was but as a meteor's blaze, shedding strong but momentary day. *"What sadder scenes can angels view Than self-deceiving tears? They give you hope, a hope untrue, Then deepen all your fears."* We are quite sure that these people, though they wept, were none the better for that, because, if they had been, they would have cried "Come, 660 brethren, get your swords. Let us go and fight these Hivites and Hittites, and cast down their altars, and sweep away their images and groves." No, they kept their idle swords in their scabbards, and

made treaties with the condemned races. They used not their axes to cut down the false gods; but they said, "Let us have respect to the religion of others. There is no doubt that their idolatry is wrong: in fact, their practices are questionable, and we are very sorry for it, but we need not interfere, nor execute Jehovah's sentence with a bare literalness." In addition, they very likely confessed and deplored their own laxity, and went the length of saying "It is very grievous that we should be so obstinate. It is really a dreadful thing." I heard one say, "It is an awful thing to be a slave to the wine-cup; I wish that I had never tasted it. The first opportunity I get I will turn over a new leaf." He did not say what the new leaf would be, but He was going to do any quantity of reforming work. Alas! He never did anything at all, for He was drunk again the next day. A beautiful penitent to look upon; but a wretched hypocrite in due time, for He returned like the dog to His vomit, and the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. If you repent of sin, down with sin In God's name, down with sin! When repentance is hearty it is practical. When a man trimly turns to God, He turns away from sin. If Satan be effectually driven out of a man, the emancipated one sweeps His house out, and purges Himself of the filth which He formerly harboured; He plucks out right-eye lusts and cuts off right-arm sins, for He feels that He cannot longer transgress against His God. Next, these people had not repented, for they did not bring their children up rightly. The next generation, it is said, knew not the Lord, neither the mighty works of the Lord. That was because their parents did not teach them. Not that parents can teach children so that they know the Lord in their hearts; but God has so put it— "Train up a child in the way He should go: and when He is old, He will not depart from it." That is the great general rule of God's moral government. If parents make known the things of God to their children it cannot be said that the children do not know the works of God. If parents teach with affectionate earnestness, their children learn at least the letter of the truth. I do not believe in your repentance for sin if you tolerate your child's living in it. I cannot believe that you know the Lord unless you long for your offspring to know him. A man says, "Oh, it is an evil thing, but, you know, young people will have their own way, and we must not be too strict." Sorrowfully do we foresee what will become of young people who have parents that do not love them enough to restrain them from doing evil. Well may you weep, for you are murdering the souls of your own flesh and blood. Woe unto you, with all your tears, if you have no regard for your household, and no care to bring up your children in the fear of God. I know that these people did not repent aright, because they went from bad to worse. They went from weeping before God to worshipping Baal, like some I have heard of who are found crying in the house of God on Sunday night, and are laughing at the theater on Monday night. O base hypocrites! Penitents-at a dance! Broken-hearted sinners on Sunday, crying "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," and whole-hearted drunkards before the week is up, yelling "We won't go home till morning." Look at the miserable sinners, see what they are at. Are these your weepers? These your men of tender conscience? Their Bochim is all a lie—a mere pretense. The more tender you are, if afterwards you harden yourselves, so much the greater will be your guilt; and if you humble yourselves before God in mere appearance, so much the sorer will be your doom if that humbleness departs, and you go back to the sin from which you professed to turn. I know that these people were not penitents, because God did not take away the chastisement. The punishment which He threatened He brought upon them: He gave them over to the spoilers and sold them to their enemies. But where there is a hearty repentance of sin, God will never lay punishment on a man. He will forgive him and receive him to His bosom and restore him. To sum up in a word all that I have said, salvation lies not in feeling, but in believing; salvation lies not in weeping, but in trusting in Christ. Repentance is not to be measured by outward manifestations of sorrow. The Prophet says, "Rend your heart, and not your garments." Let your hearts be rent away from sin, and from everything that leads to sin; and then shall you weep acceptably before God. The Lord bless this word to those it is meant for. I do not know who they are, but He does; and may He send His blessing by His Holy Spirit. Amen. 662

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SHUTTING, SEALING AND COVERING—OR, MESSIAH'S GLORIOUS WORK NO. 1681

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”
Daniel 9:24.*

The Lord God appointed a set time for the coming of His Son into the world; nothing was left to chance. Infinite wisdom dictated the hour at which the Messiah should be born, and the moment at which He should be cut off. His advent and His work are the highest point of the purpose of God, the hinge of history, the center of Providence, the crowning of the edifice of Grace, and therefore peculiar care watched over every detail. Once in the end of the world has the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and this is the event before which all other events must bow. The studious mind will be delighted to search out the reasons why the Messiah came not before, and why He did not tarry till yet later ages. Prophecies declared the date; but long before infallible wisdom had settled it for profoundest reasons. It was well that the Redeemer came: it was well that He came in what Scripture calls the fullness of time, even in these last days. 663 Note, again, that the Lord told His people somewhat darkly, but still with a fair measure of clearness, when the Christ would come. Thus He cheered them when the heavy clouds of woe hung over their path. This prophecy shone like a star in the midst of the sorrow of Israel: so bright was it that at the period when Christ came there was a general expectation of Him. Holy men and women, diligent in the study of the Scriptures, were waiting for Him: Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and Anna looked for redemption in Jerusalem with others of like mind. Not only the Jews, but the Samaritans expected Him, for the woman at the well exclaimed, “I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ.” Even in heathen lands there was remarkable cessation from stir and battle; an unusual peace reigned over all the nations, and the hush of expectation ruled the hour- *No war, or battle's sound, Was heard the world around: The idle spear and shield were high uphung; The hooked chariot stood Unstained with hostile blood; The trumpet spoke not to the armed throng; And kings sat still with awful eye, As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.* Men were looking out for the coming One; for the corn of earth was ripe for the reaper. Men were on the tiptoe of expectation, and wondered when the promised Prince would arrive. Alas, they knew Him not when He appeared. After this fashion are things at the present moment with regard to the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Of that day and of that hour knows no man”; but it is known unto God, and fixed in the roll of His eternal purposes. “Known unto God are all His works from the creation of the world,” and especially those grand works which concern the person of our adorable Lord Jesus. He shall come as God has appointed: the vision of His Glory shall not tarry. He has given us suggestive hints as to that glorious appearing; and He has plainly taught us to be looking for and listening unto the day of the Lord. Among His last words are these, “Surely I come quickly”: these are words of consolation as well of warning. He bids us watch constantly for the coming of the Lord, that it overtake us not as a thief in the night; and He assures us that He will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: wherefore comfort one another with the glad tidings, and whenever your hearts sicken because of abounding sin, hear you with the ear of faith the 664 voice of promise crying, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes.” Rest assured that He comes who will in the fullest and most manifest sense finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The advent of the Well-beloved is the consolation of His mourning saints. Both at His first and second appearings the Lord not only comes to drive away the wicked as chaff, but also to comfort and exalt His elect: it is a day that shall burn as an oven, and yet to the redeemed it will be the gladdest day that ever dawned. The first advent of our Lord is spoken of in our text as ordained to be before the seventy weeks were finished, and the city should be destroyed; and so it was even as the Prophet had spoken. I shall not occupy your time by attempting to fix the

beginning and the end of the period intended by the seventy weeks, and the seven weeks and three-score and two weeks. That is a deep study, requiring much research and learning, and I conceive that the discussion of such a subject would be of no great practical use to us this Sabbath morning. You will be better nourished upon the Lord Himself than upon times and seasons. Suffice it to believe that Jesus Christ our Lord, the Messiah, came exactly as it was prophesied, and remained on earth as it was foretold He should do: in the middle of the predestined week He was cut off, when He had completed three years and a half of saving ministry, and within another period of like length the Gospel was preached throughout all nations, and Messiah's peculiar relation to Israel was cut off. At another time it may afford you profitable contemplation if you consider the four hundred and ninety years from the decree of the king for rebuilding to the overthrow of Jerusalem. We will at this present hour survey the work of the Messiah—that is His Hebrew name, or of Christ, which is the Greek interpretation thereof. Let us survey the work of the Anointed. Secondly, let us inquire as to our participation in it; and then, thirdly, let us contemplate the consequences which follow upon us being sharers in it, or upon our not being participants in it. Oh for a measure of the anointing, that we may fitly meditate upon our great theme. Come, Holy Spirit and rest upon us. **I.** First, Let us survey the Messiah's work. According to my text it divides itself into two grand works, which two works subdivide themselves in each case into three particulars. The first work of our Lord Jesus Christ is the overthrow of evil, and it is thus described— "To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, 665 and to make reconciliation for iniquity." But our Lord's labor is not all spent upon down-pulling work; He comes to build up, and His second work is the setting up of righteousness in the world, described again by three sentences: "To bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." The first work of the Messiah is the overthrow of evil. This overthrow of evil is described by three words. If I were to give you a literal translation from the Hebrew I might read the passage thus: "To shut up the transgression, to seal up sin, and to cover up iniquity." According to learned men, those are the words which are here used, and the three put together are a singularly complete description of the putting away of sin. First, it is shut up: it is, as it were, taken prisoner, and confined in a cell; the door is fastened, and it is held in durance: it is out of sight; held to a narrow range; unable to exercise the power it once possessed. In a word, it is "restrained"—so the margin of our Bibles reads it. The Hebrew word signifies to hold back, to hold in, to arrest, to keep in prison, to shut in or shut up. Its dominion is finished, for sin itself is bound. Christ has led captivity captive. But it is not enough to shut up the vanquished tyrant, unless He be shut up forever; and therefore, lest there should be any possibility of His breaking loose again, the next sentence is, "To seal up." The uses of the seal are many, but here it is employed for certainty of custody. Just as when Daniel was thrown into the lions' den for the king sealed the stone with His own signet and with the signet of His lords; or, better still, as when our divine Master was laid in the grave, they rolled the stone to the mouth of the sepulcher, and His enemies set a seal and a watch, lest His body should be stolen by His disciples. In His case, *Vain the stone, the watch, the seal, Christ has burst the gates of Hell.* But sin cannot thus arise. It is imprisoned in the sepulcher of Jesus, and never can it come forth; for the seal royal of the immutable God is set upon the door. Thus is sin placed doubly out of sight: it is shut up and sealed up, as a document put into a case and then sealed down. "Finished" and "made an end of" are the two words used in our authorized version, and they give the essence of the meaning. To borrow a figure from current events—Arabi, the Egyptian rebel, is shut up as our prisoner, and His defeat is sealed, therefore His rebellion is finished and an end made of it. Even thus is it with 666 transgression: our Lord has vanquished evil, and certified the same under the hand and seal of the Omnipotent, and therefore we may with rapture hear Him say, "It is finished," and also behold Him rise from the dead to seal our justification. Yet, as if this might not suffice, the next term in the Hebrew is to cover up; for the word to make reconciliation or expiation is usually in the Hebrew to cover over. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Christ has come to cover sin, to atone for it, and so to hide it. His glorious merits and substitutionary sufferings and death put away sin so completely that God Himself beholds it no more. He has blotted it out, cast it into the sea, and removed it from us as far as the east is from the west. The two former sentences speak of finishing transgression and making an end of sin, and these expressions are full and complete, while this third one explains the means by which the work is done, namely, by an expiation which covers up every trace of sin. Thus in the three together we have a picture of the utter extinction of sin both as to its guilt and its power, yes, and its very existence: it is put into the dungeon and the door is shut upon it; after this the door is sealed and then it is covered up, so that the place of sin's sepulcher cannot be seen anymore forever. Sin was aforesaid in God's sight, but through Christ Jesus we

read, "You has forgiven the iniquity of your people; you has covered all their sin; you have taken away all your wrath." Sin was in God's way till Christ shut it up, and now it pushes itself no more into the sight of the Lord. Sin was always breaking loose till Jesus sealed it up, and now it cannot come forth to lay any accusation against the justified. The three words might be put into one word by saying Christ has made a clean sweep of sin of every kind. Whatever may be its special development, whether it be transgression, which means the breaking of bounds, or sin, which is any want of conformity to the Law, or iniquity-that is to say, inequity, or the want of equity, a default in righteousness; in all forms in which it can be described Christ has shut it up, sealed it up, and covered it up by His atoning sacrifice once for all. The depths have covered it; if it be searched for, it cannot be found; our blessed Scapegoat has carried it away into the land of forgetfulness; it shall not be mentioned against us anymore forever. Those three words contain infinitely more of meaning than I have either space or ability to set forth. 667 Observe, dear Friends, that the terms for sin are left in an absolute form. It is said, "to finish transgression," "to make an end of sins," "to make reconciliation for iniquity." Whose transgression is this? Whose sins are these? Whose iniquity is it? It is not said. There is no word employed to set out the persons for whom atonement is made, as is done in verses like these- "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it"; "I lay down my life for the sheep." The mass of evil is left unlabeled, that any penitent sinner may look to the Messiah and find in Him the remover of sin. What transgression is finished? Transgression of every kind. But what sins are made an end of? Sins of every sort-against Law and against Gospel, against God and against men, sins past, sins present, sins to come. And what iniquity is expiated? Every form of iniquity, whatever falls short by omission, whatever goes beyond by commission. Christ in this passage is spoken of in general terms as removing sins, transgressions, and iniquities in the mass. In other places we read of the objects of His substitution but here all is left indefinite to encourage all. He gives us no catalogue of offenses; for where should He write it? The very heavens could not hold the enumeration; but He just takes the whole, unformed, horrible, black, disgusting mass, and this is what He does with it-He encloses it, fastens it up, and buries it forever. In the words of our version He finishes it, makes an end of it, and makes expiation for it. The Messiah came to wipe out and utterly destroy sin, and this is, and will be, the effect of His work. Put all the three sentences into one and this is the sum of them. Indulge me for a few minutes while I take the sentences separately and press each cluster by itself. And first notice that it is said He came to finish the transgression. As some understand it, our Lord came that in His death transgression might reach its highest development, and sign its own condemnation. Sin reached its finish, its ultimatum, its climax, in the murder of the Son of God. It could not proceed further: the course of malice could no further go. They had stoned the prophets and killed everyone that was sent unto them; but now He came, and God said, "They will reverence my Son," but they did not; on the other hand, they cried, "This is the heir; let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Sin finished itself when it brought forth the death of the Son of God. It could produce no riper fruit, for no supposable crime can exceed the putting to death of Jesus our Lord. Now has sin finished itself, and now has Jesus come to finish it. "Thus far," says He, "you shall go, but no further: here in my wounds and death shall your proud waves be stayed." Sin virtually committed suicide when it slew the Savior, for His death became its death. The kingdom of sin was overthrown in that day when it smote the Prince of Peace: then was a period put to the dominion of evil; and, to come back to the Hebrew, the Lord restrained transgression, and Satan was bound with a great chain. "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Sin may no longer range unchecked. Sin is now arrested and held under warrant, restrained under the bonds of Law; and from the day of our Lord by the preaching of the Gospel sin has become more and more shut up as to its reigning power. Some men have been altogether delivered from the rule of evil, and other men who remain its slaves yet go not to such a pitch of outward riot as they would have done had not Christ appeared. Sin is being besieged; it skulks behind its earthworks; its sorties are becoming fewer and less forcible; and though it is still powerful, the hour of its pride is passed, its head has received a deadly wound: the age has come in which the victory of truth and righteousness is guaranteed by the death of Jesus Christ our Lord. Your finis is written, O transgression! Written by the pierced hand! Your huge volume has in it writing long enough and grievous enough, full enough of blasphemy against God and of evil towards men; but now the Lord Jesus takes the pen from you, and you shall write no more, as you have done. The huge leviathan of evil has met its match, and is placed under the power of the Avenger. Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you by the way by which you camest." The Lord has set bounds to the transgression which aforesaid broke all bounds. Where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound. Sin is shut up

that Grace may have liberty. This is one part of our Lord's great work: all Glory be unto His name, He has accomplished it with power, and the power of the enemy is broken. Now take the second sentence, which in our version is, "To make an end of sin." Messiah has come to proclaim so free, so rich, so gracious a pardon to the sons of men that when they receive it sin virtually ceases to be: it is made an end of. The man that is in Christ, and has Christ for His covenant Head, is this day so delivered from all sin whatever, that He may boldly ask the question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If Christ has made an end of sin there is an end of it: the matter is ended, and no more is to be said. Down among the dead men let sin lie, forever buried by the right hand of the conquering Savior. 669 But the Hebrew has it "to seal up sins." Now I take it to mean just this. There are certain handwritings which are against us, and they would be produced against us in court but by order of the judge all these handwritings are sealed up, and regarded as out of sight: no man dare break the seal, and no man can read them unless the seal be broken; therefore they will never be brought against us. They have become virtually null and void. Everything that can be brought as an accusation against God's people is now sealed up and put out of the way once for all, never to be opened and laid to their charge before the living God. Or, if you regard sin as a captive prisoner, you must now see that by Christ's death the prison wherein sin lies is so sealed that the enemy can never come forth again in its ancient power. Sin could once sit on the highest mountain, and look over the world and say, "All this is mine"; and the embodiment of sin could come to Christ and say of all the kingdoms of the world, "All these will I give you," as though He claimed them all for His own. But it is not so today. The mountain of the Lord's house is this day exalted upon the top of the hills, and though as yet all nations do not flow unto it, yet a glorious company comes streaming up to the temple of the living God, and that company shall increase from day to day. As when a brooklet groweth to a stream, and the streamlet rises to a river, and the river swells till it rolls in fullest force into the shoreless main, so is it yet to be with the veer-growing church of Jesus Christ, which before long shall carry all before it, and cover the earth with blessing. Evil, you can not reign! Jesus has come and overcome you Himself, and taught man to vanquish you! You can not come again to the crown you once hadst, for the seed of the woman has broken your head: He shall reign forever and ever, and you shall die! Hallelujah! The coffin of sin is both shut up and fastened down with the seal of Christ's victory. But now, the last expression is in English, He has come "to make reconciliation for iniquity"; that is, to end the strife between God and man by a glorious reconciliation, a making again of peace between these twain; so that God loves man, and, as a consequence, man loves God. In the blessed atonement of Christ, God and man meet at a chosen meeting-place. Christ is Jehovah's darling and our delight. A slain Savior is well pleasing to God, and oh, how pleasing He is to a sinner who is deeply under a sense of sin! Here, here is that mercy-seat sprinkled with blood where man may speak to God without fear, and where God does speak to man without wrath. Here righteousness and peace have met together; mercy and truth 670 have kissed each other. Oh, glorious reconciliation which Christ has made by honoring the Law in His life and in His death. Now, take the Hebrew for it, and read the sentence thus—to cover iniquity. Oh, what bliss this is: to think, dear Friends, that sin is now once for all covered! Not as though it lay rankling there beneath some coverlet through which fire might burn, or lightning strike; but Christ's covering is such that, if you could heap Hell over sin, it were not so hidden; and if you could pile worlds upon it, were not so concealed; and if all Heaven bowed to overlay it, it were not so out of sight as when Jesus buried it deeper than the lowest depths, where no memory can remember it, or mind perceive it. ***Our guilt shall vanish quite away, Though black as Hell before, Shall be dissolved beneath the sea, And shall be found no more.*** This is what is to be done with the whole kingdom of evil, as well with the power of it as with the guilt of it. Dagon is to fall and to be broken, and the very stump of Him is to be demolished. As when the darkness flies before the sun, not a trace of its blackness is left, so is sin to be destroyed utterly from the redeemed of the Lord. It is not merely the guilt of sin that is shut up and sealed and covered, but sin itself, its power, its dominion, its habit, its defilement, the dread that comes of it, and the fear and the burning of heart which it engenders. All the foul birds of sin's filthy cage must fly away, never to return, chased away by the glorious work of Him who shall save His people from their sins. For this the Messiah was cut off, and this by His death is achieved. ***O love! you bottomless abyss! My sins are swallow'd up in you; Cover'd is my unrighteousness, Nor spot of guilt remains on me. While Jesu's blood, through earth and skies, Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!*** I fail to describe this triumphant overthrow of sin and Satan. I have neither wisdom nor language answerable to such a theme. I invite you now for a few minutes to consider the second work, namely, the setting up of righteousness. This is set before us in three expressions: first, in the words "to bring in everlasting righteousness." And what is that? Why, His own

righteousness which is from everlasting to everlasting, and will never be 671 taken away from those who have it, and will never cease to be their beauty and their glorious Jesus. The work of Christ in His life and death is by God imputed to His people: indeed, it is theirs because they are one with Christ. He is the Lord their righteousness, and they are the righteousness of God in Him. Saints are so righteous in Jesus Christ that they are more righteous than Adam was before He fell, for He had but a creature righteousness, and they have the righteousness of the Creator: He had a righteousness which He lost, but believers have a righteousness which they can never lose, an everlasting righteousness. Nor is that all the meaning of our text: those to whom God imputes righteousness, to them also He imparts righteousness. He makes them pure in heart, He changes their desires, He makes them love that which is right and just and good, and so He gives them Grace to lead godly, sober, honest, and holy lives. This righteousness shall not be crushed out of them, for the work of the Spirit shall continue until they shall become perfect, and be meet to dwell with God in light. Happy are those spirits to whom Christ gives an everlasting righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom and in it they shall shine forth as the sun. They are right and they shall be right; they are true and they shall never degenerate into falsehood; they are God's own children and they shall go on to develop the image of Christ, their elder brother, till they shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This Christ came to do: He imputes and imparts righteousness, and thus brings in everlasting righteousness as the foundation of His kingdom. Next, in order to the setting up of a kingdom of righteousness He is come that He may "seal up vision and prophecy." That is, by fulfilling all the visions and the prophecies of the Old Testament in Himself, He ends both prophecy and vision. He seals up visions and prophecies so that they shall no more be seen or spoken; they are closed, and no man can add to them; and therefore-and that is the point to note-the Gospel is forever settled, to remain eternally the same. Christ has set up a kingdom that shall never be moved. His truth can never be changed by any novel revelation. If any man come to you and say, "I am a Prophet!" bid Him go and find believers among the foolish for to you Jesus has sealed up prophecy and vision, and there is to be no more of it. There is no need of it, because in Christ God has spoken all He means to say concerning the way of salvation. Until such time as Christ Himself shall come the canon is complete; and though there be many voices crying, "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" and some so fascinating that they might deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, yet 672 those whom Christ has chosen know the Shepherd's voice, and "a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Brethren, there always was something better yet to come in all times till Christ arrived; but after the best there comes none. A certain philosopher taught this; the next philosopher taught that, and the next one contradicted this and that, and taught another thing; while another master arose and contradicted all who went before. So man groped as in the dark for the wall; but now the day has dawned, and the true light shines, for Christ has appeared. This, then, is an essential part of the setting up of that which is good-namely, to settle truth on a fixed basis, whereon we may stand steadfast, immovable. The candles are snuffed out because the day itself looks out from the windows of Heaven. Rejoice in this, beloved. God makes you righteous in Christ and with Christ, and in order that you shall never be perplexed with change, He sets aside all other teachers, that Christ may be your all in all. Then, as if this were not enough, and truly it would not be enough, He is also come to anoint the Most Holy, or the Holy of Holies, as you may read it. And what means this? Nothing material, for the Holy of Holies, the place into which the High Priest went of old is demolished, and the veil is rent. The most holy place is now the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; He was anointed that God might dwell in Him. Together with Christ the Holy of Holies is now His church, and that church was anointed or dedicated when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost, to be with us, and to abide in us forever. That was a noble part of the setting up of the great kingdom of righteousness, when tongues of fire descended and sat upon each of the disciples, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. This is Christ's work, for which He came, and for which He ascended on high, to set up the truth, to set up righteousness, and to make it everlasting by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church of God in the midst of the sons of men. Thus you see, in six ways, which condense themselves into two, our Lord set about His lordly enterprise. Heaven rings with the praises of the Messiah who came to destroy the work of sin, and to set up the kingdom of righteousness in the midst of the world. II. Let us now inquire as to our participation in these two works. I will put a few questions as briefly as I can, and I pray God, the Holy Spirit, that every one of us may honestly answer them. 673 First, dear brethren, Christ has come into the world to do all this good work, but has He done it for us? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." What for? "That whoever believes in Him might not perish." There is a general aspect to the atonement, but there is quite as surely a special object

in it. God loved the world, and therefore He gave His Son. But to what end did He give His Son? Here is the answer, "That whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." There was a special eye to believers. Come, then, have you believed? The first question that is to help you to answer that inquiry is this-Is your sin shut up as to its power? "Sin shall not have dominion over you" if Christ is in you. How is it between your soul and evil? Is there war or peace? Once you loved sin; you could not have enough of it. Is it so now? Do you still delight in evil? For if you do, the love of God is not in you. Can you still put forth your hand to iniquity as you once did? Then do not pretend that Christ has done anything for you. If you are a Believer, your sin may not be absolutely dead, but it is shut up for dead: it is fast held in the condemned cell. It may still breathe, but it is crucified with Christ. How it tugs to get its hands loose from the nails! How it struggles to get its feet down from the tree! But it cannot, for He that nailed it there knew how to drive nails, and how to fasten the offender to the tree. Do you begin to grow weary of iniquity? Is it distasteful and unpleasant to you? And when looking over the day you perceive where you have spoken unadvisedly or acted hastily, or in any other way soiled your character, do you feel as if you would gladly wash out every spot with tears? If it be so, Christ has begun with you: He has come to shut up your sin, and to end its reign: it shall no more have dominion over you. It may be in you, but it shall not be on the throne: it may threaten you, but it shall not command you: it may grieve you, but it shall not destroy you. You are under another Master: you serve the Lord Christ. Judge you how this matter fares with you. The next question arising out of the text is, Is your sin sealed up as to its condemning power? Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit in your soul, saying to you, "Go in peace; your sins which are many, are all forgiven you?" Have you clutched that promise, "He that believes in Him is not condemned?" Have you believed in Jesus? Has that blessed word, "There is therefore now no condemnation," breathed a deep calm over your spirit? Some of you do not know what I mean; but others of you do. Oh, what bliss, what a Heaven it is to know, "I am washed in the blood of the Lamb-I am delivered, clean delivered from every sin, past, present, and 674 to come, as to any possibility of its being laid to my charge. Christ has put my sins into a bag, sealed them up, hurled that bag into the sea, and flung them out of existence, and they are gone, never to be found again any more." He has made an end of sin. Come, dear hearer, do you know anything about this? If you do not, it is the one thing you want to know, and until you know it you will never have any rest to your spirit, but you will be tossed to and fro as upon a raging sea. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." There is no peace to any of us till Christ has made an end of our sin. How is it with your hearts? And next, is your sin covered as to its appearance before God? Has the Lord Jesus Christ made such an expiation for your sin that it no longer glares in the presence of the Most High, but you can come unto God without dread? Can you hopefully say, "Lord God, you see no sin in me, for You has covered me with the righteousness of Christ, and washed me in His blood?" Did you ever feel the sweetness of that? It is rapture! I can recollect times when I have been driven to doubt whether it could be true, it seemed too good; and then again, when my faith has revived I have said, "Good as it is, it is true, for it is like God to do these great marvels, and to put away the sins of His people and cover them once for all." Oh then there has been a joy within my spirit not at all like the joy of harvest, or the joy of marriage, or the joy of a first-born child in the house. No; it is a joy like the bliss of angels, deep, unspeakable, mysterious, divine. Have you ever felt it? You will feel constantly if Christ comes to dwell with you: you will then be assured in your heart that He has made an end of your sin. Further, let me question you about the next point. Has the Lord Jesus Christ made you righteous? Do you Glory in His blood and righteousness, and do you now seek after that which is pure and holy? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man soweth, that shall He also reap." If we continue in sin we shall perish in sin. He is saved who comes out from evil and seeks to live honestly, righteously, soberly, after the manner of the godly and the saintly. Is it so with you? Is there a great and deep change in your spirit, so that you now love those good things which once you despised and ridiculed in others? Oh, if you cannot answer my poor questions, how will you stand before the judgment-seat of God when He shall test you as with fire? Furthermore, are the prophecies and visions sealed up as to you? Are they fulfilled in you? When God declares that He will wash us and make us 675 whiter than snow, is it so with you? When He declares that He will cleanse our blood, which has not yet been cleansed, is it so with you? When He says, "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them: and I will write my Law upon their hearts"; is it so with you? Are you fishing about after empty dreams and fancies, or have you laid hold upon the old prophecies and the ancient visions, and discovered the substance of them to be deeply worked in your very heart? Nor is this all: are you anointed to be most holy to the Lord? Are you set apart that you may serve Him? Has the Holy Spirit come upon you, giving you a desire to

do good? Have you a wish to rescue the perishing, a longing to bring the wandering sheep back to the great Shepherd's fold? Is the Spirit of God so upon you today that you can truly say, "I am not my own; I am bought with a price?" Jesus, the Messiah, came to do all these things, and if He has not done them to you, then He has not come to you; you are still a stranger, still far off from Him. Oh, may the Lord make you desperately unhappy till you come to Jesus: may you never know what quiet means till you find it at the pierced feet! From this hour may you breathe sighs, and may every pulse be a new agony of spirit, till at last you can say, "Yes, the Messiah was cut off, and cut off for me, and all that He came to do He did for me, and I am a sharer and a partaker in it all." **III.** Lastly, we have but a brief interval in which to speak of the results of participating in all this. The results! I want a week to speak of them in. They are, first of all, security. How can that man be lost whose transgression is finished, and whose sin has ceased to be? What is there for Him to dread on earth, in Heaven, or in Hell? If Christ has put away my sin, I cannot die; if Christ has washed away my guilt, I cannot be condemned; I am safe, and may triumphantly sing- *More happy, but not more secure, The glorified spirits in Heaven. Wherefore, rejoice in this.* And now, inasmuch as you are secure, you are also reconciled to God, and made to delight in Him. God is your friend and you are one of the friends of God. Rejoice in that hallowed friendship, and live in the assurance of it. Now you have the anointing, do not doubt it. Christ has made it your by His death. The Spirit of the Lord resteth upon you; you are fit for service; set about it without further question. The anointing is upon you; you are most holy to the Lord; so let your life be wholly consecrated. Your heart 676 ought to be, and shall be by the Spirit's power, as holy as that innermost shrine into which no unauthorized foot ever intruded, into which only once in the year the High Priest went, and then not without blood. God dwells in you, and you in God. Oh, blessed consequences-you shall soon dwell with Him forever! But now suppose when I put the question you had to shake your head and say, "No, it is not so with me." Then hear these few sentences. If the Messiah has not done this for you, then your sin will be finished in another way-sin, when it is finished, bring forth death. An awful death awaits you-death unto God, and purity and joy. Woe, woe, to you. Death on the pale horse pursues you, and will overtake you soon. Then will one woe be past, but another will follow it. If Christ has never made an end of your sin, then mark this, your sin will soon make an end of you, and all your hopes, your pleasure, your boasting, your peace will perish. Oh, terrible end of all that is hopeful within you. You shall be a desolation forever and forever. Has not Christ reconciled you? Then mark this, your enmity will increase. There is no peace between God and you now, but soon will the war begin in which He must conquer, and you, never yielding, will continue forever more to hate God, and to find in that hate your utmost torment, your fiercest Hell. Have you never had the righteousness of Christ brought in? Then mark this, your unrighteousness will last forever. One of these days God will say, "He that is unholy, let Him be unholy still: He that is filthy, let Him be filthy still." That will be the most awful thing that can ever happen to you. You have heard of the fable of Medusa's head: whoever looked upon it when it was held up was turned to stone, and one day, sinner, you shall look at death, and it will petrify your character so that it shall be forever what it is when death came to you. Where death finds you, there judgment shall find you, and there eternity shall leave you. Oh, wretched soul, to have nothing to do with the everlasting righteousness of Christ! Are not the prophecies fulfilled in you, the prophecies of mercy? Then listen. The prophecies of woe will be written large across your history. "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, with all the nations that forget God." Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. I will not detain you with many such words of terror, but through the Old Testament they roll like peals of thunder, nor is the New Testament less stern towards Him that goes on in His iniquity and will not turn unto the Christ. 677 Lastly, will you never be anointed to be most holy? Then remember, holiness and you will stand at a distance forever, and to be far off from holiness must necessarily be to be far off from Heaven and happiness. Sin is misery; in it lies both the root and the fruit of eternal woe. Purity is paradise: to be right with God is to be right with yourself and all created things; but if you will not be holy, then must you by force of your own choice be forever tossed about upon the restless sea of wretchedness. God save you, brothers and sisters; God save you for Christ's sake. Amen. 678

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ASK AND HAVE. NO. 1682 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1ST, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.”-James 4:2, 3. MAY these striking words be made profitable to us by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Man is a creature abounding in wants, and ever restless, and therefore His heart is full of desires. I can hardly imagine a man existing who has not many desires of some kind or another. Man is comparable to the sea anemone with its multitude of tentacles which are always hunting in the water for food; or like certain plants which send out tendrils, seeking after the means of climbing. The poet says, “Man never is, but always to be, blest.” He steers for which He thinks to be His port, but as yet He is tossed about on the waves. One of these days He hopes to find His heart’s delight, and 83 He continues to desire with more or less expectancy. This fact appertains both to the worst of men and the best of men. In bad men desires corrupt into lusts: they long after that which is selfish, sensual, and consequently evil. The current of their desires sets strongly in a wrong direction. These lustings, in many cases, become extremely intense: they make the man their slave; they domineer over His judgment; they stir Him up to violence: He fights and wars, perhaps He literally kills: in God’s sight, who counts anger murder, He does kill full often. Such is the strength of His desires that they are commonly called passions; and when these passions are fully excited, then the man Himself struggles vehemently, so that the kingdom of the devil suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. 679 Meanwhile in gracious men there are desires also. To rob the saints of their desires would be to injure them greatly, for by these they rise out of their lower selves. The desires of the gracious are after the best things: things pure and peaceable, laudable and elevating. They desire God’s Glory, and therefore their desires spring from higher motives than those which inflame the unrenewed mind, Such desires in Christian men are frequently very fervent and forcible; they ought always to be so; and those desires begotten of the Spirit of God stir the renewed nature, exciting and stimulating it, and making the man to groan and to be ill anguish and in travail until He can attain that which God has taught Him to long for. The lusting of the wicked and the holy desiring of the righteous have their own ways of seeking gratification. The lusting of the wicked develops itself in contention; it kills, and desires to have it fights and it wars; while on the other hand the desire of the righteous when rightly guided betakes itself to a far hotter course for achieving its purpose, for it expresses itself in prayer fervent and importunate. The godly man when lull of desire asks and receives at the hand of God. At this time I shall by God’s help try to set forth from our text, first, the poverty of lusting— “You lust and have not.” Secondly, I shall sadly show the poverty of many professing Christians in spiritual things, especially in their church capacity; they also long for and have not. Thirdly, we shall speak in closing, upon the wealth with which holy desires will be rewarded if we will but use the right means. If we ask we shall receive. **I.** First, consider THE POVERTY OF LUSTING— “You lust, and have not.” Carnal lustings, however strong they may be, do not in many cases obtain that which they seek after: as says the text, “You desire to have, and cannot obtain.” The man longs to be happy, but He is not; He pines to be great, but He grows meaner every day; He aspires after this and after that which He thinks will content Him, but He is still unsatisfied: He is like the troubled sea which cannot rest. One way or another His life is disappointment; He labors as in the very fire, but the result is vanity and vexation of spirit. How can it He otherwise? If we sow the wind, must we not reap the whirlwind, and nothing else? Or, if perhaps the strong lustings of an active, talented, persevering man do give Him what He seeks after, yet how soon He loses it. He has it so that He has it not. The pursuit is toilsome, but the possession is a dream. He sits down to eat, and lo! the feast is snatched away, the cup vanishes when it is at His lip. He wins to lose; He builds, and His sandy foundation slips from under His tower, and it lies in ruins. He that 680 conquered kingdoms, died discontented on a lone rock in mid ocean; and He who revived His empire, fell never to rise again. As Jonah’s gourd withered in a night, so have empires fallen on a sudden, and their lords have died in exile. So that what men obtain by warring and fighting is an estate with a short lease; the obtaining is so temporary that it still stands true, “they lust, and have not.” Or if such men have gifts and power enough to retain that which they have won, yet in another sense they have it not while they have it, for the pleasure which they looked for in it is not there. They pluck the apple, and it turns out to be one of those Dead Sea apples which crumble to ashes in the hand. The man is rich, but God takes away from Him the power to enjoy His wealth. By His lustings and His warrings the licentious man at last obtains the object of His cravings, and after a moment’s gratification, He loathes that which He so passionately lusted for. He longs for the tempting pleasure, seizes it, and crushes it by the eager grasp. See the boy hunting the

butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, while He pursues it ardently. At last it is within reach, and with His cap He knocks it down; but when He picks up the poor remains, He finds the painted fly spoiled by the act which won it. Thus may it be said of multitudes of the sons of men— “You lust, and have not.” Their poverty is set forth in a threefold manner. “You kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain,” “You have not, because you ask not,” “You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss.” If the lusters fail, it is not because they did not set to work to gain their ends; for according to their nature they used the most practical means within their reach, and used them eagerly, too. According to the mind of the flesh the only way to obtain a thing is to fight for it and James sets this down as the reason of all fighting. “Why come wars and fightings among you? Come they not therefore, even of your lusts that war in your members?” This is the form of effort of which we read, “You fight and war, yet you have not.” To this mode of operation men cling from age to age. If a man is to get along in this world they tell me He must contend with His neighbors, and push them from their vantage ground; He must not be particular how they are to thrive, but He must mind the main chance on His own account, and take care to rise, no matter how many He may tread upon. He cannot expect to get on if He loves His neighbor as Himself. It is a fair fight, and every man must look to Himself. Do you think I am satirical? I may be, but I have heard this sort of talk from men who meant it. So they take to fighting, and that fighting is often victorious, for according to the 681 text “you kilt”—that is to say, they so fight that they overthrow their adversary, and there is an end of Him. They are men of great strength, young lions that can go forth and rend the prey, and yet it is said of them that they “lack and suffer hunger,” while they that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing. These lusters are unrestrained in their efforts to gain their point; they stick at nothing, they kill, and desire to have. Moreover, they fight with great perseverance, for the text says, “You fight and war.” Now, war is a continuation of the act of fighting, prolonging it from campaign to campaign, and conducting it by the rules of military art till the victory is won. Multitudes of men are living for themselves, competing here and warring there, fighting for their own hand with the utmost perseverance. They have little choice as to how they will do it. Conscience is not allowed to interfere in their transactions, but the old advice rings in their ears, “Get money; get money honestly if you can, but by any means get money.” No matter though body and soul He ruined, and others be deluged with misery, fight on, for there is no discharge in this war. If you are to win you must fight; and everything is fair in war. So they muster their forces, they struggle with their fellows, they make the battle of life hotter and hotter, they banish love, and brand tenderness as folly, and yet with all their schemes they obtain not the end of life in any true sense. Well says James, “You kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; you fight and war, yet you have not.” When men who are greatly set upon their selfish purposes do not succeed they may possibly hear that the reason of their non-success is “Because you ask not.” Is, then, success to be achieved by asking? So the text seems to hint, and so the righteous find it. Why does not this man of intense desires take to asking? The reason is, first, because it is unnatural to the natural man to pray; as well expect Him to fly. He despises the idea of supplication. “Pray?” says He. “No, I want to be at work. I cannot waste time on devotions; prayers are not practical, I want to fight my way. While you are praying I shall have beaten my opponent. I go to my counting-house, and leave you to your Bibles and your prayers.” He has no mind for asking of God. He declares that none but canting hypocrites care to pray, thus confessing that if He were to pray He would be a canting hypocrite. As for Him, His praying is of quite another sort, and woe to those who come into His clutches; they will find that with Him business is business, and pretty sharp business too. He will never stoop to pray, He is too proud. Goreliance He does not understand; self-reliance is His word. Self is His god, 682 and to His god He looks for success. He is so proud that He reckons Himself to be His own Providence; His own right hand and His active arm shall get to Him the victory. When He is very liberal in His views He admits that though He does not pray, yet there may be some good in it, for it quiets people’s minds, and makes them more comfortable: but as to any answer ever coming to prayer, He scouts the idea, and talks both philosophically and theologically about the absurdity of supposing that God alters His course of conduct out of respect to the prayers of men and women. “Ridiculous,” says He, “utterly ridiculous;” and, therefore, in His own great wisdom He returns to His fighting and His warring, for by such means He hopes to attain His end. Yet He obtains not. The whole history of mankind shows the failure of evil lustings to obtain their object. For a while the carnal man goes on fighting and warring; but by-and-by He changes His mind, for He is ill, or frightened. His purpose is the same, but if it cannot be achieved one way He will try another. If He must ask, well, He will ask; He will become religious, and do good to Himself in that way. He finds that some religious people prosper in the world, and that even sincere

Christians are by no means fools in business, and, therefore, He will try their plan. And now He comes under the third censure of our text—“You ask and receive not.” What is the reason why the man who is the slave of His lusts obtains not His desire, even when He takes to asking? The reason is because His asking is a mere matter of form, His heart is not in His worship. He buys a book containing what are called forms of prayer, and He repeats these, for repeating is easier than praying, and demands no thought. I have no objection to your using a form of prayer if you pray with it; but I know a great many who do not pray with it, but only repeat the form. Imagine what would come to our families if instead of our children speaking to us frankly when they have any need they were always to think it requisite to go into the library and hunt up a form of prayer, and read it to us. Surely there would be an end to all home-feeling and love; life would move in fetters. Our household would become a kind of boarding-school, or barracks, and all would be parade and formality, instead of happy eyes looking up with loving trust into fond eyes that delight to respond. Many spiritual men use a form, but carnal men are pretty sure to do so, for they end in the form. This man’s prayer is asking amiss, because it is entirely for Himself. He wants to prosper that He may enjoy Himself; He wants to He great simply that He may be admired: His prayer begins and ends with self. Look at the indecency of such a prayer even if it He sincere. When a man so 683 prays He asks God to He His servant, and gratify His desires; no, worse than that, He wants God to join Him in the service of His lusts. He will gratify His lusts, and God shall come and help Him to do it. Such prayer is blasphemous, but a large quantity of it is offered, and it must be one of the most God-provoking things that Heaven ever beholds. No, if a man will live to Himself and His lusts, let Him do so, and the further He gets off from God the more consistent He will He. Let Him not mouth the Lord’s prayer as though God were His father, or drag in Christ’s sacred name to sanctify His greed, or invoke the Spirit’s blessed power in connection with His personal aggrandizement, or His selfish ambition. If He does so, He will be no better off than He was at the beginning: He will ask, and have not. His asking will miss because He asks amiss, that He may consume it upon His lusts. If your desires are the longings of fallen nature, if your desires begin and end with your own self, and if the chief end for which you live is not to glorify God, but to glorify yourself, then you may fight, but you shall not have; you may rise up early and sit up late, but nothing worth gaining shall come of it. Remember how the Lord has spoken in the thirty-seventh Psalm: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider His place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. So much upon the poverty of lusting. II. Secondly, I have now before me a serious business, and that is, to show HOW CHRISTIAN CHURCHES MAY SUFFER SPIRITUAL POVERTY, so that they too “desire to have, and cannot obtain.” Of course the Christian seeks higher things than the worldling, else were He not worthy of that name at all. At least professedly His object is to obtain the true riches, and to glorify God in spirit and in truth. Yes, but look, dear brethren, all churches do not get what they desire. We have to complain, not here and there, but in many places, of churches that are nearly asleep, and are gradually declining. Of course they find excuses. The population is dwindling, or another place of worship is attracting the people. There is always an excuse handy when a man wants one; but still there stands the fact—public worship is almost deserted in some places, the ministry has no rallying power about it, and those who put in an appearance are discontented or indifferent. In such churches there are no conversions. If they had half-a-dozen added to them in a year, they would want to sing the “Hallelujah Chorus”; but as to bringing thousands to Christ, they secretly fear that this would be an 684 undesirable thing, for it might involve excitement, and they are so proper that they dread anything of that sort. To do nothing, and let men be damned, is in their judgment proper and respectable, but to He alive and energetic is a perilous state of affairs, for it might lead to fanaticism and indecorum. They are specially afraid of anything like “sensationalism.” That ugly-looking word they set before us very much as the Chinese try to frighten their enemies by painting horrible faces on their shields. Never mind that terrible word; it will hurt no one. These churches “have not,” for no truth is made prevalent through their zeal, no sin is smitten, no holiness promoted, nothing is done by which God is glorified. And what is the reason of it? First, even among professed Christians, there may be the pursuit of desirable things in a wrong method. “You fight and war, yet you have not,” Have not churches thought to prosper by competing with other churches? At such and such a place of worship they have a very clever man: we must get a clever man, too; in fact, He must be a little cleverer than our neighbor’s hero. That is the thing—a clever man! Ah me, that we should live in an age in which we talk about clever men in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Alas, that this holy service should be thought to depend upon human cleverness! Churches have

competed with each other in architecture, in music, in apparel, and in social status. The leaders fancy that to succeed they must have something more handsome, artistic, or expensive than their neighbors: therefore they build Gothic edifices in which the minister's voice gets up among the timbers, and is never properly heard, or else they purchase an organ with every stop except the full one. The opinion would seem to be widely spread that there is a deal of Grace in an organ. To pray to God with a windmill like the Tartars would be very absurd; but to praise God with wind passing through a set of pipes is eminently proper. I never have seen the distinction, and do not see it now. Organ or no organ is not now the question, but I speak of instances in which these machines are set up as a matter of rivalry. Is it not the design of many to succeed by a finer building, better music, and a cleverer ministry than others? Is it not as much a matter of competition as a shop front and a dressed window are with drapers? Is this the way by which the Kingdom of God is to grow up among us? In some cases there is a measure of bitterness in the rivalry. It is not pleasant to little minds to see other churches prospering more than their own. They may be more earnest than we are, and be doing God's work better, but we are too apt to turn a jealous eye towards them, and we would rather they did not get on quite so well. "Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy?" If we could see a disturbance among them, so that they would break up and be ecclesiastically killed, we would not rejoice. Of course not; but neither should we suffer any deadly sorrow. In some churches an evil spirit lingers. I bring no railing accusation, and, therefore, say no more than this: God will never bless such means and such a spirit; those who give way to them will desire to have, but never obtain. Meanwhile, what is the reason why they do not have a blessing? The text says, "Because you ask not"; I am afraid there are churches which do not ask. Prayer in all forms is too much neglected. Private prayer is allowed to decay. I shall put it to the conscience of every man how far secret prayer is attended to; and how much of fellowship with God there is in secret among the members of our churches. Certainly its healthy existence is vital to church prosperity. Of family prayer it is more easy to judge, for we can see it. I fear that in these days many have quite given up family prayer. I pray you do not imitate them. I wish you were all of the same mind as the Scotch laborer who obtained a situation in the house of a wealthy farmer who was known to pay well, and all His friends envied Him that He had gone to live in such a service. In a short time He returned to His native village, and when they asked Him why He had left His situation, He replied that He "could not live in a house which had no roof to it." A house without prayer is a house without a roof. We cannot expect blessings on your churches if we have none on your families. As to the congregational prayer, the gathering together in what we call our Prayer Meetings, is there not a falling off? In many cases the prayermeeting is despised, and looked down upon as a sort of second-rate gathering. There are members of churches who are never present, and it does not prick their consciences that they stay away. Some congregations mix up the Prayer Meeting with a lecture, so as to hold only one service in the week. I read the other day an excuse for all this: it is said that people are better at home, attending to family concerns. This is idle talk, for who among us wishes people to neglect their domestic concerns? It will be found that those attend to their own concerns best who are diligent to get everything in order, so that they may go out to assemblies for worship. Negligence of the house of God is often an index of negligence of their own houses. They are not bringing their children to Christ, I am persuaded, or they would bring them up to the services. Anyhow, the prayers of the church measure its prosperity. If we restrain prayer we restrain the blessing. Our true success as churches can only be had by asking it of the Lord. Are we not prepared to reform and amend in this matter? Oh for Zion's travelling hour to come, when an agony of prayer shall move the whole body of the faithful. But some reply, "There are Prayer Meetings, and we do ask for the blessing, and yet it comes not." Is not the explanation to be found in the other part of the text, "You have not, because you ask amiss"? When prayermeetings become a mere form, when brethren stand up and waste the time with their long orations, instead of speaking to God in earnest and burning words, when there is no expectation of a blessing, when the prayer is cold and chill, then nothing will come of it. He who prays without fervency does not pray at all. We cannot commune with God, who is a consuming fire, if there is no fire in our prayers. Many prayers fail of their errand because there is no faith in them. Prayers which are filled with doubt, are requests for refusal. Imagine that you wrote to a friend and said, "Dear friend, I am in great trouble, and I therefore tell you, and ask for your help, because it seems right to do so. But though I thus write, I have no belief that you will send me any help; indeed, I should be mightily surprised if you did, and should speak of it as a great wonder." Will you get the help, think you? I should say your friend would be sensible enough to observe the little confidence which you have in Him; and He would reply that, as you did not expect anything, He would not astonish you. Your opinion of His generosity is so low that He does not feel

called upon to put Himself out of the way on your account. When prayers are of that kind you cannot wonder if we “have not, because we ask amiss.” Moreover, if our praying, however earnest and believing it may be, is a mere asking that our church may prosper because we want to Glory in its prosperity, if we want to see our own denomination largely increased, and its respectability improved, that we may share the honors thereof, then our desires are nothing but lustings after all. Can it be that the children of God manifest the same emulations, jealousies, and ambitious as men of the world? Shall religious work be a matter of rivalry and contest? Ah, then, the prayers which seek success will have no acceptance at the mercy-seat. God will not hear us, but bid us begone, for He cares not for the Petitions of which self is the object. “You have not, because you ask not, or because you ask amiss.” 687 **III.** Thirdly, I have a much more pleasing work to do, and that is to hint at THE WEALTH WHICH AWAITS THE USE OF THE RIGHT MEANS, namely, of asking g rightly of God. I invite your most solemn attention to this matter, for it is vitally important. And my first observation is this, how very small after all is this demand which God makes of us. Ask! Why, it is the least thing He can possibly expect of us, and it is no more than we ordinarily require of those who need help from us. We expect a poor man to ask; and if He does not we lay the blame of His lack upon Himself. If God will give for the asking, and we remain poor, who is to blame? Is not the blame most grievous? Does it not look as if we were out of order with God, so that we will not even condescend to ask a favor of Him? Surely there must be in our hearts a lurking enmity to Him, or else instead of its being an unwelcome necessity it would be regarded as a great delight. However, brethren, whether we like it or not, remember, asking is the rule of the kingdom. “Ask, and you shall receive.” It is a rule that never will be altered in anybody’s case. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the elder brother of the family, but God has not relaxed the rule for Him. Remember this text: Jehovah says to His own Son, “Ask of me and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” If the royal and divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that He may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favor. Why should it be? What reason can be pleaded why we should be exempted from prayer? What argument can there be why we should be deprived of the privilege and delivered from the necessity of supplication? I can see none: can you? God will bless Elijah and send rain on Israel, but Elijah must pray for it. If the chosen nation is to prosper Samuel must plead for it. If the Jews are to be delivered Daniel must intercede. God will bless Paul, and the nations shall He converted through Him, but Paul must pray. Pray He did without ceasing; His epistles show that He expected nothing except by asking for it. If you may have everything by asking, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is, and I beseech you to abound in it. Moreover, it is clear to even the most shallow thinker that there are some things necessary for the church of God which we cannot get otherwise than by prayer. You can get that clever man I spoke about—the less, perhaps, you pray about Him the better; and that new church, and the new organ, 688 and the choir, you can also get without prayer; but you cannot get the heavenly anointing: the gift of God is not to be purchased with money. Some of the members of a church in a primitive village in America thought that they would raise a congregation by hanging up a very handsome chandelier in the meeting-house. People talked about this chandelier, and some went to see it, but the light of it soon grew dim. You can buy all sorts of ecclesiastical furniture, you can purchase any kind of paint, brass, muslin, blue, scarlet, and fine linen, together with flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, and all kinds of music—you can get these without prayer; in fact, it would be an impertinence to pray about such rubbish; but you cannot get the Holy Spirit without prayer. “He blows where He wills.” He will not be brought near by any process or method at our command apart from asking. There are no mechanical means which will make up for His absence. If the Holy Spirit be not theme, what is the use of that clever man of your? Will anybody be converted? Will any soul be comforted? Will any children of God be renewed in spiritual life without the Holy Spirit? Neither can you get communion with God without prayer. He that will not pray cannot have communion with God. Yet more, there is no real, spiritual communion of the church with its own members when prayer is suspended. Prayer must be in action, or else those blessings which are vitally essential to the success of the church can never come to it. Prayer is the great door of spiritual blessing, and if you close it you shut out the favor. Beloved brethren, do you not think that this asking which God requires is a very great privilege? Suppose there were an edict published that you must not pray: that would be a hardship indeed. If prayer rather interrupted than increased the stream of blessing, it would be a sad calamity. Did you ever see a dumb man under a strong excitement, or suffering great pain, and therefore anxious to speak? It is a terrible sight to see: the face is distorted, the body is fearfully agitated; the mute writhes and labors in dire distress. Every limb is contorted with a desire to help the tongue, but it

cannot break its bonds. Hollow sounds come from the breast, and stutterings of ineffectual speech awaken attention, though they cannot reach so far as expression. The poor creature is in pain unspeakable. Suppose we were in our spiritual nature full of strong desires, and yet dumb as to the tongue of prayer, methinks it would be one of the direst afflictions that could possibly befall us; we should be terribly maimed and dismembered, and our agony would be overwhelming. Blessed be His name, the Lord ordains a way of utterance, and bids our heart speak out to Him. Beloved, we must pray: it seems to me that it ought to be the first thing we ever think of doing when in need. If men were right with God, and loved Him truly, they would pray as naturally as they breathe. I hope some of us are right with God, and do not need to be driven to prayer, for it has become an instinct of our nature. I was told by a friend yesterday the story of a little German boy; a story which His pastor loved to tell. The dear little child believed His God, and delighted in prayer. His schoolmaster had urged the scholars to pray at school in time, and this child always tried to be so; but His father and mother were dilatory people, and one morning, through their fault alone, He just left the door as the clock struck the hour for the school to open. A friend standing near heard the little one cry, "Dear God, do grant I may be in time for school." It struck the listener that for once prayer could not be heard, for the child had quite a little walk before Him, and the hour was already come. He was curious to see the result. Now it so happened this morning that the master, in trying to open the schoolhouse door turned the key the wrong way, and could not stir the bolt, and they had to send for a smith to open the door. Hence a delay, and just as the door opened our little friend entered with the rest, all in good time. God has many ways of granting right desires. It was most natural that instead of crying and whining a child that really loved God should speak to Him about His trouble. Should it not be natural to you and to me spontaneously and at once to tell the Lord our sorrows and ask for help? Should not this be the first resort? Alas, according to Scripture and observation, and I grieve to add, according to experience, prayer is often the last thing. Look at the sick man in the one hundred and seventh Psalm. Friends bring Him various foods, but His soul abhorreth all manner of meat: the physicians do what they can to heal Him, but He grows worse and worse, and draws near to the gates of death: "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." That was put last which should have been first. "Send for the doctor. Prepare Him nourishment. Wrap Him in flannels!" All very well, but when will you pray to God? God will be called upon when the case grows desperate. Look at the mariners described in the same psalm. The barque is well-near wrecked. "They mount up to the Heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble." Still they do all they can to ride out the storm; but when "they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end: then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Oh, yes; God is sought unto when we are driven into a corner and ready to perish. And what a mercy it is that He hears such laggard prayers, and delivers the suppliants out of their troubles. But ought it to be so with you and with me, and with churches of Christ? Ought not the first impulse of a declining church to be, "Let us pray day and night until the Lord appears for us; let us meet together with one accord in one place, and never separate until the blessing descends upon us"? Do you know, brothers, what great things are to be had for the asking? Have you ever thought of it? Does it not stimulate you to pray fervently? All Heaven lies before the grasp of the asking man; all the promises of God are rich and inexhaustible, and their fulfillment is to be had by prayer. Jesus says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," and Paul says, "All things are your, and you are Christ's." Who would not pray when all things are thus handed over to us? Yes, and promises that were first made to special individuals, are all made to us if we know how to plead them in prayer. Israel went through the Red Sea ages ago, and yet we read in the sixty-sixth Psalm, "There did we rejoice in Him." Only Jacob was present at Peniel, and yet Hosea says "There He spoke with us." Paul wants to give us a great promise for times of need, and He quotes from the Old Testament, "For He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." Where did Paul get that? That is the assurance which the Lord gave to Joshua: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Surely the promise was for Joshua only. No; it is for us. "No Scripture is of private interpretation"; all Scripture is ours. See how God appears unto Solomon at night, and He says, "Ask what I shall give you." Solomon asks for wisdom. "Oh, that is Solomon," say you. Listen, "If any man lack wisdom, let Him ask of God." God gave Solomon wealth, and fame into the bargain. Is not that peculiar to Solomon? No, for it is said of the true wisdom, "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor"; and is not this much like our Savior's word, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Thus you see the Lord's promises have many fulfillments, and they are waiting now to pour their treasures into the lap of prayer. Does not this lift prayer up to a high level, when God is willing to repeat the biographies of His saints in

us when He is waiting to be gracious, and to load us with His benefits? I will mention another truth which ought to make us pray, and that is, that if we ask, God will give to us much more than we ask. Abraham asked of God that Ishmael might live before Him. He thought "Surely this is the promised seed: I cannot expect that Sarah will bear a child in liner old age. God has promised nine a seed, and surely it must be this child of Hagar. Olin that Ishmael might live before you." God granted Him that, lint He gave Him Isaac as well, and all the blessings of the covenant. There is Jacob, He kneels down to pray, and asks the Lord to give Him bread to eat and raiment to put on. But what did His God give Him? When He came back to Bethel He had two bands, thousands of sheep and camels, and much wealth. God had heard Him and done exceeding abundantly above what He asked. It is said of David, "The king asked life of you, and you gave Him length of days," yes, gave Him not only length of (lays Himself, bunt a throne for His sons throughout all generations, till David went in and sat before the Lord, overpowered with the Lord's goodness. "Well," say you, "but is that true of New Testament prayers? "Yes, it is so with the New Testament pleaders, whether saints or sinners. They brought a man to Christ sick of the palsy, and asked Him to heal Him, and He said, "Son your sins be forgiven you." He had not asked that, had He? No, but God gives greater things than we ask for. Hear that poor, dying thief's humble prayer, "Lord, remember me when you earnest into your kingdom." Jesus replies, "To-day shall you be with me in Paradise." He had not dreamed of such an honor. Even the story of the Prodigal teaches us this. He resolved to say, "I am not worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants." What is the answer? "This my son was dead, and is alive again: bring forth the best robe and put it on Him; put a ring on His hands, and shoes on His feet." Once get into the position of an asker, and you shall have what you never asked for, and never thought to receive. The text is often misquoted: "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask, or even think." We could ask, if we were but more sensible and had more faith, for the very greatest things, but God is willing to give us infinitely more than we do ask. At this moment I believe that God's church might have inconceivable blessings if she were but ready now to pray. Did you ever notice that wonderful picture in the eighth chapter of the Revelation? It is worthy of careful notice. I shall not attempt to explain it in its connection, but merely point to the picture as it hangs on the wall by itself. Read on- "When He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour." Silence in Heaven there were no anthems, no hallelujahs, not an angel stirred a wing. Silence in Heaven! Can you imagine it? And look! 692 You see seven angels standing before God, and to them are given seven trumpets. There they wait, trumpet in hand, but there is no sound. Not a single note of cheer or warning during an interval which was sufficiently long to provoke lively emotion, but short enough to prevent impatience. Silence unbroken, profound, awful reigned in Heaven. Action is suspended in Heaven, the center of all activity. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer." There He stands, but no offering is presented: everything has come to a standstill. What can possibly set it in motion? "And there was given unto Him much incense, that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." Prayer is presented together with the merit of the Lord Jesus, Now, see what will happen. "And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hands." That is the key of the whole matter, Now you will see: the angel begins to work: He takes the censer, fills it with the altar fire, and flings it down upon the earth, "and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquake." "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." Everything is moving now. As soon as the prayers of the saints were mixed with the incense of Christ's eternal merit, and begun to smoke up from the altar, then prayer became effectual. Down fell the living coals among the sons of men, while the angels of the divine Providence, who stood still before, sound their thunderblasts, and the will of the Lord is done. Such is the scene in Heaven in a certain measure even to this day. Bring here the incense. Bring here the prayers of the saints! Set them on fire with Christ's merits, and on the golden altar let them smoke before the Most High: then shall we see the Lord at work, and His will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven. God send His blessing with these words, for Christ's sake. Amen. 693

THE GREAT CROSS-BEARER AND HIS FOLLOWERS. NO. 1683 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 8TH, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. *"And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him."-Mark 15:20. "And He bearing His cross went forth."-John 19:17. "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear cross."-Mark 15:21.*

WHEN our Lord had been condemned to die, the execution of His sentence was hurried. The Jews were in great haste to shed His blood: so intense was the enmity of the chief priests and Pharisees that every moment of delay was wearisome to them. Besides, it was the day of the Passover, and they wished to have this matter finished before they went with hypocritical piety to celebrate the festival of Israel's deliverance. We do not wonder at their eagerness, for they could not bear themselves while He lived, since His very presence reprov'd them for their falsehood and hypocrisy. But at Pilate we do wonder, and herein He is much to be blamed. In all civilized countries there is usually an interval between the sentencing of the prisoner and the time of His putting to death. As the capital sentence is irreversible, it is well to have a little space in which possible evidence may be forthcoming, which may prevent the fatal stroke. In some countries we have thought that there has been a cruelly long delay between the sentence and the execution, but with the Romans it was usual to allow the reasonable respite of ten days. Now, I do not say that it was incumbent upon Pilate according to Roman Law to have allowed ten days to a Jew, who had not the rights of Roman citizenship; but I do say that He might have pleaded the custom of His country, and so have secured a delay, and afterwards He might have released His prisoner. It was within His reach to have done so, and He was culpable, as He was all along, in thus yielding to the clamor for an immediate execution for no other reason than this, that He was "willing to content the people." When once we begin to make the wishes of other men our Law we know not to what extremity of criminality we may be led; and so the Savior's hasty execution is due to Pilate's vacillating spirit, and to the insatiable blood-thirstiness of the scribes and Pharisees. Being given over to death, our Savior was led away; and I suppose the painters are right when they put a rope about His neck or His loins; for the idea of being led in an open street would seem to imply some sort of bond: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter." Alas, that the Emancipator of our race should be led forth as a captive to die! The direction in which He is led is outside the city. He must not die in Jerusalem, though multitudes of prophets had perished there. Though the temple was the central place of sacrifice, yet must not the Son of God be offered there, for He was an offering of another kind, and must not lie upon their altars. Outside the city, because by the Jews He was treated as a flagrant offender who must be executed at the Tyburn of the city, in the appointed place of doom known as Calvary or Golgotha. When Naboth was unjustly condemned for blasphemy, they carried Him forth out of the city, and stoned Him with stones that He died; and afterwards Stephen— when they cried out against Him as a blasphemer, they cast Him out of the city, and there they stoned Him. Our Savior therefore must die in the ordinary place of execution, that in all respects He might be numbered with the transgressors. The rulers of the city so loathed and detested their great Reprover that they rejected Him, and would not suffer Him to die within their city walls. Alas, poor Jerusalem, in casting out the Son of David, you did cast out your last hope: now are you bound over to desolation. He was led outside of the city because from that time no acceptable sacrifice could be offered there. They might go on with their offering of daily lambs, and they might sacrifice their bullocks, and burn the fat of fed beasts; but from that day the substance of the sacrifice had gone away from them, and Israel's offerings were vain oblations. Because the true sacrifice is rejected of them the Lord leaves them nothing but a vain show. 695 Still more forcible is the fact that our Lord must die outside the city because He was to be consumed as a sin-offering. It is written in the Law, "And the skin of the bullock, and all His flesh, with His head, and with His legs, and His inwards, and His dung, even the whole bullock shall He carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn Him on the wood with fire." There were several sorts of offerings under the Law: the sweet-savor offerings were presented upon the altar, and were accepted of God, but sin-offerings were burnt without the camp or gate, because God can have no fellowship with sin. Once let sin be imputed to the sacrifice and it becomes abhorrent to God, and must not be presented in the tabernacle or the temple, but burned outside the circle wherein His people have their habitations. And here let our hearts gratefully contemplate how truly our Lord Jesus became a sin-offering for us, and how in every point He followed out the type. With His face turned away from His Father's house He must go to die: with His face turned away from what were once His Father's people He must be led forth to be crucified. Like a thing accursed, He is to be hung up where felons suffer condign punishment.

Because we were sinners, and because sin had turned our backs to God, and because sin had broken our communion with God's accepted ones, therefore must He endure this banishment. In that sorrowful march of the cross-bearing Savior my soul with sorrow sees herself represented as deserving thus to be made to depart unto death; and yet joy mingles with this emotion, for the glorious Sin-bearer has thus taken away our sin, and we return from our exile: His substitution is infinitely effectual, Well may those live for whom Jesus died. Well may those retain in whose place the Son of God was banished. There is entrance into the holy city now, there is entrance into the temple now, there is access unto God Himself now, because the Lord hath put away our sin through Him who was led to be crucified outside the city gate. Nor do I think that even this exhausts the teaching. Jesus dies outside Jerusalem because He died, not for Jerusalem alone, nor for Israel alone. The effect of His atonement is not circumscribed by the walls of a city nor by the bounds of a race. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Out in the open He must die, to show that He reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God. "For He is the propitiation for our sins," says Paul, who was Himself a Jew, "and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Had He been the Savior of Jews only, seclusion in the place 696 of His offering would have been appropriate, but as He dies for all nations, He is hung up without the city. And yet, once more, He suffered outside the gate that we might go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. "Come you out from among them; be you separate, touch not the unclean thing," from now on becomes the command of God to all His sons and daughters: behold the Son of man, His Only-begotten, leads the way in nonconformity to this present evil world, being Himself officially severed from the old Jewish church, whose elders seek His life. He dies in sacred separation from the false and corrupt corporation which vaunted itself to be the chosen of God. He protested against all evil, and for this He died, so far as His murderers were concerned. Even so must His followers take up their cross and follow Him whithersoever He goes, even though it be to be despised and rejected of men. See what instruction is found in the choice of the place wherein our great Redeemer offers Himself unto God. **I.** Let us draw near to our Lord for awhile, and carefully observe each instructive detail. Our imagination pictures the Blessed One standing outside the gate of Herod's palace in the custody of a band of soldiers with a centurion at their head, and we begin at once to observe HIS DRESS. That may seem a small matter, but it is not without instruction. How is He dressed? Our text tells us that when they had mocked Him they took off the purple from Him and put His own clothes on Him; but we are not told that they took off the crown of thorns, and therefore it has been currently believed that He continued to wear it to the cross and on the cross. Is not this highly probable? Surely if the thorny crown had been withdrawn this would have been the place to have said, "They took off the purple from Him and removed the crown of thorns"; but it is not so written, and therefore we may believe that the sorrowful coronet remained upon Him. Pilate wrote upon His accusation "the King of the Jews," and it was not unfitting that He should continue to wear a crown. Jesus died a crowned monarch, king of the curse. The Lord God in justice said to rebel man, "Cursed is the ground for your sake: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; " and lo, the man by whom we are redeemed is crowned with that product of the earth which came of the curse. 697 ***"O sacred head surrounded By crown of piercing thorn O bleeding head, so wounded, Reviled and put to scorn."*** Probably also, as I have said, He was bound; for they led Him as a sheep to the slaughter; but this binding was probably more abundant than that which we have hinted at, if it be indeed true that by Roman custom criminals were bound with cords to the cross which they were doomed to carry. If this was the case, you may picture our Lord with His cross hound to Himself, and hear Him say, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." But the chief point to be noted is that Jesus wore His own clothes, the usual garments which He was accustomed to wear, and this no doubt for identification, that all who looked on might know that it was the same person who had preached in their streets and had healed their sick. They were under no misapprehension; they knew that it was Jesus of Nazareth: the keen hate of the scribes and Pharisees would not have permitted any substitution of another. It was none other than He, and His garments were the ensigns of that truth. He wore His own clothes also for another reason, namely, that there might be a fulfillment of prophecy. It may not strike you at first, but you will soon see it. Our Lord must not go to die in the purple: He must march to the cross in that vestment which was without seam and woven from the top throughout, or else the word could not have been fulfilled, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." Other raiment could readily have been rent and divided, but this garment, which was peculiar to the Savior, could not have been so rent without destroying it, and therefore the soldiers cast lots for it. Little did they who put it on Him dream that they were thus accessory to the fulfillment of a prophecy. Does it not strike you as strange that the Pharisees, who were so full of

hatred to Christ, did not carefully draw back from the fulfillment of so many types and prophecies? Their rabbis and teachers knew the prophecy of Zechariah, that the Messiah should be sold for thirty pieces of silver: why did it not occur to them to make their bribe to Judas twenty-nine or thirty-one silver pieces? Why, again, did they cast the price unto the potter by buying of Him the field of blood? Could they not, so to speak, have balked the prophecy thereby? Here were voluntarily fulfilled by themselves prophecies which condemned them. I shall have to show you the same thing further on; but meanwhile observe 698 that if it had been their object to fulfill type and prophecy they could not have acted more carefully than they did. So they put His own garments on Him, and unwittingly they tarnished the possibility for the fulfillment of the Prophet's word: "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." To me there occurs one other thought touching His wearing His own garments. I do not know if I can express it, but it seems to me to indicate that our Lord's passion was a true and natural part of His life; He died as He lived. His death was not a new departure, but the completion of a life of self-sacrifice, and so He had no need to put on a fresh garb. Look! He goes to die in His ordinary everyday garments! Does not it almost seem as if people put on their Sunday clothes because they regard religion as something quite distinct from their common life? Do you not wish to see godliness in work-day clothes? religion in its shirt-sleeves? Grace in a smock-frock? Do you not almost cry concerning some loud talkers—"Put His own clothes on Him, and then lead Him out and let us see Him"? It should be an integral part of our life to live and to die for our God. Must we become other men if we are to be God's men? Can we not wear our own clothes, habits, characteristics, and peculiarities and serve the Lord? Is there not some suspicion of unnaturalness in services which require men to put on a strange, outlandish dress? Surely they find their worship to He on another level than their life; they must step out of their way and dress up to attend to it. It is ill for a man when He cannot lead His fellows in prayer till He has gone to the wardrobe. Time was when vestments meant something; but ever since our great High-priest went up to His one sacrifice wearing His common clothes, all types are fulfilled and laid aside. Now, we pray not officially, or we should need the robe; but we pray personally, and our own clothes suit us well. Jesus continued the unity of His life as He approached its close, and did not even in appearance change His way; He lived to die a sacrifice; this was the climax of His life, the apex of the towering pyramid of His perfect obedience. No mark is set, no line is drawn between His passion and all the rest of His life; nor should there be a screen between our life and death. Somehow, I dread a death which is meant to be pictorial and exhibitional. I am not an admirer of Addison's death, as some are, who praise Him because He sent for a young lord, and cried, "Come, see how a Christian can die!" I like better Bengel's wish when He desired to die just as a person would slip out from company because some one beckoned Him outside. Such a person modestly thinking His presence or absence to be of 699 small account in a great world, quietly withdraws, and friends only observe that He is gone. Death should be part of the usual curriculum, the close of the day's work, the entrance into harbour which ends the voyage. It is well to feel that you can die easily, because you have done it so many times before. He who dies daily will not fear to die. Bathe in the Jordan often, and you will not dread the fording of it when your hour has come. Our blessed Lord lived such a dying life that He made no show of death, He did not change His tone and spirit any more than His garments, but died as He lived. They put His own clothes on Him: He had not Himself taken them off; it was no wish of His to wear the purple even for an hour either in reality or in mockery. He was evermore the same, and His own vesture best beseeemed Him. Truly, blessed Master, we may well say, "All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia"; even though they take you not out of "the ivory palaces wherein they have made you glad"; but out of the common guardroom, where they had made you to be despised and mocked and spit upon. Come from whence you may, your vesture has a fragrant smell about it, and all your brethren rejoice therein. **II.** Brethren, I beg you for a few minutes to look at HIS COMPANY. Who were they that were with our Lord when He came to die? First and nearest to Him were the rough Roman soldiers, strong, muscular, unfeeling men, ready to shed blood at any moment. In them human affection was kept down by stern discipline, they were the iron instruments of an empire of iron. They would do what they were bid, and feeling and sympathy were not allowed to interfere. I do but bid you look at these guards to remind you that from beneath their eagle our Savior won a trophy; for their centurion at our Lord's death tittered the confession, "Certainly this was the Son of God." This was a blessed confession of faith, and I delight to think of our Lord as thus becoming the conqueror of His conquerors by taking one out of the in to He His disciple and witness, as we would gladly believe he was. Surely after openly making the clear confession which the evangelist has recorded we may number Him with believers. Next to these guards were two malefactors, led out with Him to execution. That was

intended to increase His scorn, He must not be separated from the basest of men, but He must be led forth between two thieves, having previously had a murderer preferred to Him. They seem to have been very hardened scoundrels, for they reviled Him. I mention them because our 700 Lord won a trophy by the conversion of one of them, who dying said, “We suffer justly, but this man has done nothing amiss,” and then prayed, “Lord, remember me when you comest into your kingdom.” This dying thief has brought more Glory to Christ than hundreds of us, for in every place wherever this Gospel has been preached this has been told as a memorial of Him, and as a comfort to the guiltiest to look to Jesus. In the act of death He believed in Christ, and believed when the Lord Himself was in the act of death, and that day He was with Him in paradise. How have you conquered, O you despised of men! How have you won by your gentleness both Roman legionaries and Jewish thieves. Beyond the prisoners were the scribes and Pharisees, and High Priests. I could not picture their faces, but surely they must have been about the worst lot of human physiognomies that were ever seen, as with a fiendish delight they stared at Jesus. He had called them “hypocrites”: He had spoken of them as “making clean the outside of the cup and platter,” while their inner part was very wickedness, and now they are showing their venom, and silencing His reproofs. But their hate was so insatiable that it was accompanied with fear, and that night it was seen that Christ had conquered them, for they crouched before Pilate and begged a guard to prevent their victim from leaving the tomb. In their heart of hearts they feared that after all He might be the Son of God. Thus were they also vanquished: though to them the Lord Jesus was a savor of death unto death, yet they could not but be affected by Him and vanquished by His death. Their hate brought with it alarm, and fear, and agitation: they trembled before the Nazarene. Look at the scene! Though the despised and sorrowful One is bowed down beneath His cross you can see at a glance the majesty which dwells in Him; but as you look at them, the mean, wretched seed of the serpent, they seem to go upon their bellies, and dust is their meat. He is all truth and openness, and they are all cunning and craft. You can see at a glance that as an angel is to the fiends of Hell, so is the Christ to His persecutors. That face distained with spittle, and blackened with blows, and encinctured with thorns wears a more than imperial Glory, while their faces are as the countenances of slaves and criminals. Around these there is a great rabble, and if you look into the mob you see with surprise that they are the same crowd, who a week ago shouted “Hosanna! Hosanna!” They have changed their note and cry, “Crucify Him: crucify Him”; for a few pence they were bribed to do so: they were an ignorant, fickle mob. When such do hiss at you for doing right, forgive 701 them. When they point the finger of scorn at you for being a Christian, regard them not. It little boots what they may say or do; they yelled at Him who was their host Benefactor and ours. Time Lord Christ endured the popular scorn as He had once received the popular acclamation. He lived above it all, for He knew that men of low degree are vanity. Vanity of vanities; all that comes of vain man is vanity. Yes, but there was a little change for the better in the company: there was just a streak of light in that cloud, for kindly women were in the throng. These were not all His disciples, perhaps few of them were such for otherwise He would not have bid them weep over a woe which His disciples escaped; but they were tender-hearted women who could not look upon Him without tears: it is said by Luke that they bewailed and lamented Him. They knew how innocent He was, and how kind He had been. Perhaps some of them had received favors at His hands, and therefore they wept sore that He should die. It was well done of them. In all the Evangelists there is no instance of a woman that had any hand in the death of Christ. As far as they are connected with the matter they are guiltless, they rather oppose His death than promote it. Woman was last at the cross and first at the sepulcher, and therefore we can never say a word about her being the first in the transgression. Oh, kindly eyes that gave the Lord of love the tribute of their pity! Blessed He you of compassionate Heaven! But the Savior desired not at that time that human sympathy should be spent upon Him, for His great heart was big with sorrows not His own. He knew that when the children of those women had grown up, and while yet some of the younger women would still be alive, their awful woe would make them exclaim, “Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bear, and the paps that never gave suck.” When they saw the slain of the Romans, and the slain of their own contending factions then would they mourn. The Master therefore said- *“Weep not for me! Oh! weep not, Salem’s daughters, Faint though you see me, stay the bursting tear; Turn the sad tide-the tide of bitter waters- Back on yourselves for desolation near.”* It was well on the woman’s part; it was better still on His, that He gently set the draught of sympathy on one side, because their coming sorrow oppressed Him more deeply than His own. We must now leave the company, but not till we have asked, Where are His disciples? Where is Peter? Did He not say, “I will go with you to prison 702 and to death”? Where is John? Where are they all? They have fled, and have not yet returned to speak a word to Him or for Him. Holy women are gathering,

but where are the men? Though the women are brave and act like men, the men are fearful and act as women. We are poor helpers to our Master. Had we been there, we should have done the same as they did, if not worse, for they were the flower of our Israel. Alas, me, how little worth are we for whom the Ever-blessed paid so much! Let us give clearer proof of loyalty, and follow our Prince more closely. **III.** But now, come closer to the Savior: break through the company, and hear my third talk with you while you look a little on HIS BURDEN. May the good Spirit teach me how to depict my Lord. We are told by John that our Savior “went forth bearing His cross.” We might have supposed, so far as the other three evangelists are concerned, that Simon the Cyrenian had carried the cross all the way, but John fills up the blank space in their accounts. Our Lord carried His own cross at the commencement of the sorrowful pilgrimage to Calvary. This was done, first, by way of increasing His shame. It was a custom of the Romans to make felons bear their own gibbet, and there is a word in the Latin, *furcifer*, which signifies “gallows bearer,” which was hissed at men in contempt, just as nowadays a despised individual might be called a “gallows-bird.” Nothing was more disgraceful, and therefore that must be added to the Redeemer’s load of shame. He made Himself of no reputation for our sakes. Note, next, its weight. Usually only one beam of the cross was carried: it may have been so now. It does not look so, however; for the expression, “bearing His cross,” would naturally mean the whole of it. It is highly probable that, although that load could easily be borne by the rough, coarse criminals who ordinarily suffered, yet not so readily by the tender and more exquisite frame of our divine Lord. It is difficult to find any other reason why they should have laid the cross on Simon, unless it be true, as tradition says, that He fainted beneath the burden. I care nothing for tradition, nor even for conjecture; but still there must have been a reason, and as we cannot believe that these people had any real mercy for Christ, we think they must have acted upon the cruel wish that He might not die on the road, but might at least live to be nailed to the tree. “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” This I leave. 703 And now I call your attention to the fact that there was a typical evidence about this. If Simon had carried Christ’s cross all the way, we should have missed the type of Isaac, for Isaac when He went to Mount Moriah to be offered up by His father carried the wood for His own sacrifice. I think if I had been a Jew, full of hate to Jesus Christ, I would have said, “Do not let Him carry His cross: that will be too much like Isaac carrying the wood.” No; but knowing the type, they wantonly fulfill it. It is their own will that does it, and yet the predestination of the Eternal is fulfilled in every jot and tittle, and our great Isaac carries the wood with which He is to be offered up by His Father. How marvelous it is that there should be a fixed decree and yet an altogether unlimited free agency. The spiritual meaning of it, of course, was that Christ in perfect obedience was then carrying the load of our disobedience. The cross, which was the curse, for “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,” is borne on those blessed shoulders which were submissive to the will of God in all things. Our Lord’s cross-bearing is the representation of His bearing all our sin, and therefore in it we rejoice. It also has a prophetic meaning: that cross which He carried through Jerusalem shall go through Jerusalem again. It is His great weapon with which He conquers and wins the world: it is His scepter with which He shall rule, governing the hearts of His people by no more forceful means than by the love manifested on His cross. “The government shall be upon His shoulder;” that which He bore on His shoulder shall win obedience, and they that take His yoke upon them shall find rest unto their souls. **IV.** I wish I had an hour during which I might speak upon time last head, which bristles with points of interest; but I must give its lessons to you rather in rough remarks than in studied observations. The last thing to consider is HIS CROSS-BEARER. We are not told why the Roman soldiers laid the cross on Simon. We have made a conjecture; but we leave it as a conjecture, although a highly probable one. If it be true, it lets us see how truly human our Master was. He had been all night in the garden, sweating as it were great drops of blood in His anguish: He had been before the Sanhedrin, He had been before Pilate, then before Herod, then before Pilate again; He had endured scourging; He had been mocked by the soldiery; and it would have been a great wonder if the human frame had not shown some sign of exhaustion. Holy Scripture, by its example, teaches us great reticence about the sufferings of Jesus. Some of the mediaeval 704 writers and certain good people who write devotional books are too apt to dilate upon every supposed grief of our Master, so as to harrow up your feelings; but it is the part of wisdom to imitate the ancient painter who, when He depicted Agamemnon as sacrificing His daughter, veiled the father’s face. It is indelicate and almost indecent to write as some have done who would seem to be better acquainted with anatomy than awed by divinity. Much that Jesus endured must for ever remain veiled to us; whether He fainted once or twice or thrice, or did not faint at all, we are not informed; and therefore we leave the idea in the obscurity of probability, and reverently worship Him who was tender in body and soul, and suffered

even as we do. Oh, love surpassing knowledge which could make Him suffer so! There was a great singularity in the Providence which brought Simon upon the scene just when He appeared. The right man came forward at the right moment. That Simon did not come at first, and that they did not place the cross on Him from the beginning was for the fulfillment of the type of Isaac to which allusion has been made: thus Providence arranges all things wisely. Observe that Simon was pressed into this duty. The word used signifies that the person is impressed into the royal service. Simon was a pressed man, and probably not a disciple of Christ at the time when He was loaded with the cross. How often has a burden of sorrow been the means of bringing men to the faith of Jesus! He was coming in from the country about some business or other, and Him they compelled to bear His cross, impressing Him into the service which else He would have shunned, for "He passed by," and would have gone on if He could. Roman soldiers were not accustomed to make many bones about what they chose to do. It was sufficient for them that He came under their notice, and carry the cross He must. His name was Simon: and where was that other Simon? What a silent, but strong rebuke this would He to Him. Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, where were you? Another Simon has taken your place. Sometimes time Lord's servants are backward where they are expected to be forward, and He finds other servitors for the time. If this has ever happened to us it ought gently to rebuke us as long as we live. Brothers and sisters, keep your places, and let not another Simon occupy your room. It is of Judas that it is said, "His bishopric shall another take;" but a true disciple will retain His 705 office. Remember that word of our Lord, "Hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown." Simon Peter lost a crown here, and another head wore it. Simon was a Cyrenian-an African-I wonder if He was a black man. In the Acts of the Apostles, at the thirteenth chapter, we find mention of a Simeon that was called Niger, or black. We do not know whether He was time same man or no, bat anyhow He was an African, for Cyrene lies just to the west of Egypt, on time southern coast of time Mediterranean. Surely the African has had His full share of cross-bearing for many an age. Oh that the pangs of His sorrow may bring forth a birth of joy! Blessed be He, whether African or Englishman, or who He may, that has the honor of bearing the cross after Christ. He was coming in from the country. How often the Lord takes into His service the unsophisticated country people who as yet are untainted by the cunning and the vice of the city. Some young man is just come up from the country this very week, and is commencing His apprenticeship in London. How I wish my Master would impress Him at the city gates, and do it in that divine way of His to which the will of the impressed person yields a sweet consent. Would God you would come at once and take up the cross of Jesus just at the city gate, before you learn the city's sin and plunge into its dangers. Happy is the Simon coming in from the country who shall this day be led to bear Christ's cross. Good Master, fulfill our heart's desire, and lay your cross on some unaccustomed shoulder even now. We are told He was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Which, my brethren, is the greater honor to a man, to have a good father, or to be the father of good sons? Under the Old Testament rule we usually read of a man that He is the son of such an one, but here we come to another style, and find it to a man's honor that He is the father of certain well-known brethren—"the father of Alexander and Rufus." Surely, Mark knew these two sons, or He would not have cared to mention them; they must have been familiar to the church, or He would not have thus described their father. It was their father who carried the cross. It is exceedingly likely that this Rufus was He of whom Paul speaks in the last chapter of His epistle to the Romans, for Mark was with Paul, and by this means knew Simon and Rufus. Paul writes, "Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and His mother and mine." His mother was such a motherly person that she had been a mother to Paul as well as to Rufus. Surely, if she was a mother to Paul, she was 706 another disciple of Jesus, and it would look as if this man, His wife, and His two sons all became converts to our Lord after He had carried His cross. It is certainly not the most unlikely circumstance that has been accepted by us on the ground of probability. Ohm, what a blessing to a man to be known by His sons! Pray, dear Christian friends, you that have an Alexander and a Rufus, that it may be an honor to you to be known as their father. "Him they compelled to bear His cross,"-perhaps time heavier end of it, if it was really bound to Christ, as they say; or as I judge, the whole of it. It matters little how it was; but Simon is the representative of the church which follows Christ hearing His cross. Here we may recall the language of Paul: "I fill up that which is behind," may I paraphrase it?-I take the hinder end—"of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, that is the church," Everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Jesus said, "Whosoever does not hear His cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Here is a representative, then, of all the godly-this Simon bearing Christ's cross. Mark, it was not a cross of His own making, like those of monks and nuns who put themselves to pains of their own inventing. It was Christ's cross; and He carried it not

before Christ, as some do who talk of their poverty as though it would get them to Heaven, instead of resting on Christ's cross. He carried it after Christ in its right place. This is the order—Christ in front hearing all our sin, and we behind enduring shame and reproach for Him, and counting it greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. There is Simon, and we will view Him as a lesson to ourselves. First, let Simon be an example to us all, and let us readily take up the cross after Christ. Whatever is involved in being a Christian, rejoice at it. If there be any shame, if there He any contumely, if there be no loss, if there be any suffering, even if it were martyrdom, yet gladly take up the cross. Behold, the Father lays it upon you for Christ's sake. The next is advice to any of you that have been compelled to suffer as Christians though you are not Christians. I wonder whether there is anybody here who is only a press-man and yet has to bear the cross. A working man became a teetotaler: He did not mean to be a Christian, but when He went to work His mates tempted Him to drink, and as He would not join them they attacked Him as a Christian, and said, "You are one of those canting hypocrites, those Wesleyans, those Presbyterians, or those Spurgeonites!" This is not true of you: but thus you see the cross is forced 707 on you: had you not better take it up and bear it joyfully? They have pressed you into this service: take it as an index of the will of Providence, and say, "I will not be a press-man only; I will be a volunteer, and I will cheerfully carry Christ's cross." I know a man who merely comes to this place of worship because He is somewhat interested with the preaching, though He has no idea of being a converted man; yet in the street where He lives nobody ever goes to a place of worship, and therefore they set Him down as a pious man, and some have even ridiculed Him for it. Friend, you are in for it because you attend here, and you put me in for it too, for if you do anything wrong they are sure to lay all the blame on me. They say- "That is one of Spurgeon's people." You are not: I do not own you as yet; but the outsiders have pushed you into the responsibilities of a religious profession, and you had better go in for its privileges. They have laid the cross upon you, do not throw it off. Come on, and bring that dear motherly wife with you, and Alexander and Rufus too. The church will be glad to take you all in, and then as a Volunteer you shall bear Christ's cross, It is, however, a remarkable thing that some should first of all be forced into it and then become willing followers. Last of all, if you and I are cross-bearers, here is a sweet thought. Are we carrying a cross which presses us heavily just now? You know you are to be like your Master, and if so there will be someone found to help you bear your cross. They found Simon to bear the cross of Jesus, and there is a Simon somewhere to help you. Only cry to the Lord about it, and He will find you a friend. If Simon is not forthcoming I will tell you what to do. Imitate Simon. If Simon was what I think He was, He became a converted man, and before long found Himself in trouble through it, and He at once went to the Lord in prayer, and said, " Lord Jesus I am resting in you alone. You did give me the honor to carry your cross once, now, I beseech you, carry mine!" This is what I want you to do with your crosses at this time. You that have to endure hardness for Christ, and are glad to do it, ask Him to bear your burden for you. He has borne your sins, and if you will but commit your troubles to Him, joy and peace through believing shall stream into your souls by His Holy Spirit. God bless you, for Christ's sake. 708

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“FEED MY LAMBS:” A SABBATH-SCHOOL SERMON. NO. 1684 DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15TH, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “So when they had dined, Jesus says to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest you me more than these? He says unto Him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He says unto Him, Feed my lambs.” -John 21:15. READ the whole chapter, and observe the change of scene. First, they are on the lake fishing, casting their nets at Christ’s command, and dragging to land a multitude of great fishes. They have all come on shore, and when they have breakfasted, their faces are not turned to the sea, but to the pastures on the hillside. These are clothed with flocks, and the Master says no more about fishermen and fish, but speaks of shepherds and sheep. Herein lies a parable the servants of the Lord Jesus are first fishermen and then shepherds. The first work of Christ’s servants is comprised in that commission, “Go, you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature”; or, parabolically, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.” They begin their heavenly vocation as fishers, even as Jesus said to them at the first, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Their earliest work is to preach the Gospel, which is like the letting down of a great seine net, enclosing life of all kinds. They are not to make a selection of characters so as to preach only to likely persons: that would be comparable to angling, a figure which is used in the Old Testament in connection with destruction, and not in reference to salvation, even as Amos says: “The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that He will take you away with hooks, and your 709 posterity with fishhooks.” In Gospel fishery we let down the big net and thus encompass many of all sorts. In the act of preaching the Gospel, all is fish. that comes to net; the sorting of the good from the bad is to be done another day. Our urgent work-I mean your and mine, my brethren-is to go out into the world and proclaim the blessed Gospel of salvation to all who care to hear us. We are to go into every place to which we can gain access, “into all the world”; “into the streets and lanes of the city, into the highways and hedges”: anywhere and everywhere the world over. Our one instrument as fishers for Christ is the Gospel of the Grace of God. God forbid that we should use any other. May the Lord help us to keep to our fishing, and may we come and instantly receive divine direction as to how and where to cast the net, so that we may have a full net, and yet a net unbroken, with which we may fish again. After this is done, and while it is being done, another are is to be practiced. Fishing is not all, as many seem to think. It is a great part of our service, and would God it were more attended to; but after it has been attended to shepherding comes in, and is a work of equal weight. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have His servants attend to this second task with all their hearts. If souls are converted they have been brought up from the depths of sin, and the scene changes: we see a flock, “the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood,” This flock needs as much care as any other, yes, it needs to be tended with the utmost labor and watchfulness. The Lord Jesus Himself is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep, the Great Shepherd who is brought again from the dead, and the Chief Shepherd under whom He has appointed shepherds to watch for the souls of men. He will have those of us whom He calls to His service to shepherdize those who are converted: leading, protecting, feeding, comforting, and succouring them, He will call us to account if we neglect this charge, for He will require His flock at our hands, saying, “Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock?” This shepherd work is so important that three times the Savior bids us attend to it, saying first, “Feed my lambs,” then, “Feed my sheep,” or as some old manuscripts have it, “my little sheep,” and then again, “Feed my sheep.” We are to feed the babes in Grace; to shepherdize the young men in Christ Jesus; and to feed the older ones who feel many growing infirmities, and need again the comforts of their earliest days. Three times over are we thus bid: are we, then, so apt to fail in this? Jesus spoke but once to death, and Lazarus came forth are we more deaf than the grave, and must 710 we be thrice commanded? Let us no longer be disobedient to the heavenly mandate. We must never so evangelize the outside mass as to forget to fold and feed those within. We are to disciple all nations, and then to teach them all things whatever Christ has commanded us, Not every man that can haul in a net is ready at once to tend a flock; we need much Grace, for the Lord Jesus Christ spent years in most industriously educating the Twelve, training the Seventy, and getting ready a band of followers who were not only saved, but educated, so as to teach others also. We must not be indifferent to this matter. The quiet work of building up believers must be steadily pursued, even though those who sound a trumpet before them may despise such ministries. I shall speak this morning upon work within the fold, the feeding of the sheep and lambs, and this I shall do in order that I may help our beloved Sabbath-school teachers. This is their day, and if I do not seem to speak directly or exclusively to them, I hope I shall nevertheless say much to stimulate and direct them in their invaluable labors. I bespeak for them your most earnest

prayers and loving sympathies, and of many I would beg a more practical co-operation with them. Concerning this shepherding for Christ let us first note the sphere- “My lambs”: secondly, the man for it-one like Simon son of Jonas: thirdly, His preparation for it: fourthly, the work itself: and fifthly, the motive under which the feeding is to be carried out. Briefly on each point. Oh for help from the Spirit of God! I. First, think of THE SPHERE. Although in the other instances Jesus says, “Feed my sheep,” yet in this first instance He says, “Feed my lambs.” To whom does He refer? I think, first, to such as are little in Grace. They have but a grain of mustard seed of faith as yet: their love is not a flame, but a spark: the leaven of Grace within them has begun to work, but all the measures of meal are not yet leavened. The spiritual life in these is like a candle newly lit, apparently in danger of being suddenly blown out, and therefore needing great care. Weakness is an idea in the word “lambs”; and so in the church of God all such as are weak-and, alas, how many there are-all such as are doubting, all such as are slenderly instructed, all such as are easily bewildered in doctrine, cast down in spirit, and apt to be staggered—all such, I say, are to be watched over with special care, and therefore Jesus mentions them particularly and separately and in the first place. If our kindness should neglect the strong it would be a sad pity, but 711 it might not entail so much damage as if we neglect the weak. What says the Apostle? “Comfort the feeble-minded; support the weak; be patient towards all men.” In our numbers we have always a few who wear the weeds of spiritual widowhood; these are very sincere, but sadly anxious, scarcely knowing what full assurance means, but yet true and resolute. Their faith is a trembling one, crying “Lord, I believe; help you mine unbelief.” Such are not to be blamed, nor avoided, nor despised, nor in the least degree discouraged; but, inasmuch as we ourselves also may be tempted with like fears, we are to console them. We ought to know that if we be strong, our strength lies not in ourselves; for our own strength is perfect weakness; and therefore we should deal graciously and tenderly with the weak of the flock. I think this is the reason why the weak were committed to Simon Peter in this particular case; because He had been very weak Himself: He had denied His Master through His fears, and thus He was taught to have compassion on other trembling ones. He who is Himself compassed with infirmities knows the heart of the weaklings: He can enter with sympathy into their doubts and their distresses, for He has felt the same. I say therefore, this morning, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to all of you who love Him, “Look well to the weak ones of the church.” But I cannot think, as some expositors do, that weakness is the main idea in the word “lambs”; for the notion of a lamb is not confined to the thought of weakness, since full-grown sheep may be weak and lambs may be vigorous; but the most prominent thought is that of youth. The lambs are the young of the flock, So, then, we ought to look specially and carefully after those who are young in Grace. They may be old in years, and yet they may be mere babes in Grace as to the length of their spiritual life, and therefore they need to be under a good shepherd. As soon as a person is converted and added to the church He should become the object of the care and kindness of His fellow members. He has but newly come among us, and has no familiar friends among the saints, therefore let us all be friendly to Him. Even should we leave our older comrades we must be doubly kind towards those who are newly escaped from the world and have come to find a refuge with the Almighty and His people. Watch with ceaseless care over those newborn babes who are strong in desires, but strong in nothing else. They have but just crept out of darkness, and their eyes can scarcely bear the light; let us be a shade to them until they grow accustomed to the blaze of Gospel day. Addict yourselves to the holy work of caring for the feeble and despondent. Peter Himself that morning must have felt like a 712 newly enlisted soldier, for He had in a sense ended His public Christian life by denying His Lord, and He had begun it again when he “went out and wept bitterly.” He was now making a new confession of His faith before His Lord and His brethren, and, therefore, because he was thus made to sympathize with recruits He is commissioned to act as a guardian to them. Young converts are too timid to ask our help, and so our Lord introduces them to us, and with an emphatic word of command He says, “Feed my lambs.” This shall be our reward, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these you have done it unto me.” But surely we must include in this those who have been converted while young in years. We thank God exceedingly that we have among us and round about us many dear children that already know Christ. We have never as a church thought that a certain number of years must have passed over a child before it can confess its faith in Christ and be received into the church. It is sometimes said that we teach adult baptism. We do nothing of the sort. We practice Believer’s baptism, and baptize all who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are children or adults. Our enquiry as to fitness does not refer to age, but to faith. The number or the fewness of days or years is no consideration whatever with us. Our question is, “Dost you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?” If that be fairly answered we say at once, “What does hinder you to be baptized?”

However young a Believer may be He should make an open confession of His faith, and be folded with the rest of the flock of Christ. We are not among those who are suspicious of youthful piety: we could never see more reason for such suspicions in the case of the young than in the cases of those who repent late in life. Of the two we think the latter are more to be questioned than the former: for a selfish fear of punishment and dread of death are more likely to produce a counterfeit faith than mere childishness would be. How much has the child missed which might have spoiled it! How much it does not know which, please God, we hope it never may know! Oh, how much there is of brightness and trustfulness about children when converted to God which is not seen in elder converts! Our Lord Jesus evidently felt deep sympathy with children, and He is but little like Christ who looks upon them as a trouble in the world, and treats them as if they must needs be either little deceivers or foolish simpletons. To you who teach in our schools is given this joyous privilege of finding out where these young disciples are who are truly the lambs of Christ's flock, and to you He says, 713 "Feed my lambs"; that is, instruct such as are truly gracious but young in years. It is very remarkable that the word used here for "feed my lambs" is very different from the word employed in the precept, "feed my sheep." I will not trouble you with Greek words, but the second "feed" means exercise the office of a shepherd, rule, regulate, lead, manage them, do all that a shepherd has to do towards a flock; but this first feed does not include all that: it means distinctly feed, and it directs teachers to a duty which they may, perhaps, neglect, namely, that of instructing children in the faith. The lambs do not so much need keeping in order as we do who know so much, and yet know so little: who think we are so far advanced that we judge one another and contend and emulate. Christian children mainly need to be taught the doctrine, precept, and life of the Gospel: they require to have divine truth put before them clearly and forcibly. Why should the higher doctrines, the doctrines of Grace, be kept back from them? They are not, as some say, bones; or if they be bones, they are full of marrow, and covered with fatness. If there be any doctrine too difficult for a child, it is rather the fault of the teacher's conception of it than of the child's power to receive it, provided that child be really converted to God. It is ours to make doctrine simple; this is to be a main part of our work. Teach the little ones the whole truth and nothing but the truth; for instruction is the great want of the child's nature. A child has not only to live as you and I have, but also to grow; therefore He has double need of food, When fathers say of their boys, "What appetites they have!" they should remember that we also should have great appetites if we had not only to keep the machinery going, but to enlarge it at the same time. Children in Grace have to grow, rising to greater capacity in knowing, being, doing, and feeling, and to greater power from God; therefore above all things they must be fed. They must be well fed or instructed, because they are in danger of having their cravings perversely satisfied with error. Youth is susceptible to evil doctrine. Whether we teach young Christians truth or not, the devil will be sure to teach them error. They will hear of it somehow, even if they are watched by the most careful guardians. The only way to keep chaff out of the child's little measure is to fill it brimful with good wheat. Oh that the Spirit of God may help us to do this! The more the young are taught the better; it will keep them from being misled. We are specially exhorted to feed them because they are so likely to be overlooked. I am afraid our sermons often go over the heads of the 714 younger folk, who, nevertheless, may be as true Christians as the older ones. Blessed is He that can so speak as to be understood of a child! Blessed is that godly woman who in her class so adapts herself to girlish modes of thought that the truth from her heart streams into the children's hearts without let or hindrance. We ought especially to feed the young because this work is so profitable. Do what we may with persons converted late in life, we can never make much of them. We are very glad of them for their own sakes; but at seventy what remains even if they live another ten years? Train up a child, and He may have fifty years of holy service before Him. We are glad to welcome those who come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but they have hardly taken their pruning-hook and their spade before the sun goes down, and their short day's work is ended. The time spent in training the late convert is greater than the space reserved for His actual service: but you take a child-convert and teach Him well, and as early piety often becomes eminent piety, and that eminent piety may have a stretch of years before it in which God may be glorified and others may be blessed, such work is profitable in a high degree. It is also most beneficial work to ourselves. It exercises our humility and helps to keep us lowly and meek. It also trains our patience; let those who doubt this try it; for even young Christians exercise the patience of those who believe in them and are therefore anxious that they should justify their confidence. If you want big-souled, large-hearted men or women, look for them among those who are much engaged among the young, bearing with their follies, and sympathizing with their weaknesses for Jesus' sake. You see the sphere which is presented to your zealous activity. Will you not occupy it? Many of you are already engaged in it; see to it

that you fulfill your high calling, and to the utmost feed the lambs. **II.** Secondly, let us speak of THE MAN who is to do this? I look upon my text as addressed, not to Peter only, but to those who are like Peter. What if I say it is addressed to us all? As servants and lovers of Jesus, He says to us, "Feed my lambs." Who should do it? Christ selected Simon Peter as a leading man. He was one of the chief of the Apostles, if we may use such a word. He was one of the triumvirate that led the van-Peter, and James, and John. But though a leading man, He was to feed the lambs, for no man may think Himself too great to care for the young. The best of the church are none too good for this work. And, dear Friends, do not think because you 715 have other service to do that therefore you should take no interest in this form of holy work, but kindly, according to your opportunities, stand ready to help the little ones, and to cheer those whose chief calling it is to attend to them. To us all this message comes: "Feed my lambs." To the minister, and to all who have any knowledge of the things of God, the commission is given. See to it that you look after the children that are in Christ Jesus. Peter was a leader among believers, yet He must feed the lambs. But He was especially a warm-hearted man. Simon Peter was not a Welshman, but He had a great deal of what we know as Welsh fire in Him. He was just the sort of man to interest the young. Children delight to gather round a fire, whether it be on the hearth or in the heart. Certain persons appear to be made of ice, and from these children speedily shrink away: congregations or classes grow smaller every Sunday when coldblooded creatures preside over them. But when a man or a woman has a kindly heart, the children seem to gather readily, just as flies in these autumn-days swarm on a warm sunny wall. Therefore Jesus says to warmhearted Simon, "Feed my lambs." He is the man for the office. Simon Peter was, moreover, an experienced man. He had known His own weakness; He had felt the pangs of conscience; He had sinned much and had been much forgiven, and now He was brought in tender humility to confess the love and loveliness of Jesus. We want experienced men and women to talk to converted children, and to tell them what the Lord has done for them, and what have been their dangers, their sins, their sorrows, and their comforts. The young are glad to hear the story of those who have been further on the road than they have. I may say of experienced saints-their lips keep knowledge. Experience lovingly narrated is suitable food for young believers, instruction such as the Lord is likely to bless to their nourishing in Grace. Simon Peter was now a greatly indebted man. He owed much to Jesus Christ, according to that rule of the kingdom-He loves much to whom much has been forgiven. Oh you that have never entered upon this service for Christ, and yet might do it well, I beseech you consider your obligation to Jesus. The state of our schools at the present moment is a strong argument for your aid. We have plenty of children and few teachers; around this place of worship many schools are doing their work in a lame and halting manner for want of teachers. O you who owe so much to Christ, will you not feed His lambs? Ought you not to be forward to offer 716 yourselves? Will you refuse Him? Come forward at once and say, "I have left this work to younger hands, but I will do so no longer. I have experience, and I trust I yet retain a warm heart within my bosom; I will go and join these workers, who are steadily feeding the lambs in the name of the Lord. So far as to the man who is called to feed the lambs. **III.** Thirdly, when the Lord calls a man to a work, He gives Him THE PREPARATION necessary for it. How was Peter prepared for feeding Christ's lambs? First, by being fed Himself. The Lord gave Him a breakfast before giving Him a commission. You cannot feed lambs or sheep either unless you are fed yourself. It is quite right for you to be teaching a great part of the Lord's-day; but I think a teacher is very unwise who does not come to hear the Gospel preached and get a meal for His own soul. First be fed, and then feed. But especially Peter was prepared for feeding the lambs by being with His Master. He would never forget that morning, and all the incidents of it. It was Christ's voice that He heard; it was Christ's look that pierced Him to the heart: He breathed the air which surrounded the risen Lord, and this fellowship with Jesus perfumed Peter's heart and tuned Peter's speech, that He might afterwards go forth and feed the lambs. I commend to you the study of instructive books, but above all I commend the study of Christ. Let Him be your library. Get near to Jesus. An hour's communion with Jesus is the best preparation for teaching either the young or the old. Peter was also prepared in a more painful way than that, namely, by self examination. The question came to Him thrice over, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest you me? Lovest you me? Lovest you me?" Often the vessel wants scouring with self-examination before the Lord can fitly use it to convey the living water to thirsting ones. It never hurts a true-hearted man to search His own spirit and to be searched and tried by His Lord. It is the hypocrite who is afraid of the truth which tests His profession: trying discourses, and trying meditations, He dreads; but the genuine man wants to know for certain that He really does love Christ, and therefore He looks within Him and questions and cross-questions Himself. Mainly, dear Friends, that examination should He exercised concerning our love; for the best preparation for teaching Christ's

lamb is love— love to Jesus and to them. We cannot be priests on their behalf unless like Aaron we wear their names upon our breasts. We must love or we cannot bless. Teaching is poor work when love is gone; it is like a smith working 717 without fire, or a builder without mortar. A shepherd that does not love His sheep is a hireling and not a shepherd: He will flee in the time of danger, and leave His flock to the wolf. Where there is no love there will be no life; living lambs are not to be fed by dead men. See, brothers and sisters, we preach and teach love: our subject is the love of God in Christ Jesus. How can we teach this if we have no love ourselves? Our object is to create love in the hearts of those we teach, and to foster it where it already exists; but how can we convey the fire if it is not kindled in our own hearts? How can He promote the flame whose hands are damp, and dripping with worldliness and indifference, so that He acts on the child's heart rather as a bucket of water than as a flame of fire? These lambs of the flock live in the love of Christ: shall they not live in ours? He calls them His lambs, and so they are; shall we not love them for His sake? They were chosen in love; they were redeemed in love; they have been called in love; they have been washed in love; they have been fed by love, and they will be kept by love till they come to the green pastures on the hill tops of Heaven. You and I will be out of gear with the vast machinery of divine love unless our souls are full of affectionate zeal for the good of the beloved ones. Love is the grandest preparation for the ministry, whether exercised in the congregation or in the class. Love, and then feed. If you lovest, feed. If you do not love, then wait till the Lord has quickened you, and lay not your unhallowed hand to this sacred service. Thus I have described the sphere, the man, and His preparation. **IV.** Let us now consider THE WORK "Feed my lambs." I have given you the gist of this subject already. With the weak of the flock, with the new converts in the flock, with the young children in the flock, our principal business is to feed. Every sermon, every lesson, should be a feeding sermon and a feeding lesson. It is of little use to stand and thump the Bible and call out, "Believe, believe, believe!" when nobody knows what is to be believed. I see no use in fiddles and tambourines; neither lambs nor sheep can be fed upon brass bands. There must be doctrine, solid, sound, Gospel doctrine to constitute real feeding. When you have a joint on the table, then ring the dinner-bell; but the bell feeds nobody if no provender is served up. Getting children to meet in the morning and the afternoon is a waste of their steps and your if you do not set before them soul-saving, soulsustaining truth. Feed the lambs; you need not pipe to them, nor put garlands round their necks; but do feed them. 718 This feeding is humble, lowly, unostentatious work. Do you know the name of a shepherd? I have known the names of one or two who follow that calling, but I never heard anybody speak of them as great men; their names are not in the papers, nor do we hear of them as a trade with a grievance, claiming to be noticed by the legislature. Shepherds are generally quiet, unobtrusive people. When you look at the shepherd, you would not see any difference between Him and the ploughman, or the carter. He plods on uncomplainingly through the winter, and in the early spring He has no rest night or day because the lambs are needing Him: this He does year after year, and yet He will never be made a Knight of the Garter, nor even be exalted to the peerage, albeit He may have done far more useful work than those who are floated into rank upon their own beer-barrels. So in the case of many a faithful teacher of young children; you hear but little about Him, yet He is doing grand work for which future ages will call Him blessed. His Master knows all about Him, and we shall hear of Him in that day; perhaps not till then. Feeding the lambs is careful work too; for lambs cannot be fed on anything you please, especially Christ's lambs. You can soon half poison young believers with bad teaching. Christ's lambs are all too apt to eat herbs which are deleterious; it needs that we be cautious where we lead them. If men are to take heed what they hear, how much more should we take heed what we teach? It is careful work the feeding of each lamb separately, and the teaching of each child by itself the truth which it is best able to receive. Moreover, this is continuous work. "Feed my lambs," is not for a season, but for all time. Lambs could not live if the shepherd only fed them once a week. I reckon they would die between Sunday and Sunday; therefore good teachers of the young look after them all the days of the week as they have opportunity, and they are careful about their souls with prayer and holy example when they are not teaching them by word of mouth. The shepherdry of lambs is daily, hourly work. When is a shepherd's work over? How many hours a day does He labor? He will tell you that in lambing-time He is never done, He sleeps between whiles just when He can, taking much less than forty winks, and then rousing Himself for action. It is so with those who feed Christ's lambs; they rest not till God saves and sanctifies their dear ones. It is laborious work, too; at least He who does not labor at it will have a terrible account to render. Do you think a minister's life is an easy one? I 719 tell you that He who makes it so will find it hard enough when He comes to die. Nothing so exhausts a man who is called to it as the care of souls; so it is in measure with all who teach—they cannot do good without spending themselves. You must study

the lesson; you must bring forth something fresh to your class: you must instruct and impress. I have no doubt you are often driven very hard for matter, and wonder how you will get through the next Lord's-day. I know you are sore pressed at times if you are worth your salt. You dare not rush to your class unprepared, to offer to the Lord that which costs you nothing. There must be labor if the food is to be wisely placed before the lambs, so that they can receive it. And all this has to be done in a singularly choice spirit; the true shepherd spirit is an amalgam of many precious graces. He is hot with zeal, but He is not fiery with passion; He is gentle, and yet He rules His class; He is loving, but He does not wink at sin; He has power over the lambs, but He is not domineering or sharp; He has cheerfulness, but not levity; freedom, but not license; solemnity, but not gloom. He who cares for lambs should be a lamb Himself; and, blessed be God, there is a Lamb before the throne who cares for all of us, and does so the more effectually because He is in all things made like unto us. The Shepherd spirit is a rare and priceless gift. A successful pastor or a successful teacher in a school will be found to have special characteristics, which distinguish Him from His fellows. A bird when it is sitting on its eggs, or when the little ones are newly-hatched, has about it a mother-spirit, so that it devotes all its life to the feeding of its little ones other birds may be taking their pleasure on the wing, but this bird sits still the life-long day and night, or else its only flights are to provide for gaping mouths which seem to be never filled. A passion has taken possession of the bird; and something like it comes over the true soul-winner: He could gladly die to win souls; He pines, He pleads, He plods to bless those on whom His heart is set. If these could but He saved He would pawn half His Heaven for it; yes, and sometimes in moments of enthusiasm He is ready to barter Heaven altogether to win souls, and, like Paul, He could wish Himself accursed, so that they were but saved. This blessed extravagance many cannot understand, because they never felt it; may the Holy Spirit work it in us, so shall we act as true shepherds towards the lambs. This, then, is the work "Feed my lambs." **V.** Lastly, let us consider THE MOTIVE. Our Lord Jesus heard Peter's assurance of love, and then He said, "Feed my lambs." The motive for feeding the lambs was to be His Master's self, and not His own self. Had 720 Peter been the first Pope of Rome, and had He been like His successors, which indeed He never was, surely it would have been fitting for the Lord to have said to Him, "Feed your sheep. I commit them to you, O Peter, Vicar of Christ on earth." No, no, no. Peter is to feed them, but they are not His, they are still Christ's. The work that you have to do for Jesus, brethren and sisters, is in no sense for yourselves. Your classes are not your children, but Christ's. This is not my church, but Christ's. The exhortation which Paul gave was, "Feed the church of God," and Peter Himself wrote in His epistle, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Let these lambs turn out what they may, the Glory is to be to the Master and not to the servant; and the whole time spent, and labor given, and energy put forth, is every particle of it to redound to His praise whose these lambs are. Yet while this is a self-denying occupation, it is sweetly honorable, too, and we may attend to it feeling that it is one of the noblest forms of service. Jesus says, "My lambs: my sheep." Think of them, and wonder that Jesus should commit them to us. Poor Peter! Surely when that breakfast began He felt awkward. I put myself into His place, and I know I should hardly have liked to look across the table to Jesus, as I remembered that I denied him with oaths and curses. Our Lord desired to set Peter quite at His ease by leading Him to speak upon His love which had been so seriously placed in question. Like a good doctor He puts in the lancet where the anxiety was festering: He enquires, "Lovest you me?" It was not because Jesus did not know Peter's love; but in order that Peter might know of a surety, and make a new confession, saying, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." The Lord is about to hold a tender controversy with the erring one for a few minutes, that there might never be a controversy between Him and Peter any more. When Peter said, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you," you half thought that the Lord would answer, "Ah, Peter, and I love you"; but He did not say so, and yet He did say so. Perhaps Peter did not see His meaning; but we can see it, for our minds are not confused as Peter's was on that memorable morning. Jesus did in effect say, "I love you so that I trust you with that which I purchased with my heart's blood. The dearest thing I have in all the world is my flock: see, Simon, I have such confidence in you, I so wholly rely on your integrity as being a sincere lover of me, that I make you a shepherd to my sheep. These are all I have on earth, I gave everything for them, even my life, and now, Simon, son of 721 Jonas, take care of them for me." Oh, it was "kindly spoken." It was the great heart of Christ saying, "Poor Peter, come right in and share my dearest cares." Jesus so believed Peter's declaration that He did not tell Him so in words, but in deeds. Three times He said it, "Feed my lambs: feed my sheep: feed my sheep," to show how much He loved Him. When the Lord Jesus loves a man very much, He gives Him much to do or much to suffer. Many of us have been plucked like brands from the

burning, for we were “enemies to God by wicked works “; and now we are in the church among His friends, and our Savior trusts us with His dearest ones. I wonder when the prodigal son came back and the father received Him, whether when market-day came He sent His younger son to market to sell the wheat and bring home the money. Most of you would have said, “I am glad the boy is come back; at the same time I shall send His elder brother to do the business, for He has always stuck by me,” As for myself, the Lord Jesus took me in as a poor prodigal son, and it was not many weeks before He put me in trust with the Gospel, that greatest of all treasures; this was a grand love-token. I know of none to excel it. The commission given to Peter proved how thoroughly the breach was healed, how fully the sin was forgiven, for Jesus took the man who had cursed and sworn in denial of Him and bade Him feed His lambs and sheep. Oh, blessed work, not for yourselves, and yet for yourselves! He that serves Himself shall lose Himself, but He that loseth Himself does really serve Himself after the best possible fashion. The master-motive of a good shepherd is love. We are to feed Christ’s lambs out of love. First, as a proof of love. “If you love me, keep my commandments.” If you love me, feed my lambs. If you love Christ, show it, and show it by doing good to others, by laying yourself out to help others that Jesus may have joy of them. Next, as an inflowing of love. “Feed my lambs,” for if you love Christ a little when you begin to do good, you will soon love Him more. Love grows by active exercise. It is like the blacksmith’s arm, which increases its strength by wielding the hammer. Love loves till it loves more, and it loves more till it loves more; and it still loves more till its loves most of all, and then it is not satisfied, but aspires after enlargement of heart that it may copy yet more fully the perfect model of love in Christ Jesus, the Savior. Besides being an inflowing of love, the feeding of lambs is an outflow of 722 love. How often have we told our Lord that we loved Him when we were preaching, and I do not doubt you teachers feel more of the pleasure of love to Jesus when you are busy with your classes than when you are by yourselves at home. A person may go home and sit down and groan out- *“Tis a point I long to know Oft it causes anxious thought,”* and wipe His forehead and rub His eyes, and get into the dumps without end; but if He will rise up and work for Jesus, the point He longs to know will soon He settled, for love will come pouring out of His heart till He can no longer question whether it is there. So let us abide in this blessed service for Christ that it may be the delight of love, the very ocean in which love shall swim, the sunlight in which it shall bask. The recreation of a loving soul is work for Jesus Christ; and amongst the highest and most delicious forms of this heavenly recreation is the feeding of young Christians; endeavoring to build them up in knowledge and understanding, that they may become strong in the Lord. The Lord bless you, dear fellow-laborers in the Sabbath-school, from this time forth and for evermore. 723

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GOD'S NON-REMEMBRANCE OF SIN NO. 1685 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22ND, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember your sins."-Isaiah 43:25. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."-Jeremiah 31:31. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."-Hebrews 8:12. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."-Hebrews 10:17. You see these texts are all alike in their declaration that the Lord will not remember His people's sins. I have taken four of them to make the basis of my sermon firm as adamant. It is written, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." Here then, you have Isaiah and Jeremiah, two Old Testament saints affirming the same thing: is not this enough? Added to these you have the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who, in all probability, was Paul, and these three agree in one. Their united testimony is that Jehovah, the Lord God, will forgive the sins of His people, and do it in so complete a way that He will remember their iniquities no more. Now, if I did not preach at all, but merely gave you these four texts to consider, I think the service ought to be full of comfort to all who know their guiltiness and are anxious to obtain mercy. That article in the creed is too little thought of—"I believe in the forgiveness of sin." Men flippantly declare that they believe it when they are not conscious of any great sin of 724 their own; but when His transgression is made apparent to a man, and His iniquity comes home to Him, it is quite another matter. Does any unregenerate person believe in the forgiveness of sin? I think not. No man in sincerity believes it until God the Holy Spirit has taught Him its truth, and has written it upon His heart. No revealed truth is more generally doubted and disbelieved than this, the plainest of all revelations, that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, and ready to pass by the iniquities of His people. Men disbelieve for themselves, and doubt it as to others when the matter is fairly tested. When a man's sins are set before Him in the light of God's countenance His first instinct is to fear that they are altogether unpardonable. If He does not state His unbelief in so many words, yet in the secret of His soul that dreadful conviction takes hold upon Him and darkens every window of hope. He looks to the Law of God, and while He looks in that direction He will certainly conclude that there is no pardon, for the Law knows nothing of forgiveness. It is, "This do, and you shall live disobey and you shall die." To convince and to condemn is all the Law was set for. By the Law is the knowledge of sin, and by its power sinners are shut up in the prisonhouse of despair, from which only the Lord Jesus can deliver us. What the Law asserts the understanding also supports; for within the awakened man there is the memory of His past offenses, and on account of these His conscience passes judgment upon His soul, and condemns it even as the Law does. "God must punish wickedness," is the utterance of conscience "He were not the judge of all the earth if He did not do right and if He does right He must visit my transgressions with the threatened penalty." Thus, the thunder of Sinai is echoed by conscience. Meanwhile, many natural impressions and instincts assist and increase the clamours of conscience for the man knows within Himself as the result of observation and experience, that sin must bring its own punishment; He perceives that is a knife which cuts the hand of Him that handles it, a sword that kills the man who fights there with. He feels that He cannot Himself readily pass by offenses committed by His fellow men and so He concludes that the Lord cannot willingly forgive. That part of the hardness of His heart goes to deepen the conviction that God will not pass by His transgression; and He is therefore terribly dismayed and hopeless of mercy. Meanwhile the devil comes in with all the horrors of the infernal pit, and threaten speedy destruction. That same evil spirit who once pictured sin in glowing colors and set before the sinner the pleasureableness of unrighteousness, now comes in 725 and turns accuser, forestalls the final sentence, and hardens the man's heart by the assurance that there is no hope. Bunyan very aptly pictures Diabolus when He was attacking the town of Mansoul, as making Captain Past-hope unfurl. The red colors which were carried by Mr. Despair, and He also speaks of the roaring of the tyrant's drum, which sounded forth terribly, especially by night, so that the men of Mansoul had always in their ears the sound of Hell-fire! Hell-fire! and all this to keep them from submitting to their gracious prince. Thus, for once, the devil craftily co-operates with the Law of God and with conscience; these would drive men to self-despair, but Satan would go further, and compel them to despair as touching the Lord Himself so as to believe that pardon for transgression is quite impossible. The convinced sinner is able to believe that mercy may be shown to others; but as for Himself, He signs His own death-warrant, and labors under the fall persuasion that the acts of God's mercy can never extend to Him. No stocks can hold a man so fast as His own guilty fears. The hangman's whip never tortured men so cruelly as does an awakened conscience. With the desponding I shall try to deal at this time, and

may the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, help me to console them. **I.** Our first theme is this,—THERE IS FORGIVENESS. Our four texts all teach us that doctrine with great distinctness. Is not that a sublime assurance, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember your sins?” Does not Paul put it sweetly as from God’s own mouth “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Remember how the Psalmist in the one hundred and thirtieth; psalm makes this a special note of thanksgiving: “There is forgiveness with you that you may be feared.” Let us adore the Lord because He delights in mercy. For a minute or two let me try to prove, may it be to your satisfaction, O you despairing ones—that there is forgiveness. This appears, first, in the treatment of sinners by God, inasmuch as He spares their forfeited lives. When our first parents had, transgressed they came at once under desert of penalty. The Lord visited the garden and convinced the offenders of their transgression; hat instead of then and there pronouncing their doom, and casting them for ever away from His presence, He talked to them of a certain seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent’s head. The curse which must fall fell obliquely, descending first upon the soil, and secondarily upon the man; first upon the 726 serpent, and more gently on the woman, whose very pain and travail were to bring forth deliverance for the race, and vengeance on the enemy. The man and the woman each had a separate sentence in labor and in childbirth; but, oh, how mild were these sentences compared with what they might have been. How joyful is the fact that over all there was the sparing hand of God letting them live, and His cheering voice promising them ultimate deliverance. Would the Lord thus have spared them if He had not meant to show mercy? ‘Would He not have crushed a sinful race even in ‘its egg, and have blotted out for ever those of whom not long after it repented Him that be had made them upon the earth? Assuredly the Lord meant pardon when He tarried to enquire, “Adam, where are you?” In the morning of human history the Lord’s long-suffering displayed itself and gave promise of larger Grace. The like is true of you and of me. If God had no pardons would He not long ago have sent us down as cumberers of the ground? ‘We sinned early in life; perhaps we sinned grossly in oar youthful days, doing evil with great wantonness and willfulness, according to the obstinacy of our hearts. Why did He not then say, “I will take these away: they will only go from bad to worse, and they will infect others with their vices: therefore will I root them out lest they become injurious to those about them and a curse to future generations?” But no; even yonder blasphemer was not smitten to death when He imprecated damnation upon Himself; you Sabbath-breaker was not cut down when be made the Lord’s holy day to be an opportunity for wickedness; He that lied was not made a dreadful example of judgment like Ananias and Sapphira; He that stood out to oppose God was not swallowed up quick like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. No, all these have been spared, spared to this day: and to what end, think you? Surely, the long-suffering of God is repentance, and repentance is mercy. God waiteth long because He willeth not the death of any but that they turn to Him and live. In the second place why did God institute the ceremonial Law if there were no ways of pardoning transgression? Why the bullocks and the lambs offered in sacrifice? Why the shedding of blood if God did not intend to blot out sin? Why the burnt offerings in which God accepted man’s gift if man could not be accepted? Assuredly He could not be accepted if regarded as guilty. Why the peace offering in which God feasted with the offerer, and the two united in feeding upon the one sacrifice? How could this be unless God intended to forgive and enter into fellowship with men? I confess I cannot understand the institution of priesthood and sacrifice 727 unless mercy was intended thereby. Again, why was there a tabernacle for God to dwell with His people if He would not forgive their iniquities? How could He dwell with unforgiven men? Why was there a mercy-seat? Why was there a High Priest ordained Porn among men who should enter into the holy-place, and make a typical atonement? Does not a type imply the existence of that which is typified? Why the scapegoat to take away sin in symbol, if sin, cannot be taken away in reality? Why the burning of the offering without the gate in order that sin might be put away from God’s people, if it could not be put away? Certainly, the evident design of the whole Mosaic economy was to reveal to man the existence of mercy in the heart of God, and the effectual operation of that mercy in washing away sin. Further than this, dear Friends, if there were no forgiveness of sin why has the Lord given to sinful men exhortations to repent? Why does the Lord say, “Turn you to your God: keep mercy and judgment and wait upon the God continually?” Why does He say to men, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity, Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.” Why does He cry, “Therefore also now, says the Lord, turn you even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God”? Is it not because it can be added, “for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of

great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil”? Is it not true, even as Elihu said, “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver His soul from going into the pit, and His life shall see the light”? If sin could not be pardoned why under the Gospel are we bid to urge men to repent of sin, to confess their sins, and to forsake them? Might not the Lord have said, “Let them alone: it is of no use their repenting: no mercy is in reserve for them, therefore let them continue in their iniquity till their own ways destroy them”? Even the John Baptist cry of “Repent! Repent!” is a note of hope to transgressors. The times of their ignorance God has winked at, but now under Gospel rule He commands all men everywhere to repent, because repentance has the promise of the blotting out of sin. If you will think of it you will see that there must be pardons in the hand of God, or why the institution of religious worship among us to this day? Why are we allowed to pray in secret if we cannot be forgiven? What is the value of prayer at all if that first and most vital favor of forgiven sin is utterly beyond our reach? Why are we allowed to sing the praises of God? Why has the Holy Spirit given us the Book of Psalms? Why are we bid to use psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? God cannot accept the praises of unforgiven men worshippers must be clean before they earl draw near to His altar with their incense; if, then, I am taught to sing and give thanks to God it must be because “His mercy endures for ever.” Does God expect the condemned to praise Him? Will He shut us up in the prison-house for certain death and yet expect us to chant hallelujahs to His praise? It cannot be so. The very ordaining of prayer and praise indicates a design of mercy to the sons of men. Why, dear Friends, are there two special ordinances of God’s house if in that house there is no remission of sin? Why the baptism of believers? It signifies our death in Christ to sin. But how so if we cannot be dead to sin? It signifieth typically the washing away of sin, But to what end, and to what use, except of delusion, if there be no washing away of sin by God’s abounding Grace? What means the Lord’s Supper, that eating of bread with God and drinking of the cup in familiar fellowship with Him? Why that showing forth the death of Christ until He come if in that death there is no virtue, and if God cannot deal with men on terms of love? Surely the ordinances of the Lord’s house are full of invitation to such as bemoan their transgressions and are willing to come to Jesus for pardon and renewal. The very existence of a church, and of a Gospel ministry, and the toleration of divine worship are promises and prophecies of the forgiveness of sins. What assurance of pardon lies in the ordaining, scaling, and ratifying of the covenant of Grace. The first covenant left us under condemnation, hat one main design of the new covenant is to bring us into justification. Why a new covenant at all if our unrighteousness can never be removed? Is not this the tenor of the covenant as stated in our second text? Let the Holy Spirit Himself be a witness unto us as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews “ This is the covenant that I will make with diem alter those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” What do You say to this, O despairing one? Will you dream that God can lie and even make a covenant merely to mock poor sinners with a groundless hope? Oh, think not so, for there is forgiveness. 729 Furthermore, my brethren, why did Christ institute the Christian ministry, and send forth His servants to proclaim His Gospel? For what is the Gospel but a declaration that Christ is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins? Is not its great promise this—that God will put away our transgressions upon our believing in Jesus Christ, our Great Sacrifice? “I believe in the forgiveness of sins,” for if it were not so then has the cross become a nullity, and the death of the Only-begotten a hideous mistake. To what end those bleeding wounds? To what end that crown of thornsed head? To what end that cry “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani”? To what end that shout of “It is finished”? The cross is the grandest of realities, and the core of its meaning is the removal of sin by Him who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Assuredly there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness: heavy-laden soul, that fountain is opened for you. Now, once in the end of the world has the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself: poor guilty one, if you believe, your guilt was put away by His atoning dentin. Why are we so earnestly commanded to preach this Gospel to every creature if the creature hearing it and believing it must, nevertheless, still lie under His sin? Our Lord Jesus has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; why is this, if there He no remission? The genuine love of God is manifested in His desire that to the utmost ends of the earth it should be proclaimed that “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” *“Waft, waft you winds, the story, And you, you waters, roll, Till like a sea of Glory It spreads from pole to pole.”* There is forgiveness. Through the name of Jesus whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins. “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” “ He that believes in Him is

justified from all things from which He could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” Paul says, “God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you,” and it is even so. Now, you do not want any more arguments, but if you did I would venture to offer this. Why are we taught in that blessed model of prayer which our Savior has left us, to say, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” 730 or, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us”? It is evident that God means us to give a true, and hearty absolution to all who have offended us. He does not intend that we should play at forgiveness, but should really and from our hearts most freely and sincerely forgive all those who have done evil towards us in any way. Yes, but then He has linked with that forgiveness our prayer for mercy, teaching us to ask that He would forgive us as we forgive them. If, then, our forgiveness is real, so is His; if ours be sincere, so is His; if ours be complete, so is His; only much more so, inasmuch as the great God of all is so much more gracious than we poor, fallen creatures ever can be. A star of hope shines upon the sinner in the Lord’s Prayer in that particular petition; for it seems to say, “There is a real, true, and hearty forgiveness of God toward you, even as there is in your heart a real, true, and hearty forgiveness of those who offend against you.” Mind you do really and heartily forgive others, for your own pardon is to He measured thereby. See well to this, The best of all arguments is this: God has actually forgiven multitudes of sinners. We have read in Holy Scripture of men who walked with God and had this testimony, that they pleased God; but they could not have pleased God if their sins still provoked Him to wrath; therefore He must have put their sins away. Those saints of the Old Testament who were evidently divinely favored, with whom God held sweet communion, to whom He gave marvelous power in prayer, in whom He showed the majesty of faith— all those must have been forgiven men; for the Lord could not have walked with them, and dwelt in them, and worked by them, and displayed His Glory in them, if He had not forgiven them. But I need not talk of past ages; there be many sitting among you this day who if you will ask them will tell you that they enjoy a clear sense of forgiven sin. They remember well that happy day when Jesus washed their sins away; and their state of peace, of joyful privilege, and of expectant hope, is to them intensely delightful, and may be to you an evident testimony that remission of sin is a real experience, and is known among God’s people at this day. Sin can still be put away, the spot which seemed indelible can be washed out, till all is white as snow through the precious blood of Christ. Our’ texts, all of them declare it, saying with one breath, “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” May God the Holy Spirit make use of these arguments for the comfort of every seeking sinner here and of many more who shall read this discourse. 731 **II.** Secondly, THIS FORGIVENESS IS TANTAMOUNT TO FORGETTING SIN. This is a wonder to me, a wonder of wonders, that God should say that He will do what in some sense He cannot do;-that He should use speech which includes an impossibility, and yet that it should be strictly true as He intends it. God’s pardon of sin is so complete that He Himself describes it as not remembering our iniquity and transgression. I have said that there is an impossibility in it, and so there is, because the Lord cannot in strict accuracy of speech forget anything: forgetfulness is an infirmity, and God has no infirmities. The Lord does not exercise memory as you and I do. We recall the past, but He has no past: all things are present with Him. God sees everything at once by an intuitive perception: the past, the present, the future are before Him at a glance. We may not speak, except after the manner of men, of the Lord God as having memory; and yet how blessed it is that He should Himself use the speech which is current among ourselves, and represent Himself after the manner of a man, and then say, “Your sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever.” He wishes us to know that His pardon is so true and deep that it amounts to an absolute oblivion, a total forgetting of all the wrong-doing of the pardoned ones. You know what we do when we exercise memory. To speak popularly, a man lays up a thing in His mind: but when sin is forgiven it is not laid up in God’s mind. A certain matter has happened, and we remember it: storing it away in our memory. We read that “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” We make a kind of storeroom of our memory, and there things are preserved, like fruits in autumn, stored up to be used by and by. We reckon a man to He fortunate who has a good memory, so that He can lay by things in His brain where He can get at them in time of need. The Lord will not do this with our sins. He will not store them in His archives: He will not give them house-room. The record of our sin shall not be laid up in the divine treasury: we shall not cry with Job, “My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and you sewest up mine iniquity.” As for the ungodly, their sins are written with an iron pen, and the measure of their iniquity is daily filling, till it be poured out upon their own head their sins have gone before them to the judgment seat, and are crying aloud for vengeance. As for God’s people, their case is otherwise, the Lord imputes not their iniquities to them, and does not treasure them up against a day of wrath. Of course the Lord remembers their evil doings,

in the sense that He cannot forget anything; but judicially as a judge, He forgets 732 the transgressions of the pardoned ones. They are not before Him in court, and come not under His official ken. In remembering, men also consider and meditate on things; but the Lord will not think over the sins of His people. A grievous wrong is apt to engross our thoughts. It often casts its shadow upon the mind, and you cannot get rid of it. I have known persons brood over an offense as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. The wrong grows worse as they think it over. They carefully observe the offense from different points of view, and whereas they were indignant at first, they nurse their wrath and make it so warm, that it turns to fury. At first, they would have been satisfied with an apology; but when they have brooded over the injustice, it seems so atrocious that they demand vengeance on the offender. The merciful Lord does not so to those who repent. No; for He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The great Father's heart is not brooding over the injuries we have done: His infinite mind is not revolving within itself the tale of our iniquities. Ah, no. If we have fled to Christ for refuge, the Lord remembers our sin no more. The record of our iniquity is taken away, and the judge has no judicial memory of it. Sometimes you have almost forgotten a thing, and it is quite gone out of your mind; but an event happens which recalls it so vividly that it seems as if it were perpetrated but yesterday. God will not recall the sin of the pardoned. I am blest, thank God, with a splendid memory for forgetting what anybody says or does against me. I forget it, not because I try to do so, but because I cannot help it; and therefore I claim no credit for it. The other day when I was speaking kindly with a person I was reminded by another that this man had done me a great injustice years ago. I had no recollection of it, and when it was brought before my mind I was grateful that I had forgotten it, because I could honestly treat the man as a friend, as indeed He now is. The occurrence was banished from my mind till my memory was refreshed about it. The gracious Lord can never be refreshed in His memory concerning the sins of His people: they are gone past recall. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our' transgressions from us." Neither will there be a dark day when all on a sudden the Lord will say, "I have been treating this man graciously, but now I recollect what He did in former years, and I must change my tone. I recollect that oath He swore, that criminal indulgence into which He fell, that drunkenness, that piece of dishonesty, that awful hypocrisy; and though I have been gentle with Him, I must in justice change my course, 733 and punish Him." No! no! this will never be the case with our forgiving Lord. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "No more!" Let those words go echoing through the chamber's of despair: "No more!" Is there not music in the two syllables? God will never have His memory refreshed. The transgressions of His people are dead and buried with Christ, and they shall never have a Resurrection: "I will not remember their sins." Furthermore, this not remembering, means that God will never seek any further atonement. The Apostle says: "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." The one sacrifice of Jesus has made an end of sin. Under the old Law they offered an expiatory sacrifice, but they must needs offer it again and again. There was remembrance of sins made every year on the day of atonement; but now the blessed One has entered once for all within the veil, and has put away sin for ever by the sacrifice of Himself, so that there remains no inure sacrifice for sins The Lord will never demand another victim, nor seek another expiatory offering. The sufferings of Jesus are so all-sufficient that no Believer shall be made to suffer penalty for His unrighteousness. Look at that fiction of purgatory which is coming back into the English Church, and is hankered after by certain Dissenters. They are beginning to believe in a modified form of purgatory, and this is a dark sign of the times. Purgatory has always paid the Pope well; it is the fattest province of His dominions, and has furnished His larder plentifully. But how can God's people go to purgatory? for if they go there at all, they go there for sins which God does not remember, and so He cannot give a reason for sending them there. I have no authentic communication by which to describe purgatory, but by Romish report it is a terrible place; now, if true believers go there, then God either does remember their sins, which He says He will not do; or else He punishes them for sins which He does not recollect. Did you ever hear of a judge sending a man to prisons for a crime which the judge did not remember? Does God forgive and forget and yet punish? Do not, I pray you, believe in any shape or form in a middle state in which sin can be atoned for or the condition of a man altered. When you die you shall either go to Heaven or to Hell, and that straight away, and your state in either case will be fixed, and fixed eternally without the possibility of a change. This doctrine is the cornerstone of Protestantism, and if that be taken away there is a vacuum left in which nil the evil doctrines of the papacy will speedily find a nest. Stand you to the truth revealed in Scripture, and to that only. The wicked 734 shall go away unto everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. If you are forgiven God will never remember your sins; so that in any shape or way you shall

never have to make an atonement for them. Again, when it is said that God forgets our sins it signifies that He will never punish us for them. How can He when He has forgotten them? Next, that He will never upbraid us with them— “He gives liberally and upbraids not.” How can He upbraid us with what He has forgotten? He will not even lay them to our charge. See what Ezekiel says- “All His transgressions that He has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto Him.” The Apostle bravely demanded, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Shall God do it? “It is God that justifies,” how then, can He accuse? Shall Christ do it? He is the Judge; but He cannot accuse, for “it is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Shall Jesus intercede for us and yet accuse us? Shall there come sweet waters and bitter waters out of the same fountain? No, that cannot be. The Lord has forgotten our sins, and therefore He can never lay them to our charge. Once more, when the Lord says, “I will not remember their sins,” what does it mean but this—that He will not treat us any the less generously on account of our having been great sinners. You that have been the chief of sinners, He will not put you in the second class of Christians, and treat you with a sort of second-rate love, He will not even remember that you have sinned, but treat you as if you had been perfectly innocent, and were totally clear from all iniquity. He will not remember your faults. Why, look how the Lord takes some of the biggest sinners and uses them for His Glory. Is not this a proof that He has ceased to remember their sins? When I think of Peter standing up on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand being converted under His first sermon, I think no more of Peter’s failure and the cock crowing. I can see that the Lord has forgotten His threefold denial, and placed Him in the front to be a soul-winner. But the Lord Jesus not only uses His people, He honors them greatly. What honors He put upon the Apostles, those men that forsook Him and fled in the hour of His passion. He says to each of them, “I will not remember your sins,” for He makes them leaders of His hosts, though they have been a parcel of runaways, and have forsaken their Master in His hour of peril. See how condescendingly the Lord has taken some here present, and has honored them, and given them to bring blood-bought souls to Himself, in 735 proof that He has wholly forgotten their sin. Then to think that He should adopt us into His family, we that were His enemies, and rebellious, and children of the devil. Is it not wonderful that He puts us among the children, and even makes us “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” Surely, when that testament was written by which He made us heirs with Christ, it was clear proof that the Father did not any more remember our iniquities. To put down such blacks in the same testament with His own dear Son, and then to say, “I will receive them graciously and love them freely,” this is surprising Grace. Brethren, infinite love has made us to be “accepted in the Beloved,” comely with His comeliness which He has put upon us; precious in His sight and honorable, jewels in His casket, and a crown of Glory unto Him, is not this the sign of perfect forgiveness? With His whole heart He watches over us to do us good. Surely, blessing He blesses us; yes, and makes us blessings. We shall have Grace on earth, and Glory in Heaven. He will seat us as objects of His Grace in Heaven; not in an inferior place in the suburbs or behind the door, but He will cause us to sit with Jesus on His throne, even as He has sat down with the Father on His throne. We shall be with Him where He is and behold His Glory, and be forever peers of the heavenly realm. Surely all this proves that He has altogether blotted out our sins, and has determined to treat us as if we had been perfectly innocent. Indeed, the saints are without fault before the throne of God; for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, The Believer’s sins no longer exist; and “if they are searched for they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord.” *“Who is a pardoning God like you? And who has Grace so rich and free?”* Oh, that God would comfort His mourners by this sermon! I have a notion in my head that if when I was under the sense of sin I could have heard this subject handled, I should have found liberty at once. Though I had been hidden away in the back seat of the gallery out of sight, if only I had heard of such mercy as this, I should have jumped at it. I cannot tell how it might have been, for I do not remember hearing so plain a declaration of boundless Grace. Oh, how I pray and hope that the Lord will lead some poor soul to accept this unspeakable blessing! Come, you consciously guilty ones, and touch the silver Sceptre of your reigning Savior, He is ready to forgive: the atonement is made and accepted; the Savior who died has risen again; therefore come to Him, and be at peace. Oh, that the blessed Spirit may lead you to feel the power of the reconciling blood! 736 III. I finish with the blessed fact that FORGIVENESS IS TO BE HAD. How is it to be had? Let me speak briefly, and do you catch up every word and think over it. Forgiveness is to be had through the atoning blood. Why does God forget our sin? Is it not on this wise? He looks upon His son Jesus bearing that sin. Did you ever think of what God the Father sees in Jesus on the cross? Why you and I have seen enough to make us break our hearts, but when the Father saw His only-

begotten Son suffering even to death, it made such an infinite impression upon His great soul that He forgot the sins for which His Son gave His life. That new thing coming in, the most wonderful thing that God has on His heart, the death of the Onlybegotten, made a clean erasure in the eternal memory of all the transgressions of those for whom Christ died. In such way does He describe to us the mystery of forgiving love. Dear hearts, get under the shadow of the Redeemer's cross. Trust Jesus Christ now, and that blood is then and there applied to you, and your sins shall be remembered no more for ever, because He remembers His Son's suffering in your place and stead. Next remember that this forgetfulness of God is caused by overflowing mercy. God is love: "His mercy endures for ever"; and He desired vent for His love, His great heart was filled with a desire to display the Grace which pervaded His nature: He must be gracious, and He would be gracious; and because of that divine resolve He cast our sins behind His back. Come, then, if you wish, to have your sins forgiven! Come and bow before the mercy of God. Plead not merit but mercy. Do not dare to approach the Lord on terms of Law, but draw near on terms of grace. Here is a word for you which was said by an eminent saint when approaching His God: "Lord, I am Hell, but you are Heaven." Here is a full description of yourself; and as blessed a description of God, as may be. Come, then, poor Hell-deserving one and hide yourself in the Heaven of everlasting love, and it shall be a haven of peace to thee forever. How does God forget sin? Well, it is through His everlasting love. He loved His people before they fell; and He loved His people when they fell. "I have loved you," says He, "with an everlasting love"; and when that great love of His had led Him to give His Son Jesus for His people's ransom, it made Him also forget His people's sins. The Lord so loved His chosen that He said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel." Having shown His love by the gift of Jesus that love has covered a multitude of sins. Do you not see then that if you want to enter into this pardon, this forgetfulness of sin, you must come to God on the terms of His free love, and ask Him to forgive you because His name is love? "Have mercy upon me, O God according to your loving kindness; according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Again, God forgets His people's sins because of the complacency He has in them as renewed and sanctified creatures. When He hears their cries of repentance, when He hears their declarations of faith, when He sees the love which His Spirit has worked in them, when He beholds them growing more and more like His dear Son, He delights in them. His joy is fulfilled in them. He is well pleased with them, and communes with them lovingly. He observes their signs of Grace and accepts them, and remembers their iniquities no more. Oh, then, you must come to God and ask Him to change you, and to renew you, that He may have delight in you. Come and beseech Him that you may be born again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, for this must be if you are forgiven. There cannot be pardon of sin where there is not a renewal of the heart, and that must come from God by His sovereign Grace alone. Oh, you that would have the pardon of sin, come for it this morning in God's appointed way. "Repent." says He; that is, be sorry for your sin; change your mind about it and hate it, though once you loved it. They confess it, for He says, "only acknowledge your iniquity." Get home and mourn your transgression before your offended Lord, sincerely, fully, and with deep regret, and then He will take away your sin, for it is written He that confesseth and forsaketh His sin shall find mercy. This is His way, then. Own that you are guilty but ask that you may be guilty no more. Chief of all, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," and that saving includes an act of amnesty and oblivion as to all your sinful thoughts, and words, and acts. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the pith of it. Trust yourself in the bands that were nailed to the cross for you: trust yourself to the love of the heart which was pierced with a spear, and forthwith there came out blood and water. Have you done this? Then you are even now forgiven: your sin has gone, it is cast into the depths of the sea. Go down those aisles with your heart dancing within you for delight, for there is nothing laid against you now since you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus. God imputes not iniquity to the man who has cast Himself on the Savior. Go you therefore and never forget your sin, nor the mercy which has forgiven it. Always repent and always praise the Lord. Honour the forgetfulness of God in not remembering your faults, and from now on do you tell this blessed news to everyone you see-there is forgiveness, such forgiveness as was never heard of until God Himself revealed it by saying of His people, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." God bless you dear Friends, from now on and for ever. Amen. ***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-Jeremiah 31:15-37. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"-152, 202, 371. 739***

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE. NO. 1686 DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6TH, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. *"The men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"-Matthew 8:27. "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"-Mark 4:41.* THIS story of the tempest upon the lake is wonderfully full of spiritual interest. Not only does it, literally, show to us the divine power of our blessed Master in lulling the tempest, rendered the more conspicuous by being placed side by side with the human weakness which made Him sleep in the ship upon a pillow; but, spiritually, it is a kind of ecclesiastical history, a miniature outline of the story of the church in all ages. No, the teaching ends not when you have read the incident in that light, it also contains a suggestive forecast of the story of every man who is making the spiritual voyage in company with Jesus. Notice, first, how it is a kind of ecclesiastical history. There is Christ in the vessel with His disciples. What is that but a church with its pastor? We see in the church a vessel bearing a rich cargo, steering for a desired haven, and fitted out for fishing on the road, should fair opportunity occur. Her being upon a sea shows her to be here below, subject to trial, suffering, labor and peril. I scarcely know of any apter picture of a church than a ship upon the treacherous Galilean sea with Jesus and His disciples sailing in it. After a while comes a tempest: this we may safely reckon upon. Whatever ship makes a fair voyage, with a favoring wind, the ship of the church never will. She has her calms, but these last not for ever; her sail is sure to be weather-beaten at one time or another, and the occasions are seldom far apart. The vessel which has Jesus for its captain is destined to feel the tempest. Christ has not come to send peace on earth, but a sword: this is His own declaration, and He knows His own intent. Every sail of the good ship which bears the flag of the Lord High Admiral of our fleet must be beaten with the wind, and every plank in her must be tried by the waves. To Christ's church there are many storms, and some of them of the most terrible character. Of heresy: ah, how near to wrecking has she been with the false doctrines of Gnosticism, Arianism, Popery, and Rationalism! Of persecution she has constant experience; but sometimes exceeding vehement has the tornado been. In the early stages of church history, the Pagan persecutions of Rome followed thick and fast upon each other and when Giant Pagan had emptied out all His fury there came a worse tyrant, whose magical arts raised hurricanes of wind against the good ship. There sat at Rome a harlot who persecuted the saints exceedingly, being drunken with their blood. Then there raged a cyclone which almost drove the boat out of the water, and drenched and well-near drowned her crew: a fierce Euroclydon beat upon the royal vessel, so that the waves threatened to swallow her up quick. Tears and blood covered the saints as with a salt and crimson spray hers was no pleasure-trip; she went forth like the lifeboat, fashioned for the purpose of outriding the tempest. The true ship of the Lord was, and is, and will He in a storm until the Lord shall come; and then there shall be for it no further wave of trial, but the sea of glass for ever. Note, again, that, while this tempest was roaring worse and worse, the Lord was in the ship, but He seemed to be asleep. So has it often been. No Providence delivered the persecuted: no marvelous manifestations of the Spirit scattered the heresy. The Christ was in the church, but He was in the hinder part, with His head upon a pillow, asleep. You all know the portions of church history which this illustrates, Then came distress: the people in the vessel began to be alarmed; they were afraid that they should utterly perish. And do you wonder at it when the peril was so great? That distress led to prayer. Mighty prayer has often been produced by mighty trial. Oh, how slack has the church been in the presentation of her spiritual offering until the Lord has sent fire upon her, and that fire has seemed to kindle her frankincense, so that it has begun to smoke towards Heaven. Prayer was produced by distress, and prayer brought distress to an end. Then uprose the Master, and displayed His power and Godhead. You know how He has done so in reformations and revivals time after time. He has chidden the unbelief of His trembling saints, and then He has hushed the winds and the waves, and there has been a time of halcyon peace for His poor, weatherbeaten church; a period free from bloodshed and heresy, an era of progress and peace. The church has a history which has many a time repeated itself. If you take an interest in the navigation of that wondrous vessel which carries Christ and all His chosen, you will never have to complain of want of incidents. But I think I said that the story of the storm upon the lake is an admirable emblem of the spiritual voyage of every man who is bound for the fair havens in company with Jesus. We are with Christ, happy with Him, and sailing pleasantly: will this last? Right speedily comes a storm; the ship rocks and reels; she is covered with the waves. It looks as if our poor cockle-shell would sink to the bottom. Yet Jesus is in our hearts, and that is our safety. We are not saved by seamanship, but by having on board the Lord Paramount, who rules all winds and waves, and never yet lost a vessel that bore the cross at its masthead.

Sometimes within our hearts He seems to be asleep. We hear not His voice; we see but little of His face: His eyes are closed, and He Himself is hidden away out of sight. He has not altogether left us, blessed be His name; but He appears to be asleep. Ah, then the ship rocks again, and we reel again, and we wonder that He still can sleep then are we driven in awe at alarm to prayer, to which we ought to have betaken ourselves long before. It may be that we have been busy with ropes and tackle, strengthening the mast, furling the sail, doing all kinds necessary work, and therefore leaving undone the most necessary work of all, namely, seeking out the Master and telling Him the story of our peril. We pray not till we are forced to our knees, sad sinners that we are. The boat will go down She will go down! And now it is that we also go down to the cabin and begin to wake Him up with, "Master, save us: we perish!" Then you know what happens, how the gentle rebuke passes over our spirit and we are humbled; but the grander rebuke is heard by winds and waves, and they are quieted and sleep at the Master's feet, and in us and around us there is a great calm. Oh, how profound the peace! How blessed the stillness! We were about to say, "Would God it would last on for ever" but as yet tranquillity cannot be perpetual. Our perils of waters will He sure to repeat themselves. Often we go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, so that we see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. Hear how a poet sings the story— 742 *Fierce was the wild billow Dark was the night; Oars labor'd heavily Foam glimmer'd white Trembled the mariners Peril was near Then said the God of God, -'Peace! It is I!' "Ridge of the mountain-wave, Lower your crest! Wail of Euroclydon, Be you at rest! Sorrow can never be— Darkness must fly— Where says the Light of Light, -'Peace! It is I!' "Jesu, Deliverer! Come you to me: Soothe you my voyaging Over life's sea! You, when the storm of death Roars sweeping by, Whisper, O Truth of Truth! -'Peace! It is I!'"* On this occasion I will not further call your attention to the storm, or to the calm, but I beg you to observe the feelings of the disciples about the whole matter. The text says that "The men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" God evidently thinks much of His people's inward feelings, for they are recorded here, and in many other places. The report of what these poor fishermen felt is as carefully made as the record of what their Lord and Master said, since this was necessary to set forth the intent and purpose of their Lord's utterances. God often regards the external action as a mere husk, but the feeling of His people is the innermost kernel of their life-story, and He prizes it. Some men practice introspection so much that they grow at last to make a kind of fetish of their inward feeling. This is wrong. Yet there is an error on the other side in which we cease to make conscience of our feelings, and think them to be a matter of no consequence, as if there could be real life without feeling. I will cry up faith as much as any one; but there is no need to depreciate all the other graces, and especially all the emotions, in order to do honor to faith: we may honor the heir, and yet see no reason for slaying all the rest of the seed royal. We must both feel aright and believe aright, and it is sometimes good for us to have a lesson about how to feel towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Though feeling must be secondary to faith, yet it is far from being unimportant. At this time shall principally talk about three feelings towards Christ. First the men marveled. We will dwell upon that—marvelling at Christ's work. Secondly, if you will turn to Mark the fourth and the forty-first verse, you will see that Mark describes the feeling of the men as fearing "exceedingly." That shall be our second head-awe-stricken at His presence. Thirdly, we see them in our text admiring His person for they said, "What manner of man," or, more correctly, What kind of person is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" I. First, then, MARVELLING AT HIS WORK. May I ask you to indulge for a little while the feeling of wonder. You believe in Jesus Christ and you are saved. Salvation comes not by wondering, but by believing; but now, having been saved, having passed from death unto life, and having been preserved for years upon the sea of life in the midst of many tempests, and at this moment enjoying a great calm and restfulness of spirit, I invite you to marvel. What wonderful things Jesus has done for me! It is in my power, if I choose, to waste my time in reading romances, but I care nothing for them, for my own life is to me more romantic than romance; the story of God's goodness to me is more thrilling than any work of fiction could possibly be. I am speaking to some here who I am sure will join with me in owning that there is a freshness, a novelty, a surprise-power about the dealings of God with us which we do not meet with anywhere else. Well do we sing in our hymn- *"I need not go abroad for joys I have a feast at home,"* and we can also add that we need not go abroad for wonders, for we have a perfect museum at home in our own experience. John Bunyan, when He was describing the experience of His pilgrim, said, "Oh, world of wonders! I can say no less." And so it is. The life of the godly man on the God side 744 of it, as He receives Grace from Jesus, is a gallery of heavenly art, an exhibition of divine skill and power, a wonder-land of mercy. *"Still has my life new wonders seen Of lovingkindness rare; A monument of Grace I stand,*

Your goodness to declare.” Let us think for a minute or two of the parallel between us and these disciples as to wonderment. Consider first—that the instantaneous and profound calm was contrary to nature. The Galilean lake lies in a deep hollow, much below the level of the ocean; and in the sides of the cliffs and hills which shut it in there are valleys and openings which act as funnels, down which blasts of cold air from the mountains often rush upon a sudden. When the time of storm is really on, the lake of Galilee is not tossed about like an ordinary open sea, but is rent, and torn, and upheaved, and almost hurled out of its bed by down-driving hurricanes and twisting whirlwinds. No sailor knows which way the wind does blow except that it blows all ways at once, and particularly downwards; as if with a direct draught from Heaven, it blows the vessel into the water, and soon, changing its course, lifts it into the air. Any mariner who is not used to that strange, wild sea would soon lose His head, and despair of life. It is like a boiling cauldron; the spirits of the vasty deep stir it to its bottom. Yet this billowy lake in a moment was turned to glass by the word of Jesus a fact far more wonderful to witness than to read about. Such a change in the uproarious elements was altogether contrary to nature, and therefore “the men marveled.” Now, beloved, look back upon what your life has been. I do not know exactly where you begin your life-story. Some commence in the slime-pits of Sodom, in vice and drunkenness; others begin with wandering on the dark mountains of infidelity, or among the hogs and sloughs of pharisaism and formality. however, it is a miracle that you should have been made to fall at Jesus’s feet, and cry out for mercy through His precious blood. That you should give up all trust and confidence in self; and at the same time should turn away from favorite lusts which you once revelled in, is such a wonder that nobody would have believed it had it been prophesied to them. Certainly you never would have believed it yourself; and yet it has taken place, and other unlooked-for changes have followed it. Why, you have lived since then in a way that would have been once condemned by yourself as utterly absurd. Had an oracle informed you of it you would have ridiculed its forecast. “No,” you would have said, “I shall never be that: I shall never feel that: I shall never do that.” And yet, so it has been with you. The boiling cauldron of your nature has been cooled down and quieted, and an obedient calm has succeeded rebellious rage. Is it not so? I can only say that, if your religion has never produced a wonder, I wonder that you believe in it. If there is not something about you through divine Grace which quite surprises your own self, I should not be amazed if one of these days you wake up and find that you have been self-deceived. Far above nature are the ways of Grace in men, and if you know them they have produced in you what your natural temperament and your worldly surroundings never could have produced. There has been fire where you looked for snow, and cool streams where you expected flames. A growth of good wheat has been seen where nature would have produced nothing but thorns and briars. Where sin abounded Grace has much more abounded, and your life has become the theater of miracles, and the home of wonder. These men marveled, next, because the calm was so unexpected by reason. The ship was near going to pieces. A gust of wind threatened to lift her right out of the water, and the next threatened to plunge her to the bottom of the sea. The weary fishers certainly did not look for a calm: there were no signs of such a gift. When they said, “Master, we perish,” I do not know what they thought their Lord would do; but they assuredly never dreamed that He would stand up in the hinder part of the ship, and say, “Winds and waves, what mean you? Your Master is here. Be still.” That was beyond their nautical experience, and their fathers had never seen such wonders in their day. They could not hope that in a moment they should be in a profound calm. Now, may I ask you to wonder a little at what the Lord has done for you? Has He not done for you what you never expected? To speak for myself: I never reckoned upon standing here to preach to thousands of God’s people. When I was first brought to Jesus I had no such hope. Why should I be taken from the school and from the desk to lead a part of His flock? I wonder more and more that by His Grace I am what I am. Some of you, when you sit at the communion-table, may well feel that the most wonderful thing about it is that you should find a welcome place at the Lord’s own festival. Did some of you expect, a year ago, that you would be here now, on a Thursday night, listening to a talk about Jesus Christ? Why, you hardly know how you did get here. You can scarcely tell the way by which the Lord has led you to be a lover of the Gospel. Look at your inner feelings, as well as your outward position: are you not often made the subject of desires, of longings, of groanings, and, on the other hand, of enjoyments, of sweet and precious endearments, of high and gracious expectations, which utterly surprise you as you remember what you used to be? Are you not “like them that dream” when you think over the Lord’s lovingkindness? And if others say that “the Lord has done great things for you,” does not your heart chime in with all its bells, and ring out the joynotes, “The Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad”? Come, indulge your wonder. Admire and marvel at the exceeding Grace of God towards you in working contrary to

nature, and contrary to all reasonable expectations, and bringing you to be His dear and favored child. Marvels of mercy, wonders of Grace, belong unto God Most High. Besides this, the idea of a storm which should immediately be followed by a great calm was strikingly new to experience. These fishermen of the Galilean lake had never seen it after this fashion before. We read in the Old Testament of some, to whom it was said, "You have not gone this way heretofore"; and certainly the same might have been said to these disciples. "You have been in tempest, but you never in your lives before were one minute in a tempest and the next in a calm." it must have been enough to make them weep for joy, or, at least, it must have led them to hold up their hands in glad astonishment. The deliverance worked by their Lord was so fresh, so altogether new that marvelling was natural. Well, now, brothers and sisters, to come back to ourselves again—have you not often experienced that which has astounded you by its novelty? Are not God's mercies new every morning? I address some of you who have been forty or fifty years in the ways of God: do you not find a continual freshness in the manifestations of God's goodness to you both in Providence and Grace? Let me ask you, has religious life been to you like mounting a treadmill monotonous, wearisome, uniform? If so, there is something wrong about you; for while we live near to God, we dwell under new heavens and walk upon a new earth. When a man travels through the Alps on a bright sunshiny day, all things are span new, as though born that morning: that drop of dew on the grass, He never saw before, that drifting cloud has newly arrived upon the scene. Never before has the traveler seen the face of nature radiant with the same smile as that which now delights Him. Has it not been so with you in the journey of life? Have not all things become new and remained new since you were born anew? Has not Grace been heaped upon Grace, so that each new experience has excelled its predecessor? Still have I beheld fresh beauties in my Master's face, fresh glories in my Master's word, fresh assurance of His faithfulness in His Providence, fresh in my Master's Spirit as He has dealt graciously with my soul. I know that it is so with you; and I want you to marvel at it that God should take so much trouble to manifest Himself to poor creatures that are not worth His treading on: that He should devise a thousand things most rare and new for such insignificant insects of a day as we are. Glory be to His blessed name, it may well be said of us, "The men marveled and said, What manner of person is this who dealeth so with His people? "Who is a God like unto you? What is man that you are mindful of Him? and the son of man that you visitest Him? These three things made the disciples wonder. There was another. I should think that it was a great marvel to them that a calm was sent so soon after the storm. Man needs time, but God's Word runs very quickly. Man travels with weary foot; the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly, yes, He flies upon the wings of the wind. The particles of air and the drops of water were all in confusion through the tempest, rushing as if chaos had come again, rising in whirlwinds and falling in cataracts; yet they did but see the face of their Maker, and they were still. In one single instant there was a calm. Have not you and I experienced instantaneous workings of divine Grace upon our spirits? It may not be so with all, but some of us at the first instant of our faith lost the burden of sin in a moment. Our load was all gone before we knew where we were. The change from sorrow to joy was not worked in us by degrees, but in a moment the sun leaped above the horizon and the night of our soul was over. Has it not been so since? We have been in the midst of God's people as heavy as lead, and without power to enjoy a truth, or to perform a holy act. The hymns seemed a mockery and the prayer an empty form; and yet in a single moment the rod of the Lord has touched the rock and the waters have flowed forth, and by the very means of Grace which seemed so dull and powerless, we have been enlivened and comforted. We have blessed the Lord that ever we came to the place. I do not know how it is that we undergo such sudden changes. Yes I do. It is because God works all good things in us, and He is able to accomplish in an instant that which we could not effect in a year. He can in a moment change our prison into a palace, and our ashes into beauty: He can bid us put off our sackcloth and put on the wedding garments of delight. As in the twinkling of an eye this corruptible shall put on incorruption, so in an instant our spiritual death can blossom into heavenly life. This is a great wonder. Go and marvel at what the Lord has so speedily done for you. And then to think that it should have been so perfect. When a storm subsides, the sea is generally angry for hours, if not for days. A great wind at Dover yesterday would make the Channel rough for some time. But when our Lord Jesus makes a calm the sea forgets her raging and smiles at once: in fact," He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." The winds hush all their fury and are quiet in an instant when He bids them rest. And oh, when the Lord gives joy and peace and blessedness to His people, He does not do it by halves. "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" There is no such thing as a half blessing for a child of God. The Lord gives Him fullness of peace- "the peace of God which passes all understanding." He causes Him to enjoy quiet through believing,

and He enables Him to rejoice in tribulation also; for tribulation works blessing to the souls of men. I feel that I cannot speak as I could wish, but I shall finish this division of the discourse by saying that one point of wonder was that the calm was worked so evidently by the Master's word, He spoke and it was done, He poured no oil upon the waters; His will was revealed in a word, and that will was Law. Not an atom of matter dares to move if the divine fiat forbids: the sovereignty of Jesus is supreme, and His word is with power. Now, dear friend, I know that there must have been very much that is wonderful in your life as a Christian; but do not think yourself the only partaker of such wonderment. Let us all sit down, and enquire each one, "Why is this to me? Why me, Lord? How can such great Grace be shown to me; and how can the Son of God stoop to look at me and take me into marriage union with Himself, and promise that I shall live because He lives, that I shall reign because He reigns?" Sit down, I say, and believingly marvel, and marvel, and marvel, and never leave off marvelling. And let me drop one little word into your ear. Is there something that you want of God concerning which unbelief has said that it is too wonderful to be expected? Let that be the reason why you shall expect it. There is nothing to a Christian so probable as the unexpected, and there is nothing which God is so likely to do for us as that which is above all we ask or even think. God is at home in wonder-land. If what you want is a commonplace thing, perhaps it may not come; but if it strikes you as a marvel, you are in a fit state of heart to honor God for it, and you are likely to receive it. Do not think that because between you and Heaven, if you reach it, there will be a giant's causeway of marvels, therefore you will never get there; but, on the contrary, conclude that the God who began to save you by so great a miracle as the gift and death of His own dear Son, will go on to perfect your salvation even if He have to fling into the sea a thousand heavens to make stepping-stones for you to tread upon are you can reach His presence. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?" Therefore expect wonders. These men marveled: expect to keep on marvelling till you get to Heaven, and to keep on marvelling when you are in Heaven, and throughout eternity. Wonder will be a principal ingredient of our adoration in Heaven: we *"Shall sing with wonder and surprise His loving-kindness in the skies."* I have been somewhat long on this first head, I will therefore give you a little, and only a little, upon the second. **II.** Let us now see how the disciples were AWE-STRICKEN AT OUR LORD'S PRESENCE. Mark says that "the men feared greatly." They feared greatly because they found themselves in the presence of one who had stilled the winds and the waves. Brothers and sisters, it is well to cultivate that holy familiarity which comes from nearness to Jesus, and yet we ought always to be humbled by a sense of that nearness. Permit me to remind the boldest Believer that our loving Lord is still God over all. He is to be honored and revered, worshipped and adored, by all who draw near to Him. However much He is our brother. He says, "You call me Master and Lord, and you do well, for so I am." He is all the greater because of His condescension to us, and we are bound to recognize this. Whenever Jesus is near, the feeling of holy awe and solemn dread will steal over true disciples. I am afraid of that way of being so familiar with Christ as to talk of Him as "dear Jesus," and "dear Lord," as if He were some Jack or Harry that we might pat on the back whenever we liked. No, no. This will never do. It is not such language as men would use to their prince: let them not thus address the King of kings. However favored we may be, we are but dust and ashes, and our spirit must be chastened with reverence. When Jesus is near us we ought to fear exceedingly because we have doubted Him. If you had been suspicious of a dear friend, and had indulged 750 hard thoughts about Him, and on a sudden you found yourself sitting in the same room with Him, you would feel awkward, especially if you understood that He knew what you had said and thought. Oh, you will feel ashamed of yourself, my brother, if Jesus shall draw near to you. The wisest thing you can do in such a case is to say, "My Master, my Lord, since you do favor me with your presence I will first fall at your feet, and confess that I did doubt you, that I did think that the stormy wind would swallow up the vessel, and that the waves would devour both you and me. Forgive me, Master, forgive me for having thought so ill of you." Whenever we are near to Christ, one of the first feelings should be that of great humiliation. Let us fall at His feet, and confess how ill we have thought of Him. Brethren, we have been so foolish as to fear His creatures, paying to them a sort of worship of fear, as if they had more power to harm than Jesus had to help. We clothe wind and sea with attributes which belong to God only; and look upon our trials as if they tried the Lord too, and vanquished Him because they vanquish us. Are we not because of this smitten with dread in the presence of the Christ? And then the next feeling should be,—since He has come to me, this Mighty One who has worked such marvels for me, let me try to order myself aright in His presence. I notice whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is very present in this congregation how carefully everybody sings. I notice about tune, time, and tone a difference from the singing

which' is usual, and even from that singing which comes of having an acquired skill in music. Though it may seem a trifle, yet I cannot help observing that when people come to the communion-table as a matter of routine they frequently behave roughly, walking noisily and looking about, or else they sit like statues, with a chill propriety of posture and vacancy of countenance but you will notice that fellowship with Jesus affects the glance of the eye, the thoughts of the soul, and consequently the movements of the body. When a man is truly conscious that Jesus, the Wonder-worker is near, He fears exceedingly. If ever you say to Jesus, "You know that I love you," mind you put "Lord" before it— Lord, you know all things"; for He is your Lord still, Where Jesus is, there is godly fear, which is by no means the same as slavish fear. Every true child has a reverence for His father. Every true daughter has a loving respect for her mother. So is it with us towards our Lord Jesus. We owe so much to Him, and He is so great and so good, and we are so little and so sinful, that there must be a blessed sense 751 of holy awe whenever we come before Him. Indulge it. Indulge it now. You know how John puts it: "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." Why, that is the man who leaned His head on the bosom of Christ. Yes, that is the man who fell at His feet as dead. If your head has never leaned upon the bosom of the Lord, I should not wonder if you can hold it up in His presence; but when it has once lain there in confiding love, reposing upon boundless mercy, then that head of your will lie in the dust uncrowned if God has honored it; for it will be your delight to cast your crown at His feet, and give Him all the Glory. O, reign for ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords! Conquer me, my Lord; subdue me perfectly. Make dust of me beneath your feet. if you shall be but the tenth of an inch the higher for my downcasting. Oh, my Master, and my Lord, with joy I would shrink to nothing before you, that you may be all in all. May this be your feeling and mine. The men feared exceedingly; let us fear also, after a believing sort. **III.** Now to close; the third thing is ADMIRING THE PERSON OF JESUS; for these men who marveled, and who feared exceedingly, admired the person of Him who had set them free from the storm, saying, "What manner of person is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Come, let us admire and adore the nature of Christ which is altogether beyond our comprehension. The winds and the sea obeyed Him, though He had slept like other men. When His head was that of an infant the crown of the universe was about His brow. When He was in the carpenter's shop He was still the Creator of all worlds. When He went to die upon the tree, a myriad of angels would have come to rescue Him if He had. but willed it. Even in His humiliation He was still the Son of the Highest, God over all, blessed for ever. Now that He is exalted in Heaven, do not forget the other side of the question; believe that He is just as much man now as when He was here—as truly a brother 'of our race as He is God over all, blessed for evermore. Let us now give our hearts to admiration of Him in His complex nature which is beyond comprehension. He is my next of kin, and yet my God, at once my Redeemer and my Lord. We may each one cry with Job, "I know that my next of kin lives, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though though my skin worms devour this body, yet in lay flesh shall I see God Because He lives as my kinsman there is the sweetness of it and because He is my God—there is the Glory of it He is both tenderly compassionate for my infirmities, and gloriously able to overcome them. He is a complete Savior because He is both human and divine. Come my 752 soul how down in wonder that ever God should send such a Savior as this to you. A person asked me the other day whether I had seen a book entitled "Sixteen Saviors." I answered— "No, I have not. and I do not want to know of sixteen saviors; I am perfectly satisfied with one." If all who dwell in Heaven and earth could be made into saviors, and the whole were put together, you might blow them away as a child blows away thistledown but there is this one Savior, the Son of man and yet the mighty God, and He cannot be moved. Joy then, my brethren, and rejoice in the nature of your blessed Lord. Next, rejoice in His power which has no limit, so that even the winds and the waves obey Him. The winds—can they have a master? The waves that cast their spray upon the face of princes, can they own a sovereign? Yes, the most fickle of elements, the most unruly of forces are all under the power of Jesus. Joy and rejoice in this. Little as well as great you Atlantic that divides the world and that little drop in the basin of Gennesaret—are alike in the hand of Jesus. The power of God is seen in a falling mountain when it crashes village but it is as truly present when the seeds are scattered from the pod of the gorse, or a rose-leaf falls upon the garden walk. God is seen when an angel flashes from Heaven to earth, and is He not seen when a bee flits from flower to flower? Jesus is the master of the little as well as of the great, yes, King of all things; and I joy this moment to think that even the wicked actions of ungodly men, though they are not deprived of their sinfulness, so as to make the men the less responsible, are, nevertheless, overruled by that great Lord of ours, who works all things according to the counsel of His will. In the front I see Jesus leading the van of Providence. Behind He guards the rear. On the heights I see Jesus reigning King of Kings and Lord of lords: in the

deeps I mark the terror of His justice as He binds the dragon with His chain. Let the universal cry of “Hallelujah” rise unto the Son of God, world without end. Sit down and admire and adore His unlimited power, and then conclude by paying homage to that sovereignty of His which brooks no question; for the winds and waves did not only perform His will, but, as if they were waking into life and rising into intelligent knowledge of Him, they are said to obey Him; from which I gather that Christ is not only the forceful muster of unintelligent agencies, but that He is the sovereign master of things that can obey Him; and He will be obeyed. Ah, you may bite at Him, and hiss at Him; but as the viper broke His teeth against the file, yet hurt it not, so shall the ungodly exercise all their craft and all their strength, and the end shall be 753 shame and confusion of face to them, The kingdom of our Lord and Master is by some thought to be a long way off, and His cause is hall despaired of by faint-hearted men; but He that sitteth in the heavens laughs at the impatience of saints as well as at the impiety of sinners, for He knows that all is well. Out of seeming evil He produces good, and from that good a better still, and better still in infinite progression. All things move towards His eternal coronation, As once every atom of history converged to His cross, so does it to-day project itself towards His crown: the Lord Jesus comes to His well-earned throne as surely as He came to the shameful cross. He comes, and when He comes it shall be as when He rose in the ship and rebuked the winds, and the men marveled; for all storms of raging passion, conflicting opinion, and fierce warfare shall be hushed, and He shall be admired in His saints, and glorified in all them that believe; while even unbelievers shall marvel at Him and say, “What manner of person is this, that even earth and Hell obey Him, and all things are subject to His sovereign power!” Happy are the eyes that shall see Him in that day with joy. Happy are the men who shall sit at the right hand of the Coming One. Oh, beloved, your eyes and mine shall see it if we have first looked to the Redeemer upon the cross and found salvation in Him. Courage, brethren; let the waves dash and the winds howl. The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge. All is safe because of His presence, and all shall end gloriously because of His manifestation. The Lord bless you, in tempest and in calm, for Christ’s sake. Amen, ***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 8. HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—243, 222. 814.*** Just Published. Price Eight Shillings. **THE TREASURY OF DAVID-VOL. 6. BY C. H. SPURGEON.** “The work as a whole will constitute one of the most erudite and painstaking commentaries on a single book of Scripture which one expositor has ever been known to complete. In the exposition Mr. Spurgeon is seen in His full strength, both as a writer and as a theologian, while numbers of intelligent readers, besides critics and preachers, will value that carefully-selected body of illustrative material following every 754 section which years of plodding and patient research has alone succeeded in bringing together.” ***PASSMOEE & ALABASTER, 4,*** Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers. 755

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THE LAW WRITTEN ON THE HEART. NO. 1687 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29TH, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON. *After those days, says the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.*"-Jeremiah 31:33. LAST Lord's-day morning we spoke of the first great blessing of the covenant of Grace, namely, the full forgiveness of sins.* Then we dilated with delight upon that wonderful promise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," I hope our consciences were pacified and our hearts filled with wonder as we thought of God's casting behind His back all the sins of His people; so that we could sing with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities." This great blessing of pardoned sin is always connected with the renewal of the heart. It is not given because of the change of heart, but it is always given with the change of heart. If God takes away the guilt of sin, He is sure at the same time to remove the power of sin. If He puts away our offenses against His Law, He also makes us desire in future to obey the Law. In our text we observe the excellence and dignity of the Law of God. The Gospel has not come into the world to set aside the Law. Salvation by Grace does not erase a single precept of the Law, nor lower the standard of justice in the smallest degree; on the contrary, as Paul says, we do not make void the Law through faith, but we establish the Law. The Law is never honored by fallen man till He comes from under its condemning rule, and walks by faith, and lives under the covenant of Grace. When we were under the 756 covenant of works we dishonored the Law, but now we venerate it as a perfect display of moral rectitude. Our Lord Jesus has shown to an assembled universe that the Law is not to be trifled with, and that every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward, since the sin which He bore on our account brought upon Him, as our innocent substitute, the doom of suffering and death. Our Lord Jesus has testified by His death that, even if sin be pardoned, yet it is not put away without an expiatory sacrifice. The death of Christ rendered more honor to the Law than all the obedience of all who were ever under it could have rendered; and it was a more forcible vindication of eternal justice than if all the redeemed had been cast into Hell, When the Holy One smites His own Son, His wrath against sin is evident to all. But this is not enough. The Law is in the Gospel not only vindicated by the sacrifice of Christ, but it is honored by the work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men. Whereas under the old covenant the commands of the Law excited our evil natures to rebellion, under the covenant of Grace we consent unto the Law that it is good, and our prayer is, "Teach me to do your will, O Lord." What the Law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, the Gospel has done through the Spirit of God, Thus the Law is had in honor among believers, and though they are no more under it as a covenant of works, they are in a measure conformed to it as they see it in the life of Christ Jesus, and they delight in it after the inward man. Things required by the Law are bestowed by the Gospel. God demands obedience under the Law: God works obedience under the Gospel. Holiness is asked of us by the Law: holiness is worked in us by the Gospel so that the difference between the economics of Law and Gospel is not to be found in any diminution of the demands of the Law, but in the actual giving unto the redeemed that which the Law exacted of them, and in the working in them that which the Law required. Notice, beloved friends, that under the old covenant the Law of God was given in a most awe-inspiring manner, and yet it did not secure loyal obedience. God came to Sinai, and the mountain was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. So terrible was the sight of God manifesting Himself on Sinai that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Out of the thick darkness which covered the sublime summit there came forth the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud and long, and a voice proclaimed one by one the ten great statutes and ordinances of the moral Law. I think I see the 757 people at a distance, with bounds set about the mount, crouching with abject fear, and at last entreating that these words might not be spoken to them any more. So terrible was the sound of Jehovah's voice, even when He was not declaring vengeance, but simply expounding righteousness, that the people could not endure it any longer: and yet no permanent impression was left upon their minds, no obedience was shown in their lives. Men may be cowed by power, but they can only be converted by love. The sword of justice has less power over human hearts than the scepter of mercy. Further to preserve that Law, God Himself inscribed it upon two tables of stone, and He gave these tablets into the hands of Moses. What a treasure! Surely no particles of matter had hitherto been so honored as these slabs, which had been touched by the finger of God, and bore on them the legible impress of His mind. But these laws on stone were not kept: neither the stones nor the laws were revered. Moses had not long gone up into the mount before the once awe-struck people were bowing before the golden calf, forgetful of Sinai

and its solemn voice, and making to themselves the likeness of an ox that eateth grass, and bowing before it as the symbol of the godhead. When Moses came down from the hill with those priceless tablets in His hands, He saw the people wholly given up to base idolatry, and in His indignation He dashed the tablets to the ground and broke them in pieces, as well He might when He saw how the people had spiritually broken them and violated every word of the Most High. From all which I gather that the Law is never really obeyed as the result of servile fear. You may preach up the anger of God, and the terrors of the world to come, but these do not melt the heart to loyal obedience. It is necessary for other ends that man should know of God's resolve to punish sin, but the heart is not by that fact won to virtue. Man revolts yet more and more; so stubborn is He that the more He is commanded the more He rebels. The decalogue upon your Church walls and in your daily service has its ends, but it can never be operative upon men's lives until it is also written on their hearts, fables of stone are hard, and men count obedience to God's Law to be a hard thing: the commands are judged to be stony while the heart is stony, and men harden themselves because the way of the precept is hard to their cold minds. Stones are proverbially cold, and the Law seems a cold, chill thing, for which we have no love as long as the appeal is to our fears. Tablets of stone, though apparently durable, can readily enough be broken, and so can God's commands; so are they indeed broken every day by us, and those who have the clearest knowledge of the will of God nevertheless offend 758 against Him. As long as they have nothing to keep them in cheek but a servile dread of punishment, or a selfish hope of reward, they yield no loyal homage to the statutes of the Lord. At this time I have to show you the way in which God secures to Himself obedience to His Law in quite another fashion; not by thundering it out from Sinai, nor by engraving it upon tablets of stone, but by coming in gentleness and infinite compassion into the hearts of men, and there, upon fleshy tables, inscribing the commands of His Law in such a manner that they are joyfully obeyed, and men become the willing servants of God. This is the second great privilege of the covenant: not second in value, but in order— "who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases." It is thus described by Ezekiel: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them." In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have it in another form, and we read it thus: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This is so inestimably precious that you who know the Lord are longing for it, and it is your great delight that it is to be worked in you by the sovereign Grace of God. We shall, first of all, look at the tablets— "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts"; secondly, at the writing; thirdly, at the writer; and, fourthly, at the results which come of this wondrous writing. O that the Spirit who is promised to lead us into all truth may illuminate us now. **I.** First, I invite your attention to THE TABLETS upon which God writes His Law— "I will put my Law in their inward parts." Just as once He put the two tables into the ark of gopher wood, so He will put His holy Law into our inward nature, and enclose it in our thoughts and minds and memories and affections, as a jewel in a casket. Then He adds, "And I will write it in their hearts." Just as the holy words were engraven upon stone, so shall they now be written in the heart, in the handwriting of the Lord Himself. Mark 759 that the Law is written not on the heart, but in the heart, in the very texture and constitution of it, so that into the center and core of the soul obedience shall be infused as a vital principle. Thus, you see, the Lord has selected for His tablets that which is the seat of life. It is in the heart that life is to be found, a wound there is fatal: where the seat of life is there the seat of obedience shall be. In the heart life has its permanent palace and perpetual abode: and God says that, instead of writing His holy Law on stones which may be left at a distance, He will write it on the heart, which must always be within us. Instead of placing the Law upon phylacteries which can be bound between the eyes but may easily be taken off, He will write it in the heart, where it must always remain. He has bid His people write His laws upon the posts of their doors and upon their gates; but in those conspicuous places they might become so familiar as to be unnoticed; the Lord now Himself writes them where they must always be noted and always produce effect. If men have the precepts written in the abode of their life, they live with the Law, and cannot live without it. It is a wonderful thing that God should do this. It displays infinitely greater wisdom than if the Law had been inscribed on slabs of granite or engraven on plates of gold. What wisdom is this which operates upon the original spring of life, so that all that flows forth from man shall come from a sanctified fountain-head! Observe

next, that not only is the heart the seat of life, but it is the governing power. It is from the heart, as from a royal metropolis, that the imperial commands of the man are issued by which hand and foot, and eye and tongue, and all the members are ordered. If the heart be right, then the other powers must yield submission to its sway, and become right too. If God writes His Law upon the heart, then the eye will purify its glances, and the tongue will speak according to rule, and the hand will move and the foot will travel as God ordains. When the heart is fully influenced by God's Spirit, then the will and the intellect, the memory and the imagination, and everything else which makes up the inward man, comes under cheerful allegiance to the King of kings. God Himself says, "Give me your heart," for the heart is the key of the entire position. Hence the supreme wisdom of the Lord in setting up His Law where it becomes operative upon the entire man. But before God can write upon man's heart it must be prepared. It is most unfit to be a writing-table for the Lord until it is renewed. The heart must first of all undergo erasures. What is written on the heart already, some of us know to our deep regret. Original sin has cut deep lines, Satan has scored His horrible handwriting in black letters, and our evil habits have left their impressions. How can the Lord write there? No one would expect the holy God to inscribe His holy Law upon an unholy mind. The former things must be taken away, that there may be clear space upon which new and better things may be engraven. But who can erase these lines? "Can the Ethiopian change His skin, or the leopard His spots? then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The God who can take away the spots from the leopard, and the blackness from the Ethiopian, can also remove the evil lines which now deface the heart. As the heart must undergo erasure, it must also experience a thorough cleansing, not of the surface only, but of its entire fabric. Truly, brethren, it was far easier for Hercules to purge the Augean stables than for our hearts to be purged; for the sin that lies within us is not an accumulation of external defilement, but an inward, all-pervading corruption. The taint of secret and spiritual evil is in man's natural life, every pulse of His soul is disordered by it. The eggs of all crimes are within our being: the accursed virus, from whose deadly venom every foul design will come, is present in the soul. Not only tendency to sin, but sin itself has taken possession of the soul, and blackened and polluted it through and through, till there is not a fibre of the heart untinged with iniquity. God cannot write His Law in our inward parts till with water and with blood He has purged us. Tables on which the Lord shall write must be clean, therefore the heart on which God is to engrave His Law must be a cleansed heart; and it is a great joy to perceive that from the person of our Lord heart-cleansing blood and water flowed, so that the provision is equal to the necessity. Blessed be the name of our gracious God, He knows how to erase the evil and to cleanse the soul through His Holy Spirit's applying the work of Jesus to us. In addition to this, the heart needs to be softened, for the heart is naturally hard, and in some men it has become harder than an adamant stone. They have resisted God's love till they are impervious to it: they have stood out obstinately against God's will till they have become desperately set on mischief, and nothing can affect them. God must melt the heart, must transform it from granite into flesh; and He has the power to do it. Blessed be His name, according to the covenant of Grace He has promised to work this wonder, and he will. Nor would the softening be enough, for there are some who have a tenderness of the most deceiving kind. They receive the word with joy: they feel every expression of it, but they speedily go their way and forget what manner of men they are. They are as impressible as the water, but the impression is as soon removed; so that another change is needed, namely, to make them retentive of that which is good: else might you engrave and re-engrave, but, like an inscription upon wax, it would be gone in a moment if exposed to heat. The devil, the world, and the temptations of life, would soon erase out of the heart all that God had written there if He did not create it anew with the faculty of holding fast that which is good. In a word, the heart of man needs to be totally changed, even as Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again." Dear hearers, we preach to you that whoever believes in Christ has everlasting life, and we speak neither more nor less than the truth of God when we say so; but yet, believe us, there must be as great a change in the heart as if a man were slain and made alive again. There must be a new creation, a Resurrection from the dead; old things must pass away, and all things must become new. God's Law can never be written upon the old natural heart: there must be a new and spiritual nature given, and then upon the center of that new life, upon the throne of that new power within our life, God will set up the proclamation of His blessed will, and what He commands shall be done. So, then, you see these tablets are not so easily written upon as perhaps at the first we thought. If God is to write the Law upon the heart, the heart must be prepared, and in order to being prepared, it must be entirely renewed by a miracle of mercy, such as can only be worked by that omnipotent hand which made both Heaven and earth. **II.** Secondly, let us pass on to notice THE WRITING. "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and

write it in their hearts.” What is this writing? First, the matter of it is the Law of God. God writes upon the hearts of His people that which is already revealed; He inscribes there nothing novel and unrevealed, but His own will which He has already given us in the book of the Law. He writes upon the heart by gracious operation that which He has already written in the Bible by gracious revelation, He writes: not philosophy, nor imagination, nor superstition nor fanaticism, nor idle fancies. If any man says to me, “God has written such and such a thing on my heart,” I reply, “Show me it in the Book,” for if it be not according to the other Scriptures it is not a scripture of God. A fancy as to a man’s being a Prophet, or a prince, or an angel, may be on a man’s heart, but God did not write it there, for His own declaration is, “I will write my Law in their hearts,” and He speaks not of anything beyond. The nonsense of modern pretenders to prophecy is no writing of God; it would be a dishonor to a sane man to ascribe it to Him: how can it be of the Lord? He here promises to write His own Law on the heart, but nothing else. Be you content to have the Law written on your soul, and wander not into vain imaginings lest you receive a strong delusion to believe a lie. Observe, however, that God says He will write His whole Law on the heart— this is included in the words, “my Law.” God’s work is complete in all its parts, and beautifully harmonious. He will not write one command and leave out the rest as so many do in their reforms. They become indignant in their virtue against a particular sin, but they riot in other evils. Drunkenness is to them the most damnable of all transgressions, but covetousness and uncleanness they wink at. They denounce theft, and yet defraud; cry out against pride, and yet indulge envy: thus they are partial, and do the work of the Lord deceitfully. It must not be so. God does not set before us a partial holiness, but the whole moral Law. “I will write my Law in their hearts.” Human reforms are generally lopsided, but the Lord’s work of Grace is balanced and proportionate. The Lord writes the perfect Law in the hearts of men because He intends to produce perfect men. Mark, again, that on the heart there is written not the Law toned down and altered, but “my Law,”—that very same Law which was at first written on the heart of man unfallen. Paul says of natural men, that “they show the work of the Law written in their hearts.” There is enough of light left on the conscience to condemn men for most of their iniquities. The original record of the Law upon man’s heart at His creation has been injured and almost obliterated by man’s fall and His subsequent transgressions, but the Lord, in renewing the heart, makes the writing fresh and vivid, even the writing of the first principles of righteousness and truth. But to come a little closer to the matter: what does the Scripture mean by writing the Law of God in the heart? The writing itself includes a great many things. A man who has the Law of God written on His heart, first of all, knows it. He is instructed in the ordinances and statutes of the Lord. He is an illuminated person, and no longer one of those who know not the Law and are cursed. God’s Spirit has taught Him what is right and what is wrong: He knows this by heart, and therefore can no longer put darkness for light, and light for darkness. This Law, next, abides upon His memory. When He had it only upon a tablet He must needs go into His house to look at it, but now He carries it about with Him in His heart, and knows at once what will be right and what will be wrong. God has given Him a touchstone by which He tries things. He finds that “all is not gold that glitters,” and all is not holy which pretends to that character. He separates the precious from the vile, and does this habitually; for His knowledge of God’s Law and His memory of it are attended by a discernment of spirit which God has worked in Him, so that He quickly discerns what is according to the mind of God and what is not. Now this is a great point, for some things are commonly done by men which they will even defend, and say that there is no wrong in them; but according to the divine rule they are utterly unjust. God’s people judge these things, and take no pleasure in them, A sacred instinct warns the Believer of the approach of sin. Long before public sentiment has proclaimed a hue and cry against questionable practices, the Christian man, even if deluded for a while by current custom, yet feels a trembling and an uneasiness. Even if He consents outwardly, being overborne by general opinion, a something within protests, and leads Him to consider whether the matter can be defended. As soon as He detects the evil, He shrinks from it. It is a grand thing to possess a universal detector, so that, go where you may, you are not dependent upon the judgment of others, and therefore are not deceived as multitudes are. This, however, is only a part of the matter, and a very small part comparatively. The Law is written on a man’s heart further than this: when He consents unto the Law that it is good; when His conscience, being restored, cries, “Yes, that is so, and ought to be so. That command by which God has forbidden a certain course is a proper and prudent command: it ought to be enjoined.” It is a hopeful sign when a man no longer wishes that the divine commands were other than they are, but confirms them by the verdict of His judgment. Are there not men who in their anger wish that killing were no murder? Are there not others who do not steal, and yet wish they might take their neighbors’ goods?

Are there not many who wish that fornication and adultery were not vices? This proves that their hearts are depraved; but it is not so with the regenerate, they would not have the Law altered on any account. Their vote is with the Law, they regard it as the guardian of society, the basis on which the peace of the universe can alone be built, for only by righteousness can any order of things be established. If we could possess the wisdom of God, we 764 should make just that Law which God has made, for the Law is holy, and just, and good, and promotes man's highest advantage. It is a great thing when a man gets as far as that. But, furthermore, there is worked in the heart by God a love to the Law as well as a consent to it, such a love that the man thanks God that He has given Him such a fair and lovely representation of what perfect holiness would be; that He has given such measuring lines, by which He knows how a house is to be builded in which God can dwell. Thus thanking the Lord, His prayer, desire, longing, hungering, and thirsting, are after righteousness, that He may in all things be according to the mind of God. It is a glorious thing when the heart delights itself in the Law of the Lord, and finds therein its solace and pleasure. The Law is fully written on the heart when a man takes pleasure in holiness, and feels a deep pain whenever sin approaches Him. Oh, my dear friend, the Lord has done great things for you when every evil thing is obnoxious to you. Even though you fall into sin through the infirmity of your flesh, yet if it causes you intense agony and sorrow it is because God has written His Law in your heart. Even though you cannot be as holy as you want to be, yet if the ways of holiness are your pleasure, if they are the very element in which you live as much as the fish lives in the sea, then you are the subject of a very wonderful change of heart. It is not so much what you do as what you delight to do, which becomes the clearest test of your character. Many strictly religious people who go to and fro to church and chapel would be uncommonly glad if they did not feel bound to do so. Is not their public worship a dead formality? A great many people have family-prayers and private prayers who wish they could be rid of the nuisance. Is there any religion in bodily exercises which are burdensome to the heart? Nothing is acceptable to God until it is acceptable to yourself: God will not receive your sacrifice unless you offer it willingly. How contrary this is to the notion of many, for they say, "You see I deny myself by going so many times to a place of worship and by private prayer, therefore I must be truly religious." The very reverse far nearer the truth. When it becomes a misery to serve God, then indeed the heart is far away from spiritual health; for when the heart is renewed, it delights to worship and serve the Lord. Instead of saying, "I would omit prayer if I could," the regenerate mind cries, "I wish I could be always praying." Instead of saying, "I would keep away from the assembly of God's people if I could," the newborn nature wishes like David to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. This is a great evidence of the writing of 765 the Law upon the heart, when holiness becomes a pleasure, and sin becomes a sorrow. When this is done, what great things God has done for us! The main point of the whole is this, that whereas our nature was once contrary to the Law of God, so that whatever God forbade we at once desired, and whatever God commanded we therefore began to dislike, the Holy Spirit comes and changes our nature, and makes it congruous to the Law, so that now whatever God forbids we forbid, whatever God commands, our will commands. How much better to have the Law written upon the heart than upon tables of stone! If anybody should enquire how the Lord keeps the writing upon the heart legible, I should like to spend a minute or two in showing the process. How the Holy Spirit first writes the Law on the heart I cannot tell. The outward means are the preaching of the word and the reading of it; but how the Holy Spirit directly operates on the soul we do not know; it is one of the great mysteries of Grace. This much we know within ourselves, that whereas we were blind now we see, and whereas we abhorred the Law of God we now feel an intense delight in it that the Holy Spirit worked this change we also know, but how He did it remains unknown. That part of His holy office which we can discern is done according to the usual laws of mental operation. He enlightens by knowledge, convinces by argument, leads by persuasion, strengthens by instruction, and so forth. So far also we know that one way by which the Law is kept written upon a Christian's heart is this—a sense of God's presence. The Believer feels that He could not sin with God looking on, It would need a brazen face for a man to play the traitor in the presence of a king; such things are done "under the rose," as men word it, but not before the monarch's face. So the Christian feels that He dwells in God's sight, and this forbids Him to disobey. The eye of the heavenly Father is the best monitor of the child of God. Next, the Christian has a lively sense within Him of the degradation which sin once brought upon Him. If there is one thing I never can forget personally, it is the horror of my heart while I was yet under sin, God revealed my state to me. Ah, friends, the old proverb that a burnt child dreads the fire has an intensity of truth about it in the case of one who has ever been burnt by sin so as to be driven to despair by it; He hates it with a perfect hatred, and by that means God writes the Law upon His

heart. But a sense of love is a yet more powerful factor. Let a man know that God loves Him, let Him feel sure that God always did love Him from before 766 the foundations of the world, and He must try to please God. Let Him be assured that the Father loved Him so much as to give His only-begotten Son to die that He might live through Him, and He must love God and hate evil. A sense of pardon, of adoption, and of God's sweet favor both in Providence and in Grace, must sanctify man. He cannot willfully offend against such love; on the contrary, He feels Himself bound to obey God in return for such unsearchable Grace and thus by a sense of love does God write His Law upon the hearts of His people. Another very powerful pen with which the Lord writes is to be found in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus spit upon, and scourged, and crucified, we feel that we must hate sin with all the intensity of our nature. Can you count the purple drops of His redeeming blood and then go back to live in the iniquity which cost the Lord so dear? Impossible! The death of Christ writes the Law of God very deeply upon the central heart of man. The cross is the crucifier of sin. Besides that, God actually establishes His holy Law in the throne of the heart by giving to us a new and heavenly life. There is within a Christian an immortal principle which cannot sin because it is born of God, and cannot die, for it is the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides for ever, In regeneration there is imparted to us a something altogether foreign to our corrupt nature; a divine principle is dropped into the soul which can neither be corrupted nor made to die, and by this means the Law is written on the heart. I do not pretend to explain the process of regeneration, but for certain it involves a divine life, implanted of the Holy Spirit. Once more, the Holy Spirit Himself dwells in believers. I pray you, never forget this marvelous doctrine, that as truly as ever God dwelt in human flesh in the person of the God-man Mediator, so truly does the Holy Spirit dwell in the bodies of all redeemed men and women who have been born again; and by the force of that indwelling He keeps the mind for ever permeated with holiness, for ever subservient to the will of the Most High. **III.** Now we turn for just a minute to think of THE WRITER. Who is it that writes the Law upon the heart? It is God Himself. "I will do it," says He. Note first, that He has a right to indite His Law on the heart. He made the heart; it is His tablet: let Him write there whatever He wills. As clay in the hands of the potter so are we in His hands. 767 Note, next, that He alone can write the Law on the heart. It will never be written there by any other hand. The Law of God is not to be written on the heart by human power. Alas, how often have I expounded the Law of God and the Gospel of God, but I have got no further than the ear: only the living God can write upon the living heart. This is noble work, angels themselves cannot attain to it. "This is the finger of God." As God alone can write there and must write there, so He alone shall have the Glory of that writing when once it is perfected. When God writes He writes perfectly. You and I make blots and errors: there needs to be a list of errata at the end of every human piece of writing, but when God writes, blots or mistakes are out of the question. No holiness can excel the holiness produced by the Holy Spirit when His inward work is fully completed. Moreover, He writes indelibly. I defy the devil to get a single letter of the Law of God out of a man's heart when God has written it there. When the Holy Spirit has come with all the power of His divinity and rested on our nature, and stamped into it the life of holiness, then the devil may come with His black wings and all His unhallowed craftiness, but He can never erase the eternal lines. We bear in our hearts the marks of the Lord God eternal, and we shall bear them eternally. Written rocks bear their inscriptions long, but written hearts bear them for ever and ever. Does not the Lord say, "I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me"? Blessed be God for those immortal principles which forbid the child of God to sin. **IV.** I wish to finish by noticing THE RESULTS of the Law being thus written in the heart. I hope while I have been preaching about it many of you have been saying, "I hope that the Law will be written in my heart." Remember that this is a gift and privilege of the covenant of Grace, and not a work of man. Dear Friends, if any of you have said, "I do not find anything good in me, therefore I cannot come to Christ," you talk foolishly. The absence of good is the reason why you should come to Christ to have your needs supplied. "Oh, but if I could write God's Law on my heart I would come to Christ." Would you? What would you want Christ for? But if the Law is not written on your heart, then come to Jesus to have it so written. The new covenant says, "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and will write my Law in their hearts." Come then to have the Law thus inscribed within. Come just as you are, before a single line has been inscribed. The Lord 768 Jesus loves to prepare His own tablets, and write every letter of His own epistles: come to Him just as you are, that He may do all things for you. What are the results of the Law being written on the hearts of men? Frequently the first result is great sorrow. If I have God's Law written on my heart, then I say to myself, "Ah me, that I should have lived a lawbreaker so long! This blessed Law, this lovely Law, why I have not even thought of it, or if I have thought of it, it has provoked me

to disobedience. Sin revived, and I died when the commandment came.” We wring our hands and cry, “How could we be so wicked as to break so just a Law? How could we be so willful as to go against our own interests? Knew we not that a breach of the commandment is an injury to ourselves?” Thus we are in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for the death of His first-born. I do not believe God has ever written His Law on your hearts if you have not mourned over sin. One of the earliest signs of Grace is a dew upon the eyes because of sin. The next effect of it is, there comes upon the man a strong and stern resolve that He will not break that Law again, but will keep it with all His might. He cries out with David, “I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments.” His whole heart says, when reading the precepts of the Lord— “Yes, that is what I ought to be, that is what I wish to be, and that is what I will be, according to the will of God.” That strong resolve soon leads to a fierce conflict; for another Law lifts up its head, a Law in our members; and that other Law cries, “Not so quick there your new Law which has come into your soul to rule you shall not be obeyed I will be master.” He who is born within us to be our king finds the old Herod ready to slay the young child. The lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, each one of these swears warfare against the new monarch and the fresh power that is come into the heart. Some of you know what this struggle means. It is a very hard fight with some to keep from actual sin. Have you not when troubled with a quick temper had to put your hand to your mouth to stop yourself from saying what you used to say, but what you never wish to say again? Have you not often gone upstairs to get alone, feeling that you would soon slip if the Lord did not hold you up? How wise to get alone with God and cry to Him for help! How prudent to watch day and night against evil! Certain braggers talk about having got beyond all that. I should be glad to think that there are such brethren: but I should want to keep them in a glass-ease to show them 769 round, or in an iron safe where thieves could not get at them. I conceive it to be a snare of the devil to imagine that you are beyond the need of daily watchfulness. For my own part, I have not passed beyond conflict and struggle: I bear testimony that the battle grows more stern every day. Those of God’s people with whom I associate I find fighting and wrestling still. Sometimes I know the devil does not roar, but I am more afraid of Him when He is quiet than when He rages. I would sooner He would roar of the two, for a roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil. Whenever He gives way He only gives an inch to take an mile; and whenever you begin to say to yourself, “My corruptions are all dead; I have no tendencies to sin now,” you are in awful peril. Poor soul, you do not know what you are talking about. God send you to school, and give you a little light, and you will sing to another tune, I am sure, before long. These are the incidental results-when the Lord writes the Law in the heart, strifes and struggles are common within the man, for holiness strives for the mastery. But does not something better than this come of the divine heartwriting? Oh, yes. There comes actual obedience. The man not only consents to the Law that it is good, but He obeys it; and if there be anything which Christ commands, no matter what it is, the man seeks to do it—not only wishes to do it, but actually does it; and if there be anything that is wrong, He not only wishes to abstain from it, but He does abstain from it. God helping Him, He becomes upright, and righteous, and sober, and godly, and loving, and Christ-like, for this it is which the Spirit of God works in Him. He would be perfect were it not for the old lusts of the flesh which linger even in the hearts of the regenerate. Now the Believer feels intense pleasure in everything that is good. If there be anything right and true in the world, He is on the side of it: if there be defeats to truth, He is defeated; but if truth marches on conquering and to conquer He conquers, and takes and divides the spoil with joy. Now He is on God’s side, now He is on Christ’s side, now He is on truth’s side, now He is on holiness’ side; and a man cannot be that without being a happy man. With all His strugglings, and all His weepings, and all His confessions, He is a happy man because He is on the happy side. God is with Him, and He is with God, and He must be blessed. As this proceeds, the man becomes more and more prepared to dwell in Heaven. He is changed into God’s image from Glory to Glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Our fitness for Heaven is not a thing that will be clapped upon us in the last few minutes of our life, just as we are going to die; but the children of God have a meetness for Heaven as soon as ever they are 770 saved, and that meetness grows and increases till they are ripe, and then, like ripe fruit, they drop from the tree and find themselves, in the bosom of their Father God. God will never keep a soul out of Heaven half a minute after it is fully prepared to go there; and so, when God has fitted us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, we shall enter at once into the joy of our Lord. My brethren, I feel I have talked feebly and prosily about one of the most blessed subjects that ever occupied the thoughts of man-how God’s Law shall be kept, how it shall be honored, how holiness shall come into the world, and we shall no longer be rebellious. Herein let us trust in our Lord Jesus, who is to us the surety of that covenant of which this

is one great promise- “I will put my Law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it.” God do so to us, for Christ’s sake. Amen. 771

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STAND FAST. NO. 1688 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 27TH, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. *"Be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel."-Colossians 1:23.* I THINK this morning we showed pretty plainly that many a soul has a great struggle to attain to the hope of the Gospel. (See *"Despair denounced and Grace glorified."* No. 1678.) Not without hand-to-hand fighting do many hearts lay hold on Christ and eternal life. Conscience often sets up a chevaux de frise around the hill of Calvary, and thus cuts off the convinced sinner from approaching His Savior. Doubts and fears, the Black Watch of evil, drive back the coming ones, and worry those who would gladly hide in the Rock of Ages. Satan summons all His hosts to push men back from the cross that they may not come to Christ and live. But, brethren, the battle does not end when by a desperate rush a man has come to Christ. In many it assumes a new form; the enemy now attempts to drag the trembler from His refuge, and eject Him from His stronghold. It is difficult to get at the hope of the Gospel; but quite as difficult to keep it so as not to be moved away from it. If Satan spends great power in keeping us from the hope, He uses equal force in endeavoring to drag us away from it, and equal cunning in endeavoring to allure us from it. Hence the Apostle tells us not to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel: the exhortation is necessary in presence of an imminent danger. Do not think that in the moment when you believe in Christ the conflict is over, or you will be bitterly disappointed. It is then that the battle renews itself, and every inch of the road swarms with foemen. Between here and Heaven you will always have to fight more or less, and frequently the severest struggle will be at a time when you are least prepared for it. There may be smooth passages in your career, and you may for a while be like your Savior in the wilderness, of whom it is said, "Then the devil departed from Him, and angels came and 772 ministered unto Him"; but you may not therefore cry, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved"; for fair weather may not outlast a single day. Do not grow secure, or carnally presumptuous. There is but a short space between one battle and another in this world. It is a series of skirmishes even when it does not assume the form of a pitched battle. He that would win Heaven must fight for it. He that would take the new Jerusalem must scale it, and if He has the wit to take Jacob's ladder and set it against the wall and climb up that way, He will win the city. "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" At this time our subject is not the winning, but the wearing; not the taking but the holding of the fort: "Be not moved away," you that have come to it, "Be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." **I. First, BE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE SUBJECT OF THAT HOPE** so as to give up any part of the hope which is revealed to you by the Gospel. What is your hope? First, it is the hope of full salvation-the hope that, inasmuch as you have believed in Jesus Christ, you are free from all condemnation at the present moment, and shall be free from all condemnation in the future as to all your sins; and that, in addition to this, He that takes away the condemnation of sin will also destroy the power of it over you. You have this hope-that being made to love righteousness you shall be enabled to walk in obedience, and "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," Your hope is that one day you shall be presented holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in the sight of the great Father. You shall one day be presented "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," cleansed from all guilt, and cleansed from all tendency to sin and to corruption, and made like unto the perfect creature of God when first it comes from His hands. Oh, this is a blessed hope! "He that has this hope in Him purifieth Himself, even as Christ is pure." We hope that we shall be like unto Christ Himself, and that the Glory of His holiness shall be our Glory, and we shall see His face, and His name shall be in our foreheads, and we shall be without fault before the throne of God. Now, never give that up: never allow a particle of it to be diminished. God means all that He has said, and more rather than less. Let no man debase the currency of Heaven or clip the coin of the realm of the Great King. The first part of it-hold to it, that the Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed you from all the guilt and penalty of sin, so that not a speck remains to accuse or condemn you. Hold to it, moreover, that if He has once washed you, you shall not need to wash again in that fountain filled with blood, for 773 "He that is washed needeth not except to wash His feet"; and that washing shall He give to Him by the condescending hands of Christ. The water shall be a second cure of that which the blood has already cleansed and removed. The blood-washing has removed all guilt, and prevented all possibility that sin shall have dominion over you. Complete forgiveness and full justification are proofs that through your Lord's endurance of the death-penalty you are no more under the Law, but under Grace. My soul rejoices to-night in perfect pardon. I will not take off a corner of it, so as to allow that the smallest charge can lie against us. We are complete in Christ. He that believes in Him is justified from all things. *"Here's pardon for transgressions past, It matters not how black their cast; And, oh! my soul, with wonder view: For sins to come here's pardon too!"* All pardon is provided in the one great

sacrifice offered by our bleeding Lord, who has now gone into the heavens to plead the merit of His blood. Never take off a fraction from that other part of full salvation, namely, the possibility and the absolute certainty that every sinful tendency now in your nature shall be utterly destroyed. There shall remain in you no root of bitterness, no scar of evil, no footprint of iniquity. There shall be no tinder in your soul upon which the sparks of temptation can fall, so as to live and make a flame; and when the Prince of this world comes He shall find nothing in you. Then you shall enter into your rest eternal; for God keeps not His ripe wheat in the field, but takes it home when it is once fit to be gathered into the garner. This is your hope through the Gospel: be not moved away from it. In connection with this there is the hope of final perseverance. I confess that to me it is one of the most attractive doctrines of God's Word, that "the righteous shall hold on His way, and He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." For I am "confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." "He that lives and believes in me shall never die." There are many assurances to this effect, and if anything definite is taught in Scripture, I am confident that this is among the plainest of such teachings, I beseech you, do not shun this doctrine as though it would lead you into the least presumption if properly understood. Its legitimate effect 774 is the very reverse of carelessness. If it be true that, once enlisted in this army of the Lord, you must and shall fight until you are a conqueror, then there is no temptation to lay down the sword for a while in the hope of taking it up again at a more convenient season. If, as some say, you may be Christ's soldier today and desert to-morrow, and then He enlisted again—if it be indeed true that a man may be regenerated and then lose the divine life, and upon repentance be re-regenerated and re-re-re-re-regenerated I know not how many times, I am not aware that this novelty is hinted at in my unrevised New Testament. There I read of being "born again," but not of being born again and again and again and again and again and again—I say I cannot find a trace of this in the Bible. On the other hand, I find that if the one regeneration fails, which is impossible, there would remain nothing else to be done. God's best work is broken down, and He will never try it again. He has said, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that comes oft upon it, and bring forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which hears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." You cannot re-salt the salt if it has once lost its savor. If, then, Grace does utterly depart, which I believe to be impossible, there remains no hope for such a one. God's supreme effort, according to that theory, has been made and failed. Now, there is nothing for it but that the land which has received the dew of Heaven, and brought forth no fruit, is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." We have but made the supposition to show you the danger, upon whose brink you stand, and over whose verge you would slide if Grace did not prevent. If you indeed believe in Christ Jesus, set this to your seal, that He will keep you to the end. Whatever happens, "I am persuaded that neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." For dear life hold on to the hope of final preservation; for there is a purifying, encouraging, stimulating power about that precious truth. "He keepeth the feet of His saints:" "be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." 775 We have a hope beyond this; for we believe that we shall experience the Resurrection. Though they fall down and men call them corpses, they are precious in the sight of the Lord, and the grave shall be a refining pot, out of which the pure metal of our purified body shall come forth. At the word of the Lord the dry bones shall live; they shall be clothed with flesh, and skin shall come upon them, if after that fashion the body is to be raised. But, if not—if the body is to assume another form, and we are to be made like unto a Glory which as yet we cannot comprehend, then we may be sure of this—that we shall so rise that mortality shall put on immortality, and corruption shall give place to incorruption. In any case, our bodies shall rise again. The Grace of God secures the bodies as well as the souls of the saints. Christ bought not the half of a man, but the whole trinity of our manhood is His redeemed inheritance spirit, soul, and body shall dwell for ever with Him, for He has redeemed our undivided manhood. Never give up that hope either concerning yourselves or your friends. Let nothing shake your confidence in the Resurrection; let no philosophical explanation fritter it away. No other historical fact is so well attested as the

Resurrection of Christ, and that is the very corner-stone of our confidence. “For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” Often and often when I am sore beset with devilish temptations and insinuations as to the eternal hope of my soul and body, I fly to this—Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, and, inasmuch as He rose from the dead, He has come back to tell us that there is another world, and that not only our souls but our bodies shall inherit a far more blessed condition than this present one. Hold on to this hope of the Gospel, and never let it go. *“The Lord is risen: He lives, The First-born from the dead, To Him the Father gives To be creation’s Head, O’er all for ever reigning, Of death He holds the keys; And Hell-His might constraining Obeys His high decrees. 776 Flies now the gloom that shaded The vale of death to me; The terrors that invaded Are lost, O Christ, in Thee! The grave, no more appalling, Invites me to repose; Asleep in Jesus falling, To rise as Jesus rose.”*

Then, remember, you have the hope of the second advent; if Jesus comes before you die you will meet Him—gladly meet and welcome the Son of God upon this earth. You shall be changed so that you shall be fit to inherit the incorruptible glories of the skies. You shall see your Redeemer when He stands in the latter day upon the earth. As Job said, “In my flesh shall I see God, whom my eyes shall see for myself, and not another.” Have joy, then, at every thought of your Master’s coming. Do not put it among dark prophecies or doubtful dreams. It is a clearly revealed truth that Jesus will come again and take His people up to their eternal home; “Wherefore comfort one another with these words,” and be not moved away from that hope of the Gospel, which lies so sweetly in the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, once more, we have this hope—that when we have passed through all that concerns time and are in eternity, that shoreless, bottomless sea, there remains for us no fear or dread; but we shall be “for ever with the Lord.” I notice that certain of those who deny the eternity of future punishment are ready, for the sake of their notion, to pull down the battlements of Heaven itself, and to make the joy of saints to be as short as the misery of sinners. I, for one, will not pawn Heaven in that fashion, to make sin cheap for the willfully impenitent. Once landed on that eternal shore, there are no storms to dread or hurricanes to fear for these frail barques of ours. There shall not a wave of trouble roll across our peaceful spirits when once we cast anchor in the “Fair Havens,” in the port of peace for ever. Be not dismayed as though there would be an after-probation, or a purgatory, or a lim bus patrum, or any of those pretty places that have filled priests’ pockets so long, and are now being newly vamped and produced by our proud thinkers as an aid to their pretty speculations. We will have no purgatory under any form, it is the larder of priests, and the refuge of heresy-mongers; but there is not a word of it in God’s book. We stand to the text—“So shall we be for ever with the Lord.” “The righteous shall go away into 777 life eternal.” There is “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.” “Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and He shall go no more out: and I will write upon Him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from my God: and I will write upon Him my new name.” “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” “Be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel,” as to the objects of that hope. **II.** But now, secondly, I charge you, beloved, before God, that you **BE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL AS TO THE GROUND OF THAT HOPE.** And what is the ground of that hope? The ground of that hope is, first, the rich, free, sovereign Grace of God, because He has said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The Lord claims for Himself the prerogative of mercy, and as He can exercise it without the violation of His justice through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, we joy and rejoice in the fact that men are not saved because of any natural goodness of disposition, or because of anything that they have done, or ever shall do. The children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, the divine decree stood fast fixed in the sovereign will and immutable counsels of Jehovah, and it is a good ground of hope for the very chief of sinners. If He has saved the dying thief—if He has saved the adulterer—if He has saved even the murderer, why should He not save me? He can if He will, and He is exceeding gracious, and infinite in compassion, willing not the deaths of any, but that all should come to repentance. It is in the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin, and the cause of that mercy is itself. The reason of divine love is divine love. Because God is gracious therefore He bestows His Grace upon the undeserving and the lost. Be not moved away from

this. The ground of our salvation is, next, the merit of Christ—what Christ is—what Christ has done—what Christ has suffered. This is the ground upon which God saves the sons of men, Even Cardinal Bellarmine, the mighty opponent of Luther—perhaps the best opponent that He had, whose eyes saw much of Gospel light, once said this, that albeit that good works are necessary unto salvation, yet, inasmuch as no man can be sure that He has 778 performed as many good works as will save Him, it is, upon the whole, safest to trust alone in the merits and sufferings of Christ. Cardinal! the safest way suits me. If that be the best and safest, what better do any of us want? Where is the rest for our soul if the ground of our hope is to be what we are, or what we do, or what we feel? But when we fall back upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, and believe in Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world—I say, when we fall back on Him, then we have something solid to rest upon. Our eyes cannot bear to look into eternity so long as we cling in the least degree to human merit; but when it is all put aside, and we look to Him bleeding yonder on the cross, then is there a “peace that passes all understanding,” filling our hearts by Christ Jesus. Brethren, if a man were to live in good works without a single sin for ten thousand years, He would be well recompensed for that by half-an-hour of Heaven. How, then, can we expect to merit eternal bliss by any works of ours? Ah, no; the hope were vanity. Heaven is too precious a thing to be purchased by anything that we can by any possibility do; but it is not too great to be purchased by the blood of Christ; and when we come to His atonement our anchor holds abidingly. “Be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.” Another ground of our hope is this—that God has solemnly pledged that “ whoever believes in Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.” if, then, we do really and in very deed believe in Jesus Christ and rest on Him, we cannot perish, for God cannot contradict Himself. Thus it is written: hear it and accept it. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Those of us, then, who do trust the Savior, and Him only, and have made confession of that trust in His own appointed way, know of a surety that God’s eternal veracity is staked upon our salvation. It is not possible that the Lord should east away a Believer. Is it not written, “The just shall live by faith”? We live because we believe in the ever living One. “ HE that believes in Him has everlasting life,” Be not moved away from this Gospel hope, which God that cannot lie has set before us. *The covenant of the King of kings Shall stand for ever sure Beneath the shadow of His wings His saints repose secure.*” Another ground of our hope is the immutability of God. God changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. The immutability of Christ also confirms our hope; for He is “ the same yesterday, and to-day, 779 and for ever.” The unchanging power of His blood is a tower of strength to our faith. *“Dear dying Lamb, your precious blood Shall never lose its power, Till all the ransomed church of God Be saved to sin no more.”* If God be immutable, then those that believe in Him have an immutable hope: be sure that you never east it away. But, once again, our hope of the Gospel is grounded in the infallibility of Scripture. The Papist has an infallible pope, but we have an infallible Bible. If that which is spoken in this Book be not true, neither is our hope sure. If these things be questionable, our confidence is questionable; but if this Word of God abides fast for ever and ever, though Heaven and earth should pass away, then He that believes and builds on this infallible truth may rejoice and stand fast. I beseech you, “be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.” **III.** So far have I come with all my heart and soul, and I believe that you, dear Friends, the members of this church at any rate, have accompanied me therein. Now let us consider HOW WE MAY BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL unless Grace He given to prevent us. We may be moved from the hope of the Gospel in the following ways. Sometimes by a conceit of ourselves. You may get off the ground of confidence in free Grace to think, “Now I am somebody. Have not I prayed at the Prayer Meeting? Did not friends say that they were edified by it? Have not I preached a wonderful sermon? Am I not generous? Have not I given large sums to the church and to the poor? Am I not somebody?” Ah! you and the devil together can make a flue tale about that, and I have no doubt that all He tells you you will very greedily suck in, for we like to be praised, and, though the praise comes from Satan Himself, it is welcome to our proud flesh. Well, whenever we get to think we are somebody, we are moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Somebody says, “But I am not one.” Ah! then He did not come to save you. “Do you say I was a sinner once, but I have grown so perfect that I do not sin now.” Don’t you? Then you are removed from that hope which belongs to those who confess and lament their sins. You unChristianize yourself as soon as you strike your name out of the list of 780 sinners who are saved by the Savior’s Grace. You are a sinner and Christ died to save you, but do not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel by a vain notion that you are no longer sinful. Christ came not to heal the whole, but those who are sick. Do not be moved away, on the other hand, by despondency. Satan

does not mind which way you get off the rock, whether it is by jumping up or by jumping down. It is all the same to Him, so long as you leave the rock of your salvation. Many there are that go up in a balloon of conceit, while others are ready to roll down the steeps of despondency and despair. But be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel either one way or the other. The least sin ought to make you humble, but the greatest sin ought not to make you despair. If you are even now as big a sinner as any fifty men rolled into one, Christ can save you readily—no, has saved you if you put your trust in Him. But, on the other hand, if you presume that you are not guilty, or despairingly say, “I am guilty, but I dare not believe that He can forgive me,” you are in either case moved away from the hope of the Gospel. May eternal mercy keep you hourly penitent and believing; for repentance and faith walk on either side of a Christian till He enters the pearly gate. You may be moved away from the hope of the Gospel also by false teaching. If, for instance, you do not believe Christ to be “Light of light, very God of very God,” you have moved away from our hope, which depends upon His godhead. If you think that the priest can save you, you are moved away from the one only Priest before whom all other priests must let their censers die out into blackness. He alone can save you. If you listen to any teaching which puts your working or your doing into the place of Christ, you are drinking in error, and you will be removed from the hope of your calling, which is free Grace, received by faith, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. You can be removed from the hope of your calling by hoping to live by feelings. Ah! there are many Christians who get tempted that way. They feel so happy, and that is the reason why they believe that they are saved. That is not the reason why I believe I am saved. I am saved because I trust Christ, and if I were as miserable as misery itself I should be just as truly saved as if I were as happy as Heaven itself. It is faith that does it, not feeling. Faith is precious, feeling is fickle. Believing, we stand firm; but by feeling we are tossed about. True feeling follows faith, and as such is 781 valuable; but faith is the root, and the life of the tree lies there, and not in the boughs and leaves, which may be taken away, and yet the tree will survive. Some have very joyous feelings; they swim in trances and deliriums, and yet they are all wrong. Rest you on Christ, whether it is bright day or dark night with you: though He slay you, trust in Him—as much trust in Him as if He pressed you to His bosom. Faith must abide, though joy depart. If your feelings are down in the dust—if you feel as though you could not hold up your head or look towards Heaven, never mind that, but cling to the promise, feel what you may. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners, and good feelings will follow by-and-by; but, just now, your first business is this—“He that believes in Him is not condemned.” “He that believes in Him has everlasting life,” Stand you to that hope of the Gospel. Many are moved away from the hope of their calling by a dazzle of intellect. They are content simply to believe in Jesus till they meet some fine man, a thinker with a big forehead and a large box which ought to be full of brains. We have not been inside to see what is there, but the preacher talks much of His thought and culture. He tells you that you are behind the age—that a faith which believes God might do very well for the times of Cromwell and the roundhead Puritans, but that, nowadays, we are far in advance of all that kind of thing. Whenever a brother dazzles you like that, let Him dazzle. Let Him shine as much as He likes; but, as for you, tell Him that He who has once looked the sun in the face is not to be dazzled by a glow-worm. Go back to your batik, and dazzle your brother worms, but you cannot dazzle me! A man who once has come to know Christ experimentally, and lives by faith upon the Son of God, may, if He likes, read all your essays and reviews, and all the articles in your Quarterlies which ridicule the power of faith whether in living or in dying, and He will say when He has read them all through, “This is all they know about it.” I daresay that if a horse were to write a book He would tell us that roast beef is exceedingly bad food to eat. “Well,” we should say, “that is a very natural opinion for a horse. Let Him keep to His oats and His hay.” And when a man says that there is no power in prayer, He shows that He does not know anything about praying. Let Him keep to what He does know and hold His tongue about what He does not know. He says that it cannot be so say we, “but it is so”; and when we have tasted and handled it and known it, there is no dazzling us out of it by a sense of the great man’s superiority of mind. I have often thought that those who cry up their own learning 782 must have wonderfully little of it, for I have jotted down in my pocketbook that I never saw the Bank of England send its bullion anywhere with a number of bells upon the cart to say, “Here is bullion coming along.” But I have noticed that every dustman does that, When I hear the bells ringing so much about “culture,” I say to myself, “Dust oh!” If they had real diamonds on board they would hold their tongues about them. At any rate, dust or diamonds, the load in these men’s carts is nothing to us, we have a more sure word of testimony to which our experience has set its seal. We have believed in Christ Jesus and found salvation, and by God’s Grace we will not be moved away from the hope of our calling. Lastly, be not moved away by persecution, or by

sneers, or by ridicule. The persecution of this present day is a small thing compared with what our forefathers suffered. Look at that picture of the amphitheatre, by Dore. All is over. Every seat is empty. The stars, like the eyes of God, are looking down upon the arena. There lie the bodies of the saints, and there are the tigers and the lions prowling over the sanded floor, tearing the carcasses which they have slain. But the painter pictures a vision of angels, descending from over the uttermost parapet of the amphitheatre; they are tenderly watching over those precious bodies, for they have triumphed, and from the mouths of the beasts they have gone to the thrones of the angels. Only hold you fast where the saints held fast at the first, “in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” No more mind the advance of learning than they dreaded the universality of ignorance. We have to fight with both the ignorance of this world and the wisdom of it, too; “But the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man.” How readily shall the divine wisdom and power make an end of learned babblings. Be not moved away from the hope of your calling. “Cast not away your confidence,” which has great recompense of reward. Be like the Grecian youth who took His shield to battle, let it be your Glory and your defense. We would say to you what the Spartan mother said to her son: “Come back with your shield, or on it.” Come back with the Gospel well strapped upon your arm like a golden shield, or, if you die, may it become your bier, and may you be borne home upon it as a steadfast, Believer in Christ; but never be moved away from the hope of your calling, for so would your shield be vilely cast away. **III.** Lastly, WHY IS IT THAT WE CANNOT BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL? What would follow if we were? Well, first, we will not be moved away from the hope of our calling, for there is nothing better 783 to take its place. A man would not think of going to Australia if He heard that the wages were less there than here, and the expense of living greater, and that the people were poorer. “No,” he would say, “I shall not jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. I shall certainly stop where I am rather than go farther and fare worse.” Well, we are just of that mind. We do not see how we could improve ourselves. Jonathan Edwards, in one of His treatises, speaks somewhat to this effect: “If any man can prove this form of the Gospel to be untrue and a mere dream, the very best thing that He can do is to sit down and weep for ever to think that He has disproved the brightest hope that ever shone upon the eyes of men.” And that is so. To have the glorious hope that, believing in Christ, we are saved, is such a blessedness and such a joy that nothing can compare with it. Where are the fields that can tempt away the sheep of Christ? Where is the shepherd that can vie with Him? Where is the light that is brighter than this eternal sun? Oh! you tempt us with your rattles like children, but having become men we despise them, What have you to offer of truth, of hope, of comfort, of joy, equal to what we possess? Let us each one sing our answer to the tempter— *“You only Sovereign of my heart My refuge, my almighty Friend, And can my soul from you depart, On whom alone my hopes depend?”* *“Let earth’s alluring joys combine, While you are near, in vain they call; One smile, one blissful smile of your, My dearest Lord, outweighs them all.”* *“Your name, my inmost powers adore, You are my life, my joy, my care; Depart from you! ‘tis death-’tis more, ‘Tis endless ruin, deep despair!”* Remember, too, that if we are moved away from the hope of our calling we shall soon be in bondage. A man may be as merry as a lark if He believes in Christ for salvation; but let Him leave that and before long He will be as dull as an owl. What is there that can give us joy apart from Christ? Are we not bound in chains of doubt when once we leave the way of sovereign Grace through believing in Christ? If we are moved away from the hope of our calling we cannot grow. A tree that is frequently moved usually dies; but growth there cannot be; and a man who begins in the spirit, and hopes to 784 be made perfect by the flesh—begins in free Grace and then gets tagging on His own works—begins by trusting in Christ and then makes confession to a priest—rests in the precious blood, and then dabbles in sacraments, a ad hopes to find salvation there: He can never grow in Grace. He is wherried about with every oar. Every tide of doctrine puts Him up stream or down stream. He can make no progress. And what good can such a man do? He cannot influence others beneficially, for He teaches one thing to-day, and another to-morrow. He says that God has saved Him, and the next day He doubts it. He says that the atonement is full and free, and to-morrow He says that penance is to be performed. He cannot bless others, He does not Himself know the way to blessing. Besides, if we were moved away from the hope of our calling, what mean, miserable wretches we should be, for we should have deserted our Savior. I wonder where I could hide my dishonorable head if I once came here to preach to you salvation by the works of the flesh and not by the Grace of God. I hope that you would hiss me from the platform, and I hope that you will so serve everybody that shall succeed me when I am gone who shall preach to you any other Gospel than that you have received. Hold fast with all your might right solemnly to the grand old faith, for if you do not, in rejecting that way of salvation you reject yourselves. What did

Christ die for, if we can be saved in some other way? Why did He pour out His blood if there is a cheaper method to win the skies? Why did He go down into the depths of death-shade, if you can force your way to Heaven by your own endeavors without Him? No, no: we will stand fast where we now are, resting only and alone upon Jesus Christ our Savior, For us to leave the plan of salvation-and with this I close-is some. thing like a soldier entrenched in an impregnable fortress accepting an invitation to come out of it. You remember how the black monarch who has been so much run after in England, said that our soldiers ought to come out of the entrenchments. They were rats, He said, to hide behind earthworks. If they would only come out, He would destroy them; but our soldiers were wise enough not to venture into the open until the proper time. So the world, the flesh, the devil, and error say, "Come out! Come out: You talk about an infallible Scripture and an almighty Savior, and a simple faith in Him. Come out and fight us fairly on the level." Yes, but we do not see it, and we shall never attempt it. We are like the little coney, of whom Solomon speaks. He hid Himself among the rocks, and the sportsman, I have no doubt, said, "Why don't you come out, little coney? Come, and let me be 785 your friend." But the coney. though He was feeble, was wise, and He hid Himself in the rock all the more, because a stranger invited Him out. Do you the same when Satan cries, "Come away and be free. Be a man. Do not He always trusting in authority." "No," say you, "I shall keep where I am." As I was riding along in the south of France one day I saw pair of fine birds overhead. The driver called out in the French tongue, "Eagles!" Yes; and there was a man below with a gun, who was wishful to get a nearer acquaintance with the eagles, but they did not come down to oblige Him. He pointed His rifle at them, but His shots did not reach half way, for the royal birds kept above. The higher air is the fit dominion for eagles. Up there is the eagle's playground, where He plays with the callow lightnings. Up above the smoke and clouds He dwells. Keep there, eagles! Keep there! If men can get you within range, they mean no good to you. Keep up, Christians. Keep up in the higher element, resting in Jesus Christ, and do not come down to find a perch for yourself among the trees of philosophy. Whatever we do let us never leave the way of truth, of peace, of safety. We are going along the king's highway, and the thieves on the side of the road say, "Come off the highway: it is so dull and monotonous. Come into the woods; we will show you fair flowers, and ferny dells, and quiet caves. Come, listen to the birds that sing all day and all night too. Come quick with us." We heed you not: He that travels along the king's highway is under the king's protection; but He that wanders into the dark mountains and lonesome woods may take care of Himself. We shall do as we have done-follow the way that leads from the banishment-the way of trusting in the Savior and in Him alone. As you hold to the faith, so may God bless and enrich you. As with simple heart you plod along the road that leads to Heaven by the righteousness of the Son of God, may the Lord be with you and comfort you. But if you turn back, woe unto you! A curse will fall upon you in that day of shame and crime! The Lord keep you that you may keep the faith. Amen. 786

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THE GENERAL CONVOCATION AROUND MOUNT ZION. NO. 1689 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “But you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.”- Hebrews 12:22-24. THE whole passage will He considered, but our special central text will be verse 23: “To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” Paul is displaying the superiority of the new covenant to the old. He tells us what Israel after the flesh came to at their best in the morning hours of the Law, and what the first-born after the Spirit have come to under the Gospel. He pictures the great assembly of the chosen people round about Mount Sinai, and then His inspired mind describes an infinitely larger and happier gathering, to which all believers have come, around Mount Sion. Not only the Hebrews to whom He was writing, but all the people of God are gathered together in one general assembly, of which the blessed God is the center. He shows us the joyful difference between the two gatherings, and the feelings and pursuits of those who compose them. What we shall want this morning is a little careful attention to the deep meaning of the text, and an intensely earnest desire actually to enter into the enjoyment of the 787 privileges which are herein set before us. Our text contains an incalculable wealth of meaning: it is written according to God’s riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. Surely it was written as with a pen of diamond upon plates of gold set with jewels. May God of His Grace lead us fully into it. We would not only speak of privilege as possible, but would say with Paul, “We are come unto it.” As surely as we are not come to the terrors of the Law, so surely we are come to the blessings of the Gospel. Read in verse 18, “You are not come,” and then in verse 22, “But you are come.” We do not only hear of Zion and her festivities, but we are come to them. We do not merely know the letter of the Gospel, but we are come into the inner and spiritual meaning of it by personal enjoyment. “We are come.” I would ring out those words as a sort of musical accompaniment to the truths uttered. All through the sermon let our hearts rejoicingly say, “We are come,” “We are come.” We have obtained by faith all that which is set before us in the text. **I.** First, I want to set out, as I may be able, A CONTRAST PRESENTED IN THE ENTIRE PASSAGE which we have read—a contrast between the economy of Law and the economy of Grace. Every good thing is enhanced in value by its opposite. Light is all the brighter to eyes which have wept in darkness food is all the sweeter after you have known hunger; and Sion is all the fairer because of Sinai. The contrast between free Grace and Law makes Grace appear the more precious to minds that have known the rigour of the commandment. The contrast presented here is sevenfold. It may be that the idea of this sevenfold contrast first occurred to Bengel, that prince of critics; but I have ventured to differ from His form of it, and I hope that in so doing I have set forth the contrast as to the seven things more clearly than He has done, so that even the humblest here will catch each point, and retain each contrast in His memory. Notice the contrasts. First, as to place (v. 18), “You are not come unto the mount that might be touched”; (v. 22) “but you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Behold Sinai with its rugged crags: scarce had a human foot ever trod it perhaps until that hour in which Jehovah descended upon it in splendor it had remained a virgin peak, which the foot of man had never polluted. There was no habitation of man upon it, neither did it yield pasturage for flocks. The mount of God stood out in terrible sublimity against the sky, holding communion with the stars, 788 but refusing to deal with men. It was sublime, but stern and tempestbeaten. God came upon Sinai with His Law, and the dread mount became a type of what the Law would be to us. It has given us a grand idea of holiness, but it has not offered us a pathway thereto, nor furnished a weary heart with a resting-place, nor supplied a hungry soul with spiritual food. It can never be the place where congregated multitudes erect a city for themselves, and a temple for the living God: it is not the shrine of fellowship, but the throne of authority and justice. The Jews under the Law had that stern hill for their center, and they compassed it about with pale countenances and trembling knees. We gather to quite another center, even unto the palace-crowned steep of Sion. There David dwelt of old, and there David’s Lord revealed Himself. The hill of Sion rose above the city of Jerusalem, and the two together formed the favored spot where Jehovah deigned to dwell in solemn state in the midst of His chosen nation; “for the Lord has chosen Sion; He has desired it for His habitation.” There the service of His sanctuary was carried on, and around it clustered all the palaces of Judah and the habitations of the chosen people. It was called “the city of vision,” and the city of peace. God dwelt in the midst of her, and therefore she was not moved. “Beautiful for situation,

the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Sion.” “God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” “God shall help her, and that right early.” This is a type of the dispensation in which the Lord comes to man in a vision of peace, and manifests Himself in forgiving Grace. The Lord dwells with men in the person of the man Christ Jesus, and we come to Him and find our habitation in Him in all generations. Even as the sparrow has found a house. and, the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay lieu young, so do we come to dwell at the altars of God, in the city which His Grace has founded and His power has garrisoned. The places in their contrast are full of teaching. This mount that might be touched we are told, in the next place, burned with fire.” God’s made the mountain melt and flow down. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail-stones and coals of fire.” Sinai was altogether on a smoke; innumerable lightning s flashed forth around the summit of the hill, and Jehovah revealed Himself in flaming fire. What, then, have believers come to instead of fire? Why, to another form of fire: to “an innumerable company of angels”- “He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.” Some of those bright beings are called seraphim, or burning ones for they Come and go like flames of 789 fire. It must have been terrible to look up to Sinai and see it casting forth its flames but it is with delight that we look towards the angels who excel in strength, and spend that strengths in the service of the Lord and His people. These are a wall of fire round about us. “ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? “ Has He not given them charge over us to keep us in all our ways? It is most glorious to think of the position every Believer occupies to-day; for we are all come where the hosts of God encamp about us. David said, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” Daniel said, “Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.” The Prophet flings His thousands about as if they were mere units. Think of Jehovah’s legions. Jesus speaks of the Father sending Him twelve legions of angels in a moment. The Lord Jehovah has more legions to send to one spot than the Roman Empire could have mustered in all its length and breadth; and every single warrior of these legions is able to destroy a whole army in a single night, as one of them did when He smote Sennacherib. What mighty spirits, what flaming spirits, what pare spirits, what glorious spirits they are; and we have communion with them! We have come to an innumerable company of angels. We do not always realize it as we should; but these loving spirits are about us as surely as they were around Jacob in His dream, If our eyes were opened we should see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Lord’s servants. “Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we wake and when we sleep.” God comes to us by them: “He rode upon a cherub, and did fly.” Angels contend against evil spirits, and are our defenders. This, then, is our position: we are come to the countless hosts of our Father’s messengers, and not to devouring flame. Pursue the contrast, and you find on Mount Sinai that there was blackness, doubtless made the more intensely black as the vivid lightnings flashed out from it. “You are not come unto blackness,” says Paul. What is the contrast to this? “But you are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” Perhaps you do not for a moment see any contrast, but I will soon show it to you. Blackness is the symbol of sorrow, it is the garb of mourning. Everywhere we associate blackness with grief but now Paul sets before us the grandest embodiment of joy. The word for general assembly in the original suggests a far-reaching festivity. “You are come to the panequris: to a solemn festive assembly, comparable to the National Convocation of the Greeks, which was held around the foot 790 of Mount Olympus, every four or five years, when all the Greeks of different states came together to keep up the national feeling by festivities and friendly competitions which I will explain further on. Instead of the colors of grim death we see the joyous congregating of all the clans, the glad union of all the children of God who are scattered abroad. We this day, in loving fellowship with the church, are come to the great gathering of God, the holy convocation of saints of every tongue, the central home of all the tribes of His great family. It is a gathering for solemn purposes, for it is a “church;” but still for joyous purposes, for it is a national holiday. A solemn joy, a holy delight pervades the atmosphere which the one great church of God is breathing. You say to me, “Do you mean the church in Heaven? “ Yes, I mean the church in Heaven and on earth too; why divide it? There is only one church. Here and there, earth and Heaven make a little division to our senses, but there is no division in the mind of God; He sees one general assembly of all His people, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. Cannot you realize the scene and note the Glory of it? Cannot your mind come. to the general assembly? Cannot you feel that you. are standing in company with all the chosen of God of every age, clime, and place, keeping high holiday with them before the Most High, singing with them His praises continually, and doing Him service with delight? I am so glad not to be alone, but to be one of the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven: I feel ready to shout for joy! What a contrast this-between the

blackness of coming sorrow by the Law and the joyous whiteness of the garments of those who believe. Follow the next point of contrast, and you have darkness mentioned. “Nor unto blackness, and darkness.” The cloud on Sinai was so dark as to obscure the day, except that every now and then the lightning-flash lit up the scene. What are we come to in contrast to that darkness? “To God the Judge of all.” Possibly it does not strike you with joy when I mention it; but this is perhaps the most joyous of all the clauses of the passage. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” What a contrast to the darkness of the Law is a reconciled God! “Oh, but,” say you, “He is there as the Judge of all, and that makes us tremble,” Why? Wherefore? It makes me leave off trembling when I think that I am come “to God the Judge of all,” that Christ has brought me near, even to the Judge, so that I have nothing to dread from Him. What can the Judge do but pronounce sentence of acquittal upon the man for whom Christ has made expiation? What can He 791 do to harm us? Nothing, but much to help us; for, rolling every slander away, He will make the righteous to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. We are standing to day in the presence of that great God who looks upon His people with delight, and awards to them their several crowns. In this great gathering of the first-born they wrestle with sin, they run the race of perseverance, they proclaim His honor, and sing His praise. This is, in fact, the highest delight of all the saints—to gather unto their God! And what follows next? Why, tempest it is said, “You are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.” All over the top of Sinai there swept fierce winds and terrible tornadoes, for the Lord was there. All Heaven seemed convulsed when God did rend it, and descended in majesty upon the sacred mount. But what do you and I see? The very reverse of tempest— “The spirits of just men made perfect,” serenely resting. What more is there for them to do? They are perfect, they have fought the fight, they have run the race, they are crowned, they are full of ecstatic bliss, the light of God is on their brows, the Glory of God is reflected from their faces; everything like tempest is far gone from them; they have reached the fair haven, and are tossed with tempest no more. To-day you and I have come where we hold fellowship with the immutably serene, who are resting in the Glory which God has appointed them. This is a part of the splendid pageantry of the covenant of Grace, and we are come to it. *“E’en now by faith we join our hands With those that went before And greet the blood-besprinkled bands On the eternal shore.”* Faith has brought us into that one communion in which all saints live, whether they are on earth or in the Father’s house above. Follow the contrast further, and you come to the sound of a trumpet. This resounded from the top of Sinai. Clarion notes most clear and shrill rang out again and again the high commands of the thrice-holy God. You are not come to that. Instead of a trumpet, which signifies war and the stern summons of a king, you are come unto “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,” and the silver tones of “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Here is nothing to disturb the ear; for “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not 792 quench.” No message thunders out, “Stand off!” but holy affection cries, “Come, and welcome! for God has come to you in the person of the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus.” In the person of Jesus we see nothing to alarm, but everything to encourage. Oh, for faith to see with joy the Mediator of that new covenant which does not so much command as work in us to will and to do! Is not this one of the choicest blessings of the position we now occupy, that instead of the trumpet we hear the sweet and saving voice of Jesus bidding us repose in His salvation and He eternally blessed? The seventh contrast lies in this, together with the trumpet there sounded out a voice, a voice which was so terrible that they asked that they might not hear it again. They cowered down under it, like poor, frightened children, terrified by the penetrating sound. They could not endure another word; they begged that the voice would be silent. We have come to another voice, the voice of “the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.” There is a voice from Sion, there is a voice that rolls over the heads of the innumerable company of angels, a voice of the Lord that is full of majesty, and exceedingly comfortable to the “general assembly and church of the first-born,” who know the joyful sound. The blessed Word speaks life, pardon, reconciliation, acceptance, joy, eternal bliss! Happy people, whose ears have discerned this heavenly voice “They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance.” The more of this voice the better—it never wearies the ear, nor distresses the heart, *“Blood has a voice to pierce the skies, ‘Revenge,’ the blood of Abel cries But the dear blood of Jesus slain Speaks peace as loud from every vein.”* We are come to it, for we have been washed in it, and its sweet, prevailing note is filling our heart with music even now. Now, dear Friends, I have set forth the contrast, and I want you to think it out by the help of the ever-blessed Spirit. To all that was transacted at Sinai the people could not come, nor did they wish to come; they kept at a distance, for they were afraid but to all that is

displayed on Sion we may come; no, what is better, I hope we can say with the Apostle, "We are come." We now enter into it, and delight in it: it has become our life and our joy. All that the people saw at Sinai distressed them; all that we see at Sion electrifies us with delight—we scarce know how to hear ourselves as 793 we think of the wondrous Glory of love. We are not warned off, we are not driven into fear and bondage, but we come unto the mount of God, and there we feast, rejoicing in Him, even in all that He is and does. The veil is rent from the top to the bottom, and we have access to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There I leave the instructive contrast. May the Holy Spirit bless it. **II.** I beg you, in the second place, to follow me in what may not perhaps so much strike you, but it is certainly worthy of your attention, namely, A COMPARISON IN OUR MORE CENTRAL TEXT, Our position is that "We are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven." It is a comparison, not with anything Jewish, for that would not have been suitable, but with a Gentile festival, which more readily lent itself to the Apostle's great thought. Let me give you, first of all, a rough sketch. In Greece, in her happier times, in order to preserve a national unity, the various states, kingdoms, or republics, which constituted Greece proper, held at the foot of Olympus a great gathering, to which none came as participators except citizens of the various Greek nationalities. The object of the gathering was that every part of the Greek nature might be educated and displayed, and the unity of the Greek race be remembered. Poets came and sang verses which they had composed with care; orators stood and discoursed to gain the crown for eloquence; men of all kinds of mental attainments were there emulating each other. At the same time all sorts of athletic exercises for the development of the body were going on. The territory in which this was held was considered to be sacred. Though the states were often at war with one another, they never carried the war into that particular region. It was a quiet, peaceful, neutral spot. Do you not espy a parallel? No man was allowed to compete in any of the exercises and contests except he had been at least ten months or more in preparation for them. Those who were conquerors had no gold given them as reward; a simple crown of olive was all; but it was thought quite sufficient reward for the most exhausting feats, and for the greatest self-denial, such as resistance unto blood and dislocation of bones. When the conquerors went home, we are told that they were drawn into their own cities with horses in great state, and the gates were not opened to them, but a breach was made in the city wall that they might be admitted with unusual pomp. The whole business of the panaguris was held in high esteem by the Greek people, and religion lent its rites and ceremonies to render the gathering the more 794 imposing. The Apostle, I do not doubt, had seen it at any rate, the word which He uses properly and naturally suggests it. Think for a moment! Before us stands the city which is the center of this unrivalled congregation of the first-born Jerusalem stands in her place, and liner Acropolis, Mount Sion, looks down upon the scene. To the city of the living God the living children of God have come. See how the presence of the Lord brings together an innumerable company Far as imagination can fly the space is filled with shining ones, who compose the court of the Most High. Observe the freeborn burgesses of the holy city, enrolled by God that they may participate in the exercises which make illustrious this noblest of all assemblies. See, yonder are the runners and the wrestlers, Perhaps you do not think there can be much festivity about engagements which involve so much of endurance as running and striving for the mastery, but your Greeks were of another mind, and these contests were a part of the pleasures of the festival. How much I wish that we could look upon all the conflicts, sufferings, and troubles of this mortal life as occupations of the great festive gathering which is now being held in Heaven and in earth around the city of our God. See, yonder is the Judge, the great Umpire of His people's efforts, ready to award the crowns. And who are those sitting in their seats, and looking on? These are they who have taken their turn in these grand displays, and, having won their crowns, there they sit, "the spirits of the just made perfect," "the cloud of witnesses." To-day, my brethren, you are participating in that great international gathering of all the people of God. Are you not glad to be here? When I was visiting one of our sick friends He uttered a sentence which stuck to me, and indeed suggested my subject. He said, "I have had some education for Heaven in attending the Tabernacle." "How is that?" "Because I have been used to worship with a great company of godly people, used to join in the songs of great multitudes, and I shall feel at home among the number that no man can number." Yes, it is sweet to go up with your multitude who keep holy day the number adds a charm to your worship, and gives to our hearts a tone of exhilaration which else they might have lacked. Behold, then, the countless bands of the redeemed assembled around the chosen mount! Brethren, you are not around a blazing mount, nor do you compose a trembling assembly of persons who, like shaves, are afraid of their great and terrible master; but you are come to-day to the great festival in which 795 earth and Heaven unite. That assembly is one and indivisible.

Around the throne of the Most High your Apostle represents all the saints as gathered to hold one glorious feast. "Has it begun?" say you. Yes, it is going on now, and you are come to it: if you are living by faith as you ought to live you are now engaged in it. "Oh, but," say you, "I am wrestling." That is a part of the festival. "I never thought of that," cries one. But it is even so. When the national meeting was held at Olympus there were contests of all kinds, and these were not regarded with sorrow, but with exultation. "What! would you have me look at my sufferings and wrestlings as part of a festival?" Yes; I would have you Glory in them, and view them in the same high and heroic light in which the Apostle sets them forth, in the figure before us. The exercises are now proceeding. The sacred orators are now doing their part: you heard the singers just now. I count it a high honor to hold your attention while I tell you of the Glory of my Lord and Master, who Himself contended here, and endured the cross, despising the shame. Thousands of others are discoursing as I do; for the assembly abounds in the rich gifts of utterance, and everywhere chosen spokesmen are telling out the wonderful wisdom and love of God. Many at this meeting have hymns to sing, or books to write; and all are doing their best to make the assembly a notable one. Look at another class of chosen men, and mark how they are straggling with temptation, warring against error, running in the course, or bearing heavy weights. Yes, that is all a part of the grand display which the Lord is making before all intelligent beings, wherein the power of love, the energy of faith, the splendor of Grace, and the triumph of good are being made manifest to the Glory of God by us. "Oh," say you, "I cannot look at my sorrows in such a light." No doubt the men who were wrestling or racing found that for the present it was not joyous; yet they did not shun it, for they had earnestly desired the day when they might be allowed to share in the national display: they counted it a high honor to be permitted to take part even in the roughest contests. None but a Greek could do so. You, also have put your name down for a place in the church of God; this is a high honor, to which none but the twice-born, whose names are written in Heaven, can be admitted: accept the hardness with the honor. "Oh, but," say you, "I have run a long time, I have run for fifty years!" Splendid running this! I do not believe that even at Olympus they ever saw a man run for fifty years at a stretch. Keep on! Do not suffer the Glory of the day to fail. You say this sheds a strange light upon Christian life. Say, a blessed light, which will delight the eyes and hearts of 796 enthusiastic believers. The Father of all takes delight in this assembly: it is the joy of Christ to look down upon His champions, whose faith He sustains, whose faith He accepts. He is saying to devils, "Look on, and see what lovers of right can do?" Look on, you innumerable company of angels, and see what Grace can do in the hearts of poor, feeble men and women, making them strong to do exploits. My brethren, see what feats were performed of old; read the eleventh chapter of this epistle. Remember how the Lord's own elect stood at the stake, and burned to the death without yielding. Think how they were stretched on racks, but would not deny their Lord; were dragged at the heels of wild horses; were roasted over slow fires; or were stung to death by wasps. Their endurance is more glorious than all that can be told of the heroes of Greece. What wonders men have done through Grace! God has glorified His name by what He has enabled men to bear and do, This our Lord would have us look at and unite in. Now, what can we do? God help us to do our best. Oh for Grace to suffer more, to give more, to work more, to be more firm in resisting temptation, more pure in all godly conversation! Champions, shall the day of Glory decline? Thine feast has scarce reached its greatest day; let not courage, or patience, or faith begin to flag. May we be jealous for the honor of the chosen race, to which we belong. Our text adds to the term "general assembly" that of the "church of the first born." "Oh," say the commentators, "this is tautology." Not so. The Apostle felt bound, after having used such a remarkable comparison, to call us back to your solemnity of the matter, and remind us that it is "a church" which is gathered. You and I have come to a great church-meeting, where all the saints of God are met at this moment. What makes a church? An ecclesia? These words may help you—they are, first, a people chosen; next, a people called; then a people culled; then a people consecrated; and then a people congregated. So do they become the church of the living God; separated unto God by His electing love; called out from the world by His effectual calling; culled out by being separated through a work of Grace; congregated and gathered together into one in Christ; and evermore consecrated to the divine service. This is what you and I have come to. Oh for words with which to speak our joy for admission into such a company! Brethren, notice that Paul was writing to Hebrews, and the Hebrews. no doubt gloried in their great feasts, when all the tribes came up to Jerusalem. Yes, Paul knew all about those feasts, and all that they meant; 797 but this is an assembly to which the Jewish ritual offers us no parallel. Hebrews come to that festival, but it is by no means peculiarly theirs. "They shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." Just as at Olympus, Spartans, Thebans, Athenians, and Corinthians, all came, and melted into Greeks,

so will they come—Jews, Gentiles, men of this church, and of that, and they will all melt into one general assembly. It is not a peculiar assembly of Hebrews, but a general assembly of all the first-born. Note, dear Friends, the individuals who compose the company. They are all high born, for they are all first-born. There is but one emphatically first-born, namely, Jesus Christ Himself, the first-born of every creature; but being one with Him we become the first-born of God through the new birth. By our union to Christ, and by the blessed processes of Grace, we are made and known to be the first-born of God. Now the first-born among men had the ascendancy and sway in the household, even as “the meek shall inherit the earth.” The day comes when righteousness shall be to the fore. The first-born had the excellency. “Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.” The saints are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight. The first-born were consecrated to God; and we, too, are dedicated persons, set apart unto God; “for you are not your own; you are bought with a price.” The first-born were redeemed: so have we been purchased with the precious blood of Christ. The first-born had the estate, the throne, and the priesthood. Vast is the inheritance of the first-born of God—all things are theirs; they are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. To the first-born belonged honor: “Such honor have all the saints.” There are younger brothers in every family who receive comparatively little if they happen to be descended from great lords; but there are no younger brethren in the family of God. They are all first-born, all heirs, and what is wonderful to tell, each one of the in has all the estate; for so infinite is it, that, though if I have all, you can have all too: an innumerable company of this blessed first-born race can have the whole of God to be their portion for ever and ever. But then it is added that they are enrolled. As I have already told you, they enrolled the competitors in the Greek festivals, and a man took care months before to get His name set down for a place. Thus God has enrolled the names of His people. They are written-where? In the earth? No; the wicked are written in the earth, but your names of the Lord’s people are 798 written in Heaven. In the divine decree that never changes, in the divine heart that never alters, in the divine memory that never fails, in the divine thought that never forgets, all the names of the godly are written. I do not know how to set this out, but I do want you to feel as if you were standing this morning in that great assembly with spiritual exercises going on around you, such as struggling against sin, striving for the mastery over error, patiently enduring pain, and working holy work, The Judge is looking on, with the crown in His hand, ready to place it upon each conqueror’s head; the air breathes perfume, and is full of music, for all around is joy. When a man suffers, if He looks upon it as punishment, He feels like a criminal tied up to be lashed; but if He knows that His path is a necessary part of the road to victory, He bears it without complaint. If we all understand that this period is not comparable to a battle, of which the result hangs in the balance, but comparable to those deeds of prowess with which of old men celebrated a victory, then the face of things is altered, and our toils are transfigured. Angels come down, and poor men and women are lifted up, in patience triumphing, and giving pleasure to their Lord, and bringing honor to that favored city which God has prepared for them. We are here and the throng, not as spectators only, but sharing in the overflowing joy. Oh, the bliss of feeling that even now Heaven is begun below, and the sufferings of this present life are but a part of the Glory of the Lord manifested in His people! **III.** We will conclude by noticing the third point, which is—A COMING TO BE ENJOYED. This is the essence of it all—“We are come” unto this general assembly and church of the first-born. How then do we come? A difficulty meets us at the outset. You that have never thought of this great assembly which my imagination and heart have tried to picture this morning, you cannot come. The porter stands at the barrier, and keeps you back. You cry, “Let me come!” No, you may not come. This festival is only for the first-born, and you are not that by nature. You must first be born again, and become one of the first-born. The Spirit of God must make you a new creature in Christ Jesus, and then the porter will open the wicket, and say, “Come in, and welcome.” Which part are you going to take in this great gathering? Will you fight against sin? Will you wrestle against error? Will you run for the crown? Will you sing or speak? What will you do in this great congress of all the saints? But these questions do not apply until first you are born from above. 799 Next, you must be enrolled, Your name must be written down, not in our church-book, but in the church-book of the Lord above. I would to God that some of you would be moved to say, “Oh, that my name were written there!” The name of every Believer is upon Christ’s heart, and hand, and shoulder. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you are trusting in Him, your name is among your enrolled. If you believe in Him that rose again from the dead, and He is the Author and Finisher of your faith, then come and welcome: you are one of those whose names are written in Heaven. The general assembly would miss you if you were absent: yes, Heaven itself cannot be perfect if you do not enter its ranks; for all the saints must be there,

or else it will not be a perfect gathering. Would you have them mourning in Heaven, and saying, “Such an one is not here!” Why, Heaven’s songs would be suspended if one child of the family were left in the outer darkness. There must be a believing in Jesus, and then there will be a reception into the chosen assembly. But you say again, “How am I to get into that assembly? I hope I have been born again, and that my name is written among time Lord’s redeemed people, but still I do not feel as if I were in the festive gathering yet: I feel more like one in the arena contending for very life.” So did many at Olympus. They were fighting and wrestling, and while so engaged they endured great hardness; yet their valiant strife was a part of the grand scene, and they would not have been absent on any account. So, dear Friends, what we must do is this, first -God helping us, let us partake in the joy of the one church, Why should I not be as happy as you angels are? You have not so much reason to be happy as I have, for Jesus never took your nature, or died for you. ***“Never did angels taste above Redeeming Grace and dying love.”*** And you, spirits of the just, why should not I participate in all your joy? What blessing belongs to you which does not also belong to me, except the one delight of absolute perfection? Am I not saved? Am I not washed? Am I not clothed? Am I not a child of God—in all things just what you are, except that one finishing stroke—which I am sure to have in due time when I have concluded my wrestling and my running? Let us joy in God to-day, and, surely, even in Heaven they know no greater bliss than this. To joy in God through Jesus Christ our Lord is happiness at its highest. May the Spirit of God help us. 800 If we wish to feel we are among the Lord’s host let us participate in their service. There is something for you and for me to do; and to enjoy this holiday we must all take a share in its engagements. Come, brother, quicken your pace, you are not making enough progress in the divine life: hasten your steps, throw away every weight, and cast off the garment which entangles your feet. You, too, dear brother, over there in the workshop, where you hear bad language, and see bad practices—go you in for the wrestling: see what you can do: in the name of the Lord grasp the evil which opposes you; fling an evil custom on its back, and win a victory for purity and truth. Thus shall we each by vying with the rest contribute to the grand result, and share in your general triumph. And when we are participating in the service, let us next feel that we can possess the inheritance. It is “the assembly of the first-born”: let no man miss His birthright. See how the Apostle introduces Esau as a warning, and how He bids us regard our afflictions as chastisements which prove our sonship. Come, then, act as sons, and rejoice in your Father’s riches which are all your own. Let us not remain half-starved through the penury of our unbelief; but let us be filled to the full through the richness of the faith which the Spirit of God has worked in us. Let us look on all things round about us with quite a different eye, not walking like slaves who dread their taskmaster, and scarcely dare to call their breath their own, but like free men who have even the Judge of all upon their side, and can have nothing to fear in life or death. Deep be our reverence, but high our joy, as we stand in His gracious presence, and with all the blood-bought rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of Glory. At this moment our question is, “Lord, what will you have me to do?” Our cry is—“Here am I; send me.” Use me, my Lord, glorify yourself in me; and while the innumerable company of angels look on, help me to do, and dare, and wrestle, and win, till you shall give to me also the crown of life that fadeth not away. This will not be a payment of debt, but a gift of Grace. The metaphor of a Greek assembly excludes all notion of wages for work. No mercenary thought entered the mind of a single Greek who strove for the mastery at the assembly. He had nothing to win but a crown of olive. No money was ever given; it would have degraded the paneguris to a common show. Therefore you are not invited to contend that you may win a reward by your own merit. Ours is holiday work which it ‘is joy to perform. Moved by a spiritual chivalry, saints do and dare for Jesus out of love to Him. His service is its own reward. To die for Him is life; to live for 801 Him is Heaven. Let others boast their pedigree and nationality, we have reached the august convocation of the ransomed of the Lord who have come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. 802

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CHARIOTS OF IRON. NO. 1690 DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NE WINGTON. “And the Lord was with Judah; and He drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and He expelled thence the three sons of Anak.”—Judges 1:19, 20. WE frequently use Canaan as a type of Heaven, and the Jordan, through which Israel passed, as a symbol of death. Dr. Watts has taught us to sing— *“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood Stand dress’d in living green; So to the Jews old Canaan stood, While Jordan roll’d between. “Could we but climb where Moses stood, And view the landscape o’er, Not Jordan’s stream, nor death’s cold flood, Should fright us from the shore!”* This is thoroughly poetical, and may be made exceedingly instructive; but it is not quite accurate, if we undertake a careful consideration of the whole matter. If the New Testament is to expound the Old, then there is another lesson to be learned from the land which flowed with milk and honey. “We that have believed do enter into rest;” that is to say, all believers in Christ have crossed the Jordan, and have come into the promised rest. The covenant is fulfilled to them already in a great measure; they are living under Messiah’s sway within the bounds of His kingdom, and every precious thing which God promised them is theirs. They dwell in the “land 803 which the Lord thinks upon”: “Your land, O Immanuel!” The type, therefore, may best set forth the case of the instructed and advanced Believer who has passed through the first or wilderness stage of His life, and has now come into a higher condition, actually enjoying spiritual privileges and sitting together with Christ in the heavenly places. To Him, however, this condition of exalted privilege is not a state of undisturbed repose: on the contrary, He wars a constant warfare, wrestling with spiritual wickednesses. The Canaanite is in possession, and the Canaanite is to be driven out. Our natural tendencies and corruptions, our sinful habits and lustings, and the warping and bending of our spirit towards evil all this has to be overcome; and we shall not possess the land so as to enjoy undivided tranquillity until sin is utterly exterminated. What Joshua could not do our Lord Jesus shall fully accomplish; the enemy within shall be rooted out, and then shall dawn the day of our joy and peace, when we shall sit every man under His own vine and fig-tree, and none shall make us afraid. That perfect victory shall be ours; but not yet. Taking this as the truth which we shall illustrate by our text, we notice that the work of Israel was to drive out and utterly to exterminate those condemned races which were in possession of Canaan. One tribe was chosen to lead the van in the fierce campaign. Joshua, their heroic leader, was gone: who should lead the way? The power of the Canaanites in His clay had been broken, but now that He was dead the old races began to look up again, even as we oftentimes find our sins which we thought were all dead suddenly finding fresh courage, and attempting to set up their empire once more. Then Israel went to God and enquired, “Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to light against them? And the Lord said) Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into His hand,” The tribe of Judah, then, was commissioned to lead the way, and we see three things in its conduct of the enterprise. First, the Lord’s power was trusted and magnified, for “the Lord was with Judah, and Judah drave out the inhabitants of the mountain.” Secondly, by this very tribe, this right royal tribe, the Lord’s power was distrusted, and therefore restrained; for “Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron,” Yet, as if to rebuke them, they had a singular incident set before them for the vindication of God’s power, and of that we read in the twentieth verse. Caleb, that grand old man, who still lived on, the sole survivor of all who came out of Egypt, had obtained Hebron as His portion, and He went up in His old age, when His bones were sore and set, and slew 804 the three sons of Anak, even three mighty giants, and took possession of their city. In this way the Lord’s power was trusted and vindicated from the slur which Judah had brought upon it. **I.** Let us think upon our first head, which is, that by the tribe of Judah THE LORD’S POWER WAS TRUSTED AND MAGNIFIED. “The Lord was with Judah,” Oh that the Holy Spirit may be with us! The people had wisely consulted their God, and it fell to Judah’s lot, by divine appointment, to lead the van, In that work the tribe prospered. Read the chapter when you are at home, and you will observe a series of great victories, “Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men, And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against Him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after Him, and caught Him, and cut off His thumbs and His great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God has requited me.” Thus they overcame the monarch who had domineered over the land, and had been a terror to all the little kings. Next, the tribe attacked Jerusalem, and Hebron, and Debir, and Hormah. Soon

afterwards they fell upon the Philistines, who were men of war, and they took Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron with the coasts thereof. The Lord God in this way had proved to Judah, and to all Israel, what He could do, and it would have been wise on their part to have put unlimited trust in Him; then had they gone forward conquering and to conquer. Has not the Lord done the same with those of us who have believed in Him? What has your experience been, my brother? I speak not to men of the world, nor to those who have just begun the divine life; but I speak to those of you who have experience of the things of God, and who have lived the life of faith for years. Has not God revealed His power in you? Do you not possess infallible proofs of it which you would scarcely like to tell, for they are as secret as they are sacred? Though you would never mention them in a mixed audience, lest you should cast your pearls where they would not be appreciated, yet they are laid up in your memories in the form of remarkable deliverances, special comforts, and singular mercies, for which to this day you cannot account upon any other theory than that the Lord God omnipotent put forth His hand and specially helped you in your hour of need. Do not forget these things. If the Lord's power be proved to your own soul by God Himself then it is proved indeed, I care very little for 805 those evidences of the existence of a God which are fashioned for us by learned men—the a priori argument, the argument from analogy, and all the rest. I have seen an end to them in my own doubts and fears. The most convincing evidence is found in another kind of reasoning, such as that which conquers all doubt by actual experience. When God has come to our soul, and drawn near to us in the hour of our distress, we have needed no further argument. When He has said “Peace” to our troubled spirit, and stilled its raging, then have we received conclusive evidence of His power. When He has lifted us up into ecstasy, and filled us with joy unspeakable and full of Glory, we have laid up these evidences in our record-house, and our assurance has grown doubly sure. If we have not tied a bit of red tape round these briefs, and hidden them away in our pigeon-holes, we have taken better care of them than that; for we have locked them up in the inner chambers of our heart. Mary pondered these things in her heart, and we have done the same. God's goodness was thus proved to Judah, even as it has been to many of us in our degree: proven as clearly as if it had been worked out mathematically, like a problem in Euclid. But the Lord had also proved His power to Judah in numerous victories. The victories which He gave to them were singular and remarkable, even when not miraculous; and there were many of them. They had gone from city to city, and smitten all their foes. It seemed as if God had said to Judah, as He said to Joshua, “No man shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life.” Now, repeated facts go to strengthen the inference drawn from former fact. According to the best practical philosophy, which is the inductive, you note a fact, and then the inference from it is probable: you note another fact, and the inference is more probable. You get six, seven, eight, ten, twenty similar facts, and your deduction becomes more and more nearly certain. But when these facts come thick as hailstones, when they become as many as the drops of dew, or the beams of light, then the inference may be regarded as absolutely sure. When your life is crowded with displays of God's power, with you, for you, and in you, then that power cannot He doubted. It is impossible to argue a Christian out of the grounds of His faith when He has had long dealings with God. There! You cavilers may boast that you can disprove a doctrine, if you like. I care nothing for your sophisms. You cannot disprove it to me. You can carp against the Old Testament or the New, if you like. I am sorry for you, for it is all clear enough to me; but I am not going to get into a great heat over it in order to combat you. It is not so very important what you prove, or do 806 not prove, about the Books, because the matter of fact still remains untouched. Those of us who have lived in the light of God's countenance, and have spoken with Him as a man speaks with His friend, and have had replies from Him, not once, nor twice, nor in years gone by alone, but daily and continually; we, I say, are not to be moved from our belief. We have another life into which a stranger can not intrude, and a converse with God which seems ridiculous only to those who never knew it, for it is sublime as sublimity itself; to those who every day enjoy it; and having such a life, it furnishes us with evidence which does not go to be debated: we believe, and are sure. Disprove our sanity, and you have done something; only let me tell you that even then we shall remain sane enough to hold to what we do hold, and shall not be so mad as to join the infidel ranks. We are satisfied to be fools if to be fools means to see God. We are satisfied to know nothing about the “culture” and the “thought” of this grand century, if that involves being far off from the Eternal Lord, and ceasing to see His hand in nature, in Providence, and in Grace. We are content if we may but know Him, whom to know is life eternal. Beloved brethren, I may say of many here present that God has proven His power and goodness to you by such overwhelming proofs that doubt, in your case, would be a grievous piece of folly and sin. God had especially favored Judah with remarkable assistance in what I may call “brotherly action.” “Judah said unto Simeon His brother, Come up with me

into my lot, that we may light against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with you into your lot. So Simeon went with Him,” (See verse 8.) In communion with each other these tribes had further proof of God’s power, for He gave them the necks of their enemies. We also can narrate wonderful displays of God’s power and Grace when we have had fellowship one with another in holy service. Our choicest experiences have been enjoyed in Christian society. When the disciples were met together, the doors being shut, then Jesus came into the midst of them, and said unto them, “Peace be unto you.” The Lord is gracious to us when we are having sympathy with His poor and struggling people, and entering into a mutual covenant that we will stand by each other and help each other in the midst of an ungodly world. The Lord is pleased with brotherly love, and there He commands the blessing to rest as the dews on Hermon. If I could forget the major part of my own personal experience at home, yet can I never forget the heavenly seasons spent in the Tabernacle with my beloved ones. In the prayermeetings, have not our hearts burned within us? At the banqueting-table of 807 celestial love, at the Lord’s Supper, to which we delight to come every Lord’s-day, have we not attained a nether Heaven? Have we not passed into the vestibule of God’s own house in Glory, and felt that it needed scarce the rending of the thinnest piece of tissue to let us actually stand in the unveiled presence of God? Yes, God has been with us, and then we have had proofs enough of His power and love. When together we have gone forth to battle, to struggle against the sin of the age, to hear testimony for neglected truth, to bring our wandering brethren back, or to reclaim fallen sisters to the faith of Jesus, have we not obtained in that fraternal action grand proofs of the Master’s power to bless and save? I know that we have. There let it stand, and let it witness against us if we in future yield to unbelief. Yet further, brethren, it so happened that to Judah God gave great proofs of His presence and power by raising up, here and there, a man in their midst who performed heroic deeds. I will not speak of Caleb, for you will tell me, “Ah, He was an old, old man, and belonged to another generation. He was just going off the scene; we do not wonder that He did great things.” Yes, but He had a nephew, one Othniel, a young man as yet unmarried, and when Caleb said, “He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and takes it, to Him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife,” His nephew Othniel was the man for the city and the bride. The young hero stood forward, and went up to the fortress, and took the city, and passed it over to His uncle’s hands, and received the promised reward. Oh yes, and we have seen raised up—and shall see it more and more young heroes who have been self-denying, self-distrustful, inconsiderate of themselves, who have been willing for Christ’s sake to be anything or nothing, and God has been with them, and the power of the Most High has rested upon them. Has not unbelief been rebuked when we have been compelled to say, “Instead of the fathers shall He the children, whom you may make princes in all the earth”? This has been a blessed token of God’s presence and power. I know how it is with those who have been long in the church: they wonder what is to become of it when the old folks die. “When the pastor is gone, what shall we do then?” Wait till it happens, brothers: wait till it happens; and then you shall see that He who could find one servant can find another. The Lord was never short of instruments yet, and He never will be. You and I, you know, if we wear out one tool, must wait till we send to the shop for a second; but the Lord grows new tools out of old ones. New springs are born out of the decays of the old year’s autumn. I have seen a 808 young tree growing out of the roots of the old one, and fresh leaves unfold where those of last year had once been. In our advancing years we become better recruiting-sergeants, and so enlist our own successors. You who are now getting gray once wondered what would become of the cause of God when the guide of your youth fell asleep in Jesus; but the immortal cause has survived the death of the standard-bearer. We never hear of that good man now: indeed, He does not seem to have been so important as you thought. God will find messengers as long as He has errands. When certain of us have gone home, you young people will be leading in our stead, and you will say, “I recollect the old gentleman. We did value His ministry, and we could not think what we should do without Him; but we have done a deal better without Him than ever we did with Him, for God in His infinite mercy has raised up a worthy successor.” Wherefore be of good courage, and let what you have seen as to the past be to you a prophecy of God’s goodness in the future. Caleb shall be gathered to His fathers, but Othniel shall follow Him, who shall be as brave as He. The reason why the men of Judah were successful was because they had full confidence in God. Up to a certain point Judah relied upon God. Jehovah had bid them to lead the way, and they led the way. He had conducted them from city to city, and they went, not doubting that God would be with them; and so success attended them, for they leaned upon the Lord. Thus shall it be with us, for it is written “According to your faith be it unto you.” The Lord will not fall short of the measure: let us not make the measure short. Yet this is where we too frequently fail; for our faith is such a poor piece of business. We scarcely trust God as well as we trust a generous man;

and when God does a great thing for His people they say one to another, "Is it not surprising? Is it not wonderful?" Many are amazed that God should keep His word; so that, when He answers prayer, they exclaim, "What a marvelous thing!" "Is it, then, a marvel for God to be true? for God to keep His promise? I grant you that there is a side of it which for ever must be marvelous; but still I fear that with the allowable marvel there is often mixed such a degree of unbelief that the wonderment is not so much of admiring gratitude as astonished unbelief. For God to hear prayer is as natural as for a cause to produce an effect. There is as much, and as certain, and as infallible a connection between prayer that is worked in us by the Holy Ghost and the result of that prayer as there is between force in the steam engine and the motion of the train. Instead of the power of prayer being a mere fiction, it is the most practical and certain 809 of all the forces that are extant this side of the eternal throne. God works more by prayer than by anything else, and if we would but enlarge the channel through which His mighty power would flow, by having more faith and more confidence in prayer, we should see greater things than these. **II.** Now I come to the painful but important subject of THE LORD'S POWER RESTRAINED BECAUSE DISTRUSTED. The men of Judah could drive out the inhabitants of the mountain, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. Some of our more flippant infidels have asserted that till verse says that the Lord could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley; yet the antecedent is not God at all, but Judah. It is Judah that could not drive them out. "Well," say they, "but God was with Judah, and they did drive out the people of the mountain why could they not drive out the people of the plain by the same power?" This is the hinge of the matter. They did not conquer the men of the iron chariots, because God in that business was not with them. As far as their faith went, so far God kept touch with them, and they could do anything and everything; but when they despondingly thought that they could not drive out the inhabitants of the wide valleys, then they failed utterly. They were afraid because of the chariots, which had poles between the horses armed with lances which cut their way through the crowd, and the axles of the wheels were fitted with great scythes: these inventions were novel, and caused a panic, and therefore the men of Judah lost their faith in God, and so became weak and cowardly. They said, "It is of no use; we cannot meet these terrible machines"; and therefore they did not pray, or make an attempt to meet the foe. They could not drive out the people. Of course they could not. If they had exhibited the same faith about the chariots of iron as about the hill-men the chariots of iron would have been no better than chariots of straw, for the Lord "breaks the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire." If they had believed in God, and gone forth in His name, the horses would soon have fled, as indeed they did when God gave His people faith. When Barak led the way with Deborah, then they smote Jabin, who had nine hundred chariots of iron. They fled; they lied; they hasted away, for the Lord was with Barak, and gave them up to Him as chaff to the whirlwind. God would have been with Judah if Judah had displayed faith; but, having no faith, they could not rout the chariots of iron. 810 Their faith was imperfect. They retained too much confidence in themselves, mark that; for, if their confidence had been in God alone, these chariots of iron would have been ciphers in the calculation. If God has to give the victory, then chariots of iron or chariots of fire are no item at all against an omnipotent God. They evidently thought that there was somewhat in themselves; for their power went as far as smiting the men of the hills, but not so far as attacking the cavalry in the open plain where there was room for them to rush to and fro, Now, that is your weakness and mine. We tacitly imply that God can help us up to a certain point, Does not that mean that we can help ourselves up to that point? Being interpreted, the belief conceals a measure of self-trust; and the next akin to self-trust is distrust. If you have passed out of yourself, where have you entered now? Into the infinite. The man who has reached the infinite needs not to reckon any longer. It was of no use for Noah to keep a log of His vessel when there remained no more: when it was all sea, it did not matter to Him where He drifted. And so when you once get right away from self there are no limits. God is unbounded: therefore trust Him without stint. Act like Samson, the strong, because the childlike, hero. If there is a Philistine to meet, He is ready for Him. There are two of them: 110 is quite ready for both. There are twenty of them: it makes no difference. A thousand of them are before Him. All right, there are only the more for the hero to kill, for He will slay every mother's son of them, and pile up their carcasses heaps upon heaps. Numbers do not matter. "But, Samson, if you are to do this deed, you must wield a good Damascus blade." "Yes," says He, "if I am to do it, of course I must; but if the Lord is to do it, the jawbone of an ass will suffice." It made no difference to Him when He had thrown Himself simply and nakedly upon God whether foes were few or many, whether weapons were fit or feeble. Herein is the failure of our faith, if it rests not in God's bare arm. See this round world, how steadily it turns! how smoothly it moves along in its predestinated course! Why? Because God has

hung it upon nothing, and God's own will directs it. Suppose it were hung on a chain would it He any the more secure? The strength of the chain would come from God, and it is better to have the power without the chain. Though a saint is sustained by nothing but the power of God, all the devils in Hell cannot stir Him. The bare arm of God is the source of all power. Next, the imperfection of their faith lay in this, as it may do in your, my brethren—that they believed one promise of God and did not believe 811 another. There is a kind of faith which is strong in one direction, but utter weakness if tried in other ways. It is curious that persons generally speak out the easiest promises to believe, while those which are greater, and therefore are the more godlike, they cannot believe. Judah believed in smiting the hill-men, because He thought such warfare easy; but as to overcoming the cavalry with their chariots of iron that was difficult, and so He did not believe tip to that mark. Beware of being pickers and choosers of God's promises. You who are traders know that customers will turn all your stock over, and keep on picking over packet after packet, and never buy anything at the end. Does this please you? When people pick the promises over they say- "That one? No, I cannot receive that." When they do believe a promise, it is the smallest in the book. Oh! for a faith that takes the promises in the bulk, and knows nothing of choosing or refusing. Whatever God has promised He is able also to perform; and if the promise be but suitable to my ease, I am to grasp it and expect to see it fulfilled. Some believe God at one time and not at another. Do you not find that you believe the Lord a good deal on Thursday nights after a sermon? How about Friday night? Ah! that is rather different. I have known friends who are wonderful believers on Sunday, They go home singing- *"Let the earth's old pillars shake And all the wheels of nature break; Our steady souls shall fear no more Than solid rocks when billows roar."* You make a bad debt on Monday: how do you feel over it? Not quite so much like a pillar, I daresay, but rather more like the thistledown that is blown with the wind. Such faith is temporary. It is not unlike the faith mentioned in AEsop's fable when the stag stood looking into the water at His branching antlers, and tossing His head with defiance. "Why," said He, "am I afraid of the hounds? A dog come near me? Impossible! If the hound does but see my horns He will fear death. I shall rip Him up or dash Him in pieces. I will let the pack see what I am made of." Just then there was heard a bark, and away went the stag like lightning, as terrified as ever. How like to us. We appear to be so grandly strong, so quietly believing; yet the first trouble that comes scatters our courage. That is the reason why Judah could not drive out the dwellers in the plain: He heard the rushing of those chariots of iron, and His heart failed Him. There was a further reason for failure arising out of this imperfection of their faith: they could not conquer the chariots of iron, because, first, they 812 did not try. The Hebrew does not say that they could not drive them out. What the Hebrew says is that they did not drive them out. Some things we cannot do because we never make the attempt. I wish we had among Christian workers the spirit of the Suffolk lad who was brought up in court to be examined by an overbearing lawyer. The lawyer roughly said to Him, "Hodge, can you read Greek?" "I don't know, Sir," said He. "Well, fetch a Greek book," said the lawyer, and showing the lad a passage He said to Him, "Can you read that?" "No." "Then why did you not say that you could not?" "Because I never say I cannot do a thing till I have tried it." If that spirit were in Christian people we should achieve great things; but we set down such and such a thing as manifestly beyond our power, and, silently, we whisper to ourselves, "therefore beyond God's power," and so we let it alone. No chariots of iron will be driven out if we dare not make the attempt. Next, I suspect that they did not drive them out because they were idle. If cavalry were to be dealt with, Judah must bestir Himself. If chariots of iron were to be defeated they must enter upon an arduous campaign; and so, taking counsel of their fears and their idleness, they said, "Let us not venture on the conflict." There are many things that Christ's church is unable to do because it is too lazy. "What," say you, "do you call us lazy?" No, brethren, I will not do anything of the sort. If any of you should happen to call yourselves so it will spare me the trouble. I am afraid that I should have to upbraid certain ministers for being indolent in God's work, and I fear that many others of God's servants are none too diligent. Idleness refuses to sound the trumpet for the battle, and the fight never comes on, and therefore the enemy is not driven out. Then, again, they were not at all anxious to meet the men who manned those chariots, for they were afraid. These men of Judah were cowards in the presence of chariots of iron, and what can a coward do? He is great at running away. They say that He "may live to fight another day." Not He: He will live, but He will not live to fight, depend upon it, any more another day than He does to-day. His heart is in His heels, and He will show His foeman His back whenever the fight is hot. We must cry mightily to God to deliver us from cowardice, and then we shall accomplish what now we think impossible. 813 Dear Friends, there was no excuse for this on the part of Judah, as there is really no excuse for us when we think any part of God's work to He too

difficult for us—for, recollect, there was a special promise made about this very case. Kindly look at the twentieth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, at the first verse, and you will see how the Lord says, “When you goest out to battle against your enemies, and see horses, and chariots, be not afraid of them: for the Lord your God is with you.” If there be a special promise made to meet an emergency, who are we that we should be cast down by the difficulty? Besides that, they received a special commission, Read the second verse of the chapter from which our text is taken- “The Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into His hand.” Iron chariots or no chariots, God had delivered the country into their hand. Besides that, their God had done greater deeds than this: He had divided the Red Sea, and drowned the chivalry of Egypt; He had divided the Jordan into halves and led His people through the river dryshod; and He had made the walls of Jericho to fall flat to the ground. Why then was He distrusted because of those wretched chariots of iron? Come then, brothers and sisters, have you got into a cleft stick in the matter of your personal affairs; and are you saying to-night, “I cannot pray about it: I cannot trust God about it”? Is that right? Look your Bibles up, and see whether there be not a promise exactly suited to your singular condition. Look back upon your own experience and see whether God has not done already for you and others of His people a greater thing than your present trial requires. Why will you say that you cannot drive out the chariots of iron? Be of good courage, and go forward. God is able to deliver you; therefore fear not, He will supply your need; be not dismayed. Perhaps some holy work for God is your difficulty. You have done something already for which you praise God, and now a new work is laid at your door, of which you say, No, I cannot undertake it: I do not feel at all equal to it.” What Not if the Almighty Lord has said, “I will be with you”? Do you answer, “I could do almost anything, but not that”? Are you sure, my brother, that you could do almost anything? Do you not think that, if another task were set before you, it would be equally hard to you? If God commands, is it right to reason why, or even to ask a question? Let us get at the work, my brethren; and the greater the danger, the greater the labor, the greater the difficulty, so much the more folly let us cast ourselves upon our God, and give to Him the Glory of the deed when the work is done. You know not 814 what you can do; you are omnipotent if girt about with God’s omnipotence; you are wise if God teaches you, strong if God upholds you. The capacities which He within a man are greater than He knows, and the capacities with which God can endow a man are greater than He dreams. Therefore forward, in the name of the Most High! An unconverted person is here who has been thinking of coming to Christ, but He says: “I cannot give up all my sins. One of them I must retain: all the rest I can leave, hut that one is invincible, for it has chariots of iron. I cannot drive it out,” That sin must die, or you will perish by it. Depend upon it, that sin which you would save from slaughter will slaughter you. “But I am in such a strange connection, and there are so many peculiar circumstances about my case. Yes, I know; peculiar circumstances surround all men that go to Hell, but they do not quench the fire for them. “But, Sir, we must hve.” Must you? I see no necessity for that in my own case. I know that I must serve God; but whether I live or not is a secondary matter. It is infinitely better that we should die than do wrong. This necessity of living is not quite so clear as people suppose. Why must you live? The martyrs did not. They felt that they must testify for Christ and His truth, and they gloried to die sooner than to do anything that was wrong. You will not perhaps be brought to that, hut you ought to be ready for it Do not be in such a fever about this poor life. Is not the soul better than the body? “Yes, Sir, but I cannot explain my difficulty.” No; and do not try. Turn the sin out. That is the only thing to do with it; and the more you love it, the more speedily should you turn it out, for it evidently lies near your heart, where it can do you great mischief. “Well, it is not one of the grosser sins.” No; it is one of those respectable sins which are so hard to get rid of. You must drive it out. I notice that if anybody picks my pocket it is sure to be a respectable-looking person. If a man is a rogue He is sure to look like an honest maim, to lead people to trust Him. Sin must be driven out, even though it is a chariot of iron. Certain Christians make up their minds that certain sins must be tolerated in their cases. I know one who has constitutionally a fiery temper, and so, whenever He gets into a towering passion, He cries, “I cannot help it: I am so constituted.” Instead of weeping before God, and vowing, “I will master this passion: God is omnipotent, and He can make my temper a reasonable one”-instead of that, He says that everything else can be conquered in Him, but not this sin, for it is constitutional. So have I known persons to be miserly and mean. The Grace of God has done everything for them except making them give away 815 a shilling, and they suppose that they are to go to Heaven with their covetous nature, as if the Lord would let such people in there. Selfishness is put down by them as being one of the sins that have chariots of iron, which they cannot overcome. “You know that we all have our besetments, says one. What do you mean by that? Some sin that you often fall into? Do you

call that a besetting sin? If I were to walk to-night across Clapham Common, and half-a-dozen men stopped me, I should say that I was beset; but if at an appointed place a party met me regularly, I should not say that I was beset. And so, the same which a man often indulges in is not His besetting sin: it is His favorite sin, a sin that will be His ruin. A besetting sin is one which forces itself upon a man, and if He can be on His guard it seizes Him by the throat and throws Him down. We must be watchful, so that the next time the temptation comes we may escape from it. Let us make war on the evil, and say, "It is no use your attacking me: I will attack and overcome you by faith in Jesus Christ." The fact is, brothers and sisters, we must tolerate no sin in ourselves; if we make excuses for it in our brethren, well and good; but let us never make or accept an excuse for ourselves. Sin in us is ten times worse sin than in others. If an unconverted man sins it is bad enough; but when a man has tasted of the good word of Grace, and has leaned His head on Christ's bosom, and then falls into sin, what excuse can be offered for Him? None. Let us weep tears of blood because we thus offend. We will yet vanquish the chariots of iron. We will throw clown the gauntlet to-night, and in the name of God we will destroy them.

III. To close. Let us see THE LORD'S POWER VINDICATED. Just at that time brave old Caleb, leaning on His stall, went up to Hebron. When He was a younger man Moses sent Him as a spy, and when He was upon that business He happened to come near to Hebron, and there he saw three tremendous fellows of the race of the giants; I suppose they were from eight to ten or twelve feet high. He saw them, and those that were with Him were afraid. They said, "We were as grasshoppers in their sight." But Caleb was not a bit afraid, He said, "God is not with them, and they will He easily overthrown." When they came into the land forty years after, Caleb did not ask for His city; but as an unselfish man, He fought to win cities for others. When that was done He said, "Hebron was given to me. I must go and conquer it; and the giants that I saw years ago, I dare say, have not grown much shorter; I must cut them down." Away He went, and it proved 816 as He had said; in His frale old age He was able to slay those three sons of Anak, and to take possession of their city. I could tell y on of holy women, sick and infirm, scarcely able to leave their beds, who are doing work which, to some strong Christians, seems too hard to attempt. Have I not seen old men doing for the Lord in their feebleness that which young men have declined? Could I not tell you of some with one talent certainly no more-who are bringing in a splendid revenue of Glory to their Lord and Master, while you fine young fellows with ten talents have wrapped them all in a napkin and hid them in the earth? I wish that I could shame myself, and shame every worker here, into enterprises that would astonish unbelievers. God help us to do that which seems impossible. Let men He provoked to charge us with fanaticism. God bless the fanaticism which, being translated, means nothing but a true faith in the living God. May we be helped to trust the Lord as He ought to be trusted, and march on till we drive out all His enemies despite their chariots of iron, that unto God may be Glory for ever and ever. Amen. ***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON- Psalm 78:10 59. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK," -63 (SONG III.); 106 (PART II.); 87 (SONG II.) 817***

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CHRIST'S WORD WITH YOU NO. 1691 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING JUNE 12TH 1881 BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON. When the regular congregation left their seats to be occupied by strangers. *“Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you Matthew 11:28.* ONE is struck with the personality of this text, There are two persons in it, “you” and “me”—that is to say, the laboring one and the tender Savior who entreats Him to come that He may find rest. It is most important, if we wish to see the way of peace clearly, to understand that we must each one come personally to Jesus for rest—“Come unto me, all you that labor”: and that coming on our part must be to a personal Christ. In effect He says, “Come yourselves to me Come not through sponsors, not through men whom you choose to call your priests, not through the petitions of ministers and teachers, but come yourselves, for yourselves.” Dear hearers, the quarrel is between you and God, and this quarrel can only be made up by your approaching the Lord through a Mediator: it would be folly for you to ask another to come to the Mediator for you: you must trust in Him yourself. Personal faith is indispensable to salvation. But the personality of Christ is equally clearly brought out in our text. Jesus says, “Come unto me”—“not to anybody else, but to me,” He does not say, “Come to hear a sermon about me,” but “come to me,” He does not say, “Come to sacraments, which shall teach you something about me,” but “come to me”—to my work and person. You will observe that no one is put between you and Christ. The text is, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden”—not to somebody that will stand between you and me, but “Come to me at once, and without a go-between.” Come to Jesus directly, even to Jesus Himself. You do want a mediator between 818 yourselves and God, but you do not want a mediator between yourselves and Jesus, Christ Jesus is the Mediator between you and the Father; but you need no one to stand between you and Christ. To Him we may look at once, with unveiled face, guilty as we are. To Him we may come, just as we are, without anyone to recommend us, or plead for us, or make a bridge for us to Jesus. We are to come distinctly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom God has ordained to be the way of access. I shall fail at this in setting forth the Gospel if I shall lead anybody to think that He can get salvation by going to church, or going to the meeting-house, or going to a minister, or going into an inquiry-room, or going to a penitent form. No, we are to go nowhere but to Jesus. YOU, us you are, are to come to Christ as He is, and the promise is that on your coming to Him He will give you rest. That is the assurance of Jesus Himself, and there is no deception in it. He will give you rest us surely as you come to Him. What a blessing it will be if those who have no rest in themselves should find rest at once in Jesus while yet this sermon calls them. Why not? I hope many of you, my brethren and sisters, who have found rest already, will be praying while I am preaching, that the unresting ones may come at this good hour and find rest in Jesus Christ the Savior. You see there are two persons. Let everybody else vanish, and let these two be left alone, to transact heavenly business with each other. Jesus says to you, “Come to me.” Your answer to Him, if it be, “Yes, Lord, I come,” shall be the means of bringing peace to your heart from this time forth and for evermore. I want at this time to set forth the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who sends this pressing personal invitation to every laboring and heavy laden one in this place. I wish that I knew how to preach. I have tried to do so for thirty years or so, but I am only now beginning to learn the way, Oh, that one knew how to set forth Christ, so that men perceived His beauty, and fell in love with Him at first sight. Oh, Spirit of God, make it so now, If men knew the grandeur of His Gospel—the joy, the peace, the happiness which comes of being a Christian, they would run to Him: as flies seek after sweet fruits, so would men seek after the Savior, if they did but know that sweeter than honey and the honeycomb is the word of His salvation. **I.** I first call your attention to THE VALUE OF THE BOON which in this text is set before weary, laboring men, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Rest of the heart is worth more than all California. To be at peace—to be no more tossed up and down in the soul—to be secure, peaceful, joyful, happy, is worth mountains of diamonds. A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which He possesses: many a poor man is vastly happier than the possessor of wide estates, for peace comes not with property, but with content, The music of peace is not the jingle of gold or silver. Sweeter bells sound in the pardoned heart than ever wealth can ring. The herb called heart’s-ease often grows in tiny gardens, and happy is the man who wears it in His bosom. It is this gift which, for value, outshines the pearls and rubies which deck an Indian queen, which Jesus promises to give to all that come to Him for it. Oh, rare peace which comes from the Prince of peace! This, if a man gets it, is practically helpful to Him in all the affairs of life. I say that, other things being equal, there is nobody so fit to run the race of life as the man who is unloaded of His cares and enjoys peace of mind. The man who is happily restful towards God is the man to fight the battle of life. I have known a man losing

money on the market step aside, and, getting into a quiet place, breathe a prayer to God, and come back calm and composed and, whereas before, in His distraction, He was ready to make bad bargains, plunge into speculation, and lose terribly, He has come buck rested and peaceful, and has been in a fit frame for dealing with His fellow-men. I know this, brethren, having many cares resting upon myself, that when I can feel calmly restful and quiet before God, I am a match for anybody; but when once the spirits sink, and depression comes in, then the grasshopper becomes a burden, and a trifle frets the soul. Bring solid rest to the heart, and you have given the man a fulcrum upon which He may rest the lever with which He can lift the heaviest weight but let Him always be tossed up and down, and He has nothing to give Him force. When a man is afraid to die, He may well be afraid to live, He who could not look death in the face-yes that could not look God in the face, is a man who has a latent weakness about Him that will rob Him of force and courage in the heat of the battle. I commend to you, men and brethren, in this busy London, the precious gift of my text called "rest," because it is not only a preparation for the world to come but for the life that now is. The peace of God will serve both as arms and armor; it is both battle-axe and breastplate. It will be your heart's comfort and your hand's strength; it will be good for day and night for calm and storm: it has a thousand uses, and all of them are essential to spiritual well-being. This rest is not found anywhere else but in Christ. Let me tell you what kind of rest it is, confessing that I now enjoy it 820 and revel in it. It is rest to the man's entire spiritual being. Conscience troubles us till Jesus speaks it into rest. Conscience looks back and cries, "Things are not right. You were wrong here, and wrong there, and wrong altogether there is no rest for you." Conscience keeps a day-book, and writes with heavy pen a gloomy record, which we read with alarm. "Tremble," says conscience, "for you will see this record again at the judgment-day, and find yourself condemned by it to eat the fruits of your doings." Men laugh and say they do not believe it; but they do believe it. Deep in their hearts they must believe it, for God has a witness within which blurts out the truth. Conscience perpetually rouses some men, as a watch-dog wakes a slumbering householder. "Down, Sir," they say, "Lie down, lie down," but this watch-dog of God in the heart will not lie down always: every now and then it begins to howl horribly, and the man cannot sleep as He wants to sleep. Even if you drug conscience it will have fits of barking in its sleep. Now, Jesus promises to those who come to Him a peaceful conscience, which He will give through pardoning all the past, through changing the current of the man's ideas in the present, and through helping Him to avoid in the future the faults into which he fell in the days that have now gone by. ***"Rest, weary soul The penalty is borne, the ransom paid, For all your sins full satisfaction made Strive not to do yourself what Christ has done Claim the free gift, and make the joy your own No more by pangs of guilt and fear distress, Rest, sweetly rest!"*** It is a grand thing to have rest of conscience. But then we have minds, and minds are troublous things. In these days of doubt it is not easy for a mind to get an anchorage, and keep it. Many are searching for something to believe, or, at least, they long to be quite sure that it would be the right thing not to believe. Minds are tossed about like ships at sea, or birds caught in a fierce gale. My mind was once in that state drifted, carried along I knew not where; I for awhile believed nothing, till at last it came to this-that I thought my own existence might be, after all, a mere thought. Having a practical vein in my character, I sat me down and laughed at my own dreams of non-existence for I felt that I did exist. Up from the depths of doubt and unbelief I rose to feel there must be something sure. I cast my soul at Jesus's feet, and I rested, and I am now perfectly content in mind. 821 Thousands of us can say, "We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him;" therefore we cannot leave the Gospel. No new doctrines, no novelties, no scepticisms, no fresh informations, can disturb us now: at least, they can but breathe a surface-ruffling; all is calm in the soul's deeps. Having found rest of intellect in the doctrine of Jesus, there will we stay till death and Heaven, or the second advent, solves all riddles. But then we have hearts. I hope we all have hearts; though some are so harsh and almost heartless. Men that have great, all-embracing hearts need a rest for their love. What a cause of trouble this heart of ours is, for it often clings to that which is unworthy of it; and we are deceived and disappointed, and heart-break crushes us. The tempting fruit, like the apple of Sodom, crumbles into ashes in our hand. Here then is rest and remedy for heart palpitations and the anguish of the breast. Let a man love Jesus, and He will crave no other love, for this will fill His soul to the brim. ***"Him on yonder cross I love; Nought on earth I else count dear! May be mine for ever prove, Who is now so inly near!"*** Christ fills a man's nature to the full. The incarnate Son of God once known gives rest of conscience, rest of intellect, and rest of heart in a word, He brings complete satisfaction to the spirit. Now, I do not know of any religion that offers perfect rest to the mind except the religion of Jesus Christ. Men go the world over to try and find this pearl of great price, but their quest is vain. I often

talk with religious people who have no idea of being saved now, and finding rest at once, because they do not understand that Christ came to give immediate salvation to those who trust Him. I spoke with one earnest soul a little while ago, and she said, "I have no rest." I replied, "Have you believed in Jesus Christ?" She answered, "Yes." "But," I asked, "Do you not know that as soon as you believe in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven you, and you are saved?" "I did not grasp that," said she. Yet that is the Gospel-that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. He that believes in Him has everlasting life, and is saved the moment He believes-becomes changed from the power of sin and made into a new man, possessing a new life which can never die. This assurance is worth getting hold of, and He that has it, let Him hold it fast, and rejoice in it; yet it is not to be obtained 822 anywhere except from the dear hands that were nailed to the wood. This rest can never come from any lips but those that prayed upon the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This, then, is the gift which is presented by Christ Jesus at this moment to all that labor and are heavy laden; if they will come to Him for it, they shall have rest of soul. Some in this place are panting for rest. In this great city there must be much trouble, sorrow, unrest, misery, and distraction. When I look on this congregation, I know that I could not bear to hear the tale of sorrow that would be unfolded if each man were to tell His inward anguish. We look cheerful, but many a cheerful face covers a sad heart. The weight of human misery is enough to make the axles of the earth to break. Oh, what a blessing it is that there is One who can lift us up- who can make the poorest to be better than if He were rich, and the sad to be happier than the merry, and the afflicted to He more blest than the prosperous. Jesus is here in our midst with hands loaded with mercy. May be prove His presence among us by giving rest to all those who came in here laboring and laden. Thus have I spoken upon the value of the gift. Oh, Spirit of God, teach men its value. **II.** Bear with me, in the second place, while I speak upon THE LARGENESS OF THE SAVIOR'S HEART, Oh, that I could stand aside, and that He would come here Himself and utter the words of my text with His own dear lips! "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden." See the persons whom He invites to come to Him. None but a man of great soul would keep such company. If we would be merry, we choose merry company. Some folks I should be glad to be in Heaven with, but I could dispense with their company here: for ten minutes with them on earth is enough to make one wretched. Only a generous spirit would say, "Come to me, all you that are downcast-all you that are desponding -all you that are broken-hearted." Yet that is exactly what the text says. Christ courts the company of the sorrowful, and invites those who are ill at ease to approach Him. What a heart of love He must have! No, He invites all such to come. You know two or three that are really cast down are quite enough at a time for most of us. It happened some months ago. when I was sitting here to see people, that I had four or five cases so sad-so deplorable-ill which I could render such little help, that, after trying to pray with them, and encourage them, I said to a friend who was helping me, "I hope the next that comes to me will be cheerful, for I feel my head ache, and my heart 823 too!" I tried as far as I could to enter into these poor people's troubles till I became troubled myself. Now, the Savior has such a large heart that He does not forbid the sorrowing ones to come, all of them. "Come one," says He, "come all. All of you that labor and are heavy laden may at this hour come to me," The love of my Master's heart is so great, and the sympathy of His nature with man is so deep, that if all should come that ever labored or ever sorrowed, He would not be exhausted by the sympathy, but would still He able to give them rest in Himself. But what a large heart Jesus has that He comes only to do men good, and begins by doing good first to those that want it most. Oh, my lords and ladies, Jesus did not come to win your patronage that you might applaud Him. Oh, you gay and high-flying ones, Jesus did not come to win your approbation. It would be a small thing to Him for you to think well of Him. But, O you despised and rejected, you oppressed and down-trod; you weary, you worn, you sad, you sick, you desponding, you despairing, the great Physician of souls came after you, and it is to you He addresses the invitation at this time: "Come an to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come, such as you, and come all of you. And, He says, come at once, He does not say, "Stop till you get your spirits raised, stop till you get some measure of relief; " but come just as you are. There is a notion in some people's minds that they cannot believe in Christ till they are better. Christ does not want your betterness. Will you only go to the physician when you feel better? Then you are foolish indeed, for you do not want the physician when you are getting better. The best time to apply to a physician is when you are as had as you can be; and the time to come to Jesus is when you are so bad that you cannot be worse. You had better come just as you are: He invites you so to do. "Come," says He, "all you that now labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Stay not to improve yourselves, but come to Him for improvement. If you cannot come with a broken heart, come for a broken heart. If you cannot come with faith, come

for faith. If you cannot come repenting, come and ask the Lord to give you repentance. Come empty-handed, bankrupt, ruined, condemned, and you will find rest. Oh, you that have written out your own sentence, and have said, "I shall perish; there is no pardon for me: "Come to Jesus, for-depths of mercy!-there is pardon even for you. Only come you to the Savior, and He will give you rest. He promises this rest to all who come to Him. My Master stakes His credit upon every case that comes to Him, He has already given rest to thousands, 824 to millions; and He promises to each one that comes to Him that He will give rest to Him. If there is in this place, if there is in this country, if there is in this universe a single person who ever did come to Jesus Christ and He did not give Him rest, I would like to know of it, because it is my daily habit to declare that Jesus gives rest to all that come to Him, and I do not want to declare a lie! Let us know when Jesus fails. He says, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out:" the first one of you that comes, and He casts you out, let us know of it. We will post it up on the Royal Exchange—"A sinner came to Jesus, and He would not receive Him." Woe to the world in that dark day, for the sun of hope will be quenched and the night will miss her stars. Till then we beg you to remember that Jesus has said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Come and test my blessed Lord, and see if He does not accept you. We stake the veracity of Christ, we stake the truth of the Gospel upon the case of every one in this place who will come to Jesus Christ by faith, and trust Him. Each heavy-laden one must and shall find rest if He will come to Jesus, or else the Redeemer's promise is not true. Thus have I spoken upon the largeness of our Lord's heart in promising rest to all that come to him for it. **III.** But now, thirdly, and but a moment, let me speak to you about THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS POWER. Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to give peace to all that labor and are heavy laden. He has not outrun His power in the promise that He has given. He is conscious that within Himself there resides a power which will be able to give peace to every conscience. Notice there is no reserve made whatever, no way is left of backing out of the promise. "Come unto me," says He, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No limiting clause is inserted. Some men will speak what looks to be a very wide promise, but a little condition inserted in it narrows it horribly; but there is no condition here. Whoever of woman born that labors and is heavy laden, and will come to Christ, must have rest; and Christ has said it because He can give it. There are desperate cases among the myriads of troubled hearts, but no single one is too far gone for Jesus. You have read the story of John Bunyan in "Grace Abounding." Was there ever a poor wretch that was dragged about by the devil more than poor John was? For five years and more He could not call His soul His own. He did not dare to sleep, because He was afraid He should wake up in Hell; and all day long He was troubled, and fretted, and worried 825 with this, and that, and the other. Poor tinker that He was, He first thought this, and then thought that; and as He says, He was "considerably tumbled up and down in His mind." I am sure such a case as that would have been given up by men; but when Jesus took it in hand John Bunyan found perfect rest; and His blessed "Pilgrim's Progress" remains a proof of the joy of heart which the poor tinker found when He came to rest in Christ. Now, if within these walls there is a case in which poverty combines with sickness and disease, and if that poverty and disease are the result of vice, and if that vice has been carried on for many years, and if the entire man is now depressed and despondent, like one shut up in an iron cage, yet the Lord Jesus can give rest in such a case. It matters not how black or horrible is your condition, if you believe in Jesus you shall be delivered. As far as this trouble of soul is concerned, and as far as the venom of sin in your nature is concerned, you shall be healed. You shall be made pure, though now you are filthy: you shall be restored, though now you are fallen; you shall be started again in life by a power that shall cause you to be born again, so that you shall be as though you were a little child commencing life again, only under happier skies and holier influences. My Lord and Master has a power to comfort which reaches to the uttermost of human necessity. Some go a long way in sin and doubt, but they cannot rush beyond the uttermost, and therefore they are within the bounds of Grace. Let the wind drive the bird far off the shore, yet the Lord has a rest for it in another land. Still does Jesus bid us sound the great trumpet, and ring out the notes both clear and shrill—"Come to me! Come to me! Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Blessed shall those ears be that hear the sound if their hearts obey it, and come to Jesus, and find rest at once. He is able. He is able to give rest. He is willing to cause joy. Doubt no more. Jesus speaks thus without reserve because He is conscious of power; for note this—Jesus Christ is God, and He that made men's hearts can make them all anew. The God at whose bidding sprang that mighty arch of the blue sky, who poured out the sea from the hollow of His hand, and named the stars in their hosts, is able to save unto the uttermost them that come to Him. This blessed God took upon Himself our nature and became man, and being found in fashion as a man He took men's grief and sin upon Him, and went up to the cross loaded with it, and

there suffered in our room and stead, to make expiation for our guilt, There is such merit in His precious blood that no sin can ever overpower it. I can see man's sin before me it 826 towers aloft, defying Heaven; it rises like an awful alp shrouded in a tempest of ill. It seems to thread the clouds, to overtop the stars. Oh, mighty mountain, what shall become of you? But, lo! I see Christ's precious blood and merit like an ocean of Grace poured forth to cover sin. Comparable to Noah's deluge, the power of the Atonement is revealed till, twenty cubits upward, the tops of the mountains of our sin are covered, and not a speck of them remains; while on the top of the waters rides the ark of everlasting salvation, and all that believe in Jesus are safe, and safe for ever, Oh, sinner, Christ is able to cast your sins into the depths of the sea, so that they shall never be mentioned against you any more for ever, and thus He will give you serenest rest. "Come to me," says He, "and I will give you rest." I wish I knew how to put this so that it would get into men's hearts; my Master knows that He can save you, for He had reckoned up every possible case before He spoke so positively. His prescient eye discerned all men that have ever lived, or that ever shall live, and He perceived you, dear friend, whom nobody else knows. You up in the corner there, whom nobody understands, not even yourself-He understands you, and He is able to give rest to your eccentric mind. He meant this promise to ring down the ages till it reached you. We have nearly completed the nineteenth century; but if ever we should get to the one hundred and nineteenth century, His power to give rest will be still the same. Still will He cry—"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, the vastness of my Master's power, that in all ages, and all places, to all the children of man, He promises perfect rest of heart if they will but come to Him! Will not you come at once and test that power? Oh that the Holy Spirit may incline you to do so! **IV.** Now, fourthly, and this is a very important point, I want you to notice THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS INVITATION. It only says, "Come lo me, come to me, come to me, and I will give you rest." The call is, as we say, plain as a pikestaff: it has not a fine word in it. What is the way of salvation? If any minister replies, "I should want a week or two to explain it to you," He does not know the way of salvation; because the way of salvation which we need must suit a dying man, an illiterate man, and a guilty man, or else it will be unavailing in many cases. We need a way of Grace which will answer all occasions-a mode of salvation suitable to all conditions. 827 Our Lord Jesus Christ proves how willing He is to save sinners by making the method of Grace so easy. He says, "Come to me." "Well, says one, "how am I to come?" Come anyhow. If you can run, come running; if you can walk, come walking; if you can creep, come creeping; if you can only limp, come limping-come anyhow, so long as you come to Jesus. "But what is coming to Him?" says one. "If He were at York, I would walk to York to-night to get at Him." He is not at York any more than He is here. We are not to come to Him with our persons, or with our legs and feet by a visible motion. How, then, can come to Him? Listen, you friends in the front gallery, how can I come to you, and yet stand here? Why, by thinking about you, knowing about you, and then confiding my thoughts to you, as I am now doing. If you over yonder are a business man, I resolve in my mind that I will commit my affairs into your hands; and in so doing I have mentally come to you. We are to do with our Lord Jesus just what we do with a physician. We are very ill; it is a bad case. We hear that a certain eminent doctor has great skill in one particular disease; so at once we go to Him. Our physical going is not so much required as our mental resort to Him, by putting our case into His hands. We say to Him, "Sir, here is my afflicted person. I will tell you all about my state as far as I know it. Ask me any questions. I will make a clean breast of all. Whatever you prescribe for me I will take; whatever regimen you lay down as to diet, I will follow. I place myself entirely in your hands because I have faith in your skill. You cured my mother of this disease; you cured my brother; and I believe you can cure me." Such is faith in Christ. A man says, "Jesus, you have died to save men, and you have revealed yourself as a Savior. I want saving, You have saved a great many like me; I now put myself into your hands. I will do what you biddest me, I will follow any directions you may lay down, I confide myself to you." Now, if this is a genuine surrender, and a hearty confidence, you are already a healed man. Your power to trust Christ is evidence of spiritual sanity: you would not have been able to trust the blessed Jesus if a sound work of restoration had not already commenced in you. "Oh," says one, "do I understand, then, that if I trust Christ, I may do as I like?" Stop, stop. I never said that. Hearken, and learn! Here is a ship which cannot get into the haven. The pilot comes on board. The captain says, "Pilot, can you get her into harbour?" "Yes, captain, I will guarantee it. I will guarantee that I will get the ship into harbour if you leave her with me." The captain goes to the helm, or gives orders as to steering the 828 vessel, and at once the pilot objects that they are not trusting to Him. "Yes, I am," says the captain, "and I expect you to get me into harbour, for you promised to do so." "Of course I did promise," replies the pilot; "but then it was understood that I should take charge of the ship for the time

being.” He orders the helm to be changed, and the captain declares that it shall not be done. Then cries the pilot, “I cannot get you into the harbour, and I will not pretend to do so. Unless you trust me I can do nothing, and the proof that you trust me is that you obey my orders.” Now, then, trust Jesus, so as to be obedient to Him, and He will pilot you safely. Yield yourself up to follow His example, to imitate His spirit, and obey His commands, and you are a saved man. Your ship shall not be driven out to sea while Jesus steers it; but do not go away under the delusion that you have only to say, “I trust Christ,” and that you are saved directly. Nothing of the kind. You must really trust Him—practically trust Him, or there is no hope for you. Give yourself up to Jesus, renounce your old sins, forsake your old habits, live as Christ will enable you to live, and immediately you shall find peace to your soul. You cannot enjoy rest, and yet riot in sin. Shall the drunkard have rest, and yet drown His soul in His cups? Shall an adulterer have rest, and wallow in His filthiness? Shall a man blaspheme, and have rest? Shall a man be a rogue and a liar, and have rest? Impossible. These things must be given up by coming to Jesus Christ, who will help you to give them up, and make a new man of you, and then you shall receive rest in your soul. Come to Him, then, in spirit and in truth. Oh, that you would come to Him while I am speaking, and find instantaneous rest to your souls! **V.** I must not keep you longer, and so I want upon the last point briefly to call your attention to THE UNSELFISHNESS OF THE LORD, JESUS CHRIST, “Come unto me,” says He, “and I will give you.” That is the Gospel. “I will give you.” You say, “Lord, I cannot give you anything.” He does not want anything. Come to Jesus, and He says, “I will give you,” Not what you give to God, but what He gives to you, will be your salvation. “I will give you:” that is the Gospel in four words. Will you come and have it? It lies open before you. Jesus wants nothing of you. Suppose you were to become Christ’s disciple, and serve Him with all your might throughout your life—in what way would that enrich Him? He has died for you: how can you ever pay Him for that? He lives in Heaven to plead for you, and He loves you; how can you ever reward Him for that? Our hope is not in what we can give to Him, but in what He gives to us, Weak-minded men have taken pleasure in flagellating themselves, starving themselves, shutting themselves up in monasteries, lacerating their bodies, and torturing their minds: to what purpose were these pains? Did the loving Jesus require this of them? Could such miseries afford His tender heart the least pleasure? Not at all. He has no pleasure in human misery, but He desires that His joy may be fulfilled in us that our joy may be full. I see before me a spring-head, from which the clearest crystal water is always leaping with a gladsome sound. A streamlet which this spring creates runs down the meadow: you can track it by the long grass, with reeds, and rushes, and tangled wild-flowers which drink their life from them. In summer and in winter the crystal fount never ceases to pour forth its treasures. Come here when you may you shall see the silver jet spurting forth, and splashing up again from the stones upon which it falls. How musical the sound! Listen! The spring is pleading, quietly but plaintively. It would become a greater blessing if it could but gain the means; and so it sighs and whispers, Buckets! Pitchers! Goblets! Cups! It longs to fill them all. See, here are a couple of pails; but they are empty. Yes, they are all the better for the purpose; full buckets would not help the spring to dispense its water. Here is a cup, but it is a very little one. Never mind, fill it, and bring many like it. This girl has brought a jug, but it is spotted with dirt. We bid her take it away, lest she pollute these sparkling waters. Not so, the spring pleads, and this is its pleading- “Bring it here, I will cleanse it, and then fill it to the brim.” Need I expound the parable? I hope not. Come and act it out, you little ones or great ones, you empty ones or unclean ones. Thus shall you know more surely and more sweetly than words can tell you how free and full is the Grace of our Lord Jesus. The emptier you are the better can you receive from our overflowing Savior. He longs to bless you for your own sake. His yearnings are all unselfish: they are yearnings to give, longings to bestow favor. He cries even now to laboring and laden souls “Come unto me, and I will give you, not only rest, but all you can require.” Friends, have you well learned the lesson that there is nothing good in yourselves with which to attract Jesus, but all the good is in Him to attract you? Is it not clear enough that physicians do not come to heal healthy persons? I saw a brougham dashing down the street with a doctor in it, and I felt morally certain that He was not coming to my house, for I am in perfect health. I dare say He was hastening to see a poor creature who was on the brink of the grave. When I see the chariots of mercy flashing with winged steeds through the air I know that they are not speeding to you 830 who are good and righteous, and think you do not need a Savior; but they are hastening to such as are sinful and crave forgiveness, to such as are guilty and require a change of heart, for these are those that Jesus comes to bless. See, then, how the unselfishness of His character comes out in His inviting to come to Himself those who cannot benefit Him, but must be pensioners on His bounty. “I will give you rest.” Men, brethren, women, sisters, all of you, this is the final word, The day is coming when

we shall all sigh for rest. We need it badly now, and if we have it not we are leading a pitiful life, Those poor rich people in the West-end that have no Christ, how can they bear their irksome idleness, the satiety and disgust of unenjoyed abundance? Those poor people in the East-end that have no Christ-what they do without Him I cannot tell. Alas for their poverty and suffering, but what are these to their wretchedness in being Christless? Those of us who have all that heart can wish yet feel that we could never be happy if we were not resting in our dear Savior; how, then, do the starving exist without Him? But we shall soon die, and what then? A young man said to His father some little while ago, "Father, I am prospering in business wonderfully! if I get on at this rate what will it come to?" "Come to a grave," said His father. And so it will; all things of earth end there. Oh that we were always ready to die, for then we should be ready to live! He that is ready to live to-morrow is ready to die to-morrow. There is no need that death should be a jerk in our existence; life ought to run on as a river pursues its way, and widens into the sea. Our existence here should glide into our existence there, but that cannot be unless we get on the right track while we are here. If we are on the right track now, which is believing, loving, fearing, serving, honoring God, we shall go on loving, fearing, honoring God for ever and ever. "Come," says Christ, "Come to me." What will Jesus say at the judgment-day to those who so come? Why, He will say, "Come"- "Come, you blessed of my Father. Keep on coming. Come, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." Ah, my Hearers, you will prize this coming when death and eternity are near you. I am glad to see this great company gathered here; but before I came into this house I felt much heaviness of heart, and it has not gone from me even now. To stand here and look into familiar faces from Sunday to Sunday is infinitely more pleasant than to look upon so many, the most of whom I have never seen before; for you cause me new anxieties that I may do good to you also. This was my thought: "I shall see them all again at the 831 judgment-day, and I shall be accountable as to whether I preached the Gospel to them with all my heart." I shall not have to answer for the blood of you all, because there are more Sabbaths than this one, and more opportunities of hearing the Gospel than this; and on other Sundays others preach to you, and these share the burden; or else you were the holy day, and in that case your blood will be on your own heads. Still, for this one service I must answer to God for you all. If I have not preached Jesus Christ simply and plainly, and from my heart, if I have been cold, and dull, and dreary when speaking upon a theme that might arouse any man to burn and glow with seraphic flame, then I shall be censurable by Him that shall judge the quick and dead. If you think there is nothing in what I have said, reject it. I have no authority to preach it of my own head, for I am no great philosopher. I speak in the name of God, and if you think I do, and believe that God has sent me, then I beseech you to lay hold of the truth which has been held up before you. The most important thing a man can do is to attend to that which is most important: your soul is of more importance than your body, and therefore your eternal life ought to secure more attention than your mere temporal existence. A man said the other day that He should die like a dog. Let Him, if He likes, but I have no ambition in that direction; I want to live like an angel. If any man be content to be a dog, well, I know not what I can do for Him but give Him a bone: I did not know that He would care to come here, or I might have sent to the butcher's for fit provender. But He that wishes to live for ever should, at least, consider where He would live, with whom He would live, and how He can secure happiness in such a life. If there be a God-and that there is a God is written on the very skies-I devoutly desire to have Him for my friend. I think, as I look up to the stars, "I love the God that made those shining worlds, I worship Him, I desire to serve Him, I wish to be at peace with Him." And what has made me desire to serve Him and obey Him? Can it be a lie which has done this? Does a lie make a man love God, and desire to serve Him? No. It is truth, then, that has made me of obedient heart. The Gospel must be true, or it could not thus put men right with their Creator. O, my beloved, trust your Savior! Lay hold on Jesus. Oh, may Christ lay hold on you at this good hour, and cause you to enter into His rest. Amen and amen. 832

"WITHOUT CAREFULNESS." NO. 1692 DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. "I would have you without carefulness."-1 Corinthians 7:32. AT the time when Paul wrote these words He was giving judgment as to whether it was expedient for Christians in those days to marry. The question was whether they were likely to be better Christians married or unmarried. This was a question of much delicacy, and Paul answered it with remarkable discretion and fidelity; and in so doing He laid down a great general principle, which is of much more value to the church to-day than Paul's private opinion about the matter of marriage or non-marriage. Paul tells us that concerning virgins He had no commandment of the Lord, but gave His judgment as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful: He did not speak in this case as under divine

inspiration, but as an experienced and consecrated man giving His judgment for the good of others, and for the benefit of the great work so dear to Him. In that capacity Paul's words are by no means to be despised. I had far rather follow the uninspired advice of Paul than that of any other man. In mental clearness none ever excelled that consecrated man. But He spoke under inspiration beyond all question when He gave this as His reason for desiring that they would remain unmarried- "I would have you without carefulness," or as the Revised Version reads it, "I would have you to be free from cares." This is the mind of the Holy Spirit as well as the mind of the Apostle Paul. This is a text, not for Paul's time alone, but for our time, and for all time. The general principle in our text I will endeavor to open up before you. We who have believed are the servants of Christ, and are no longer at our own disposal. We are not our own, for we are bought with a price. If you look 833 back in the chapter, at the twenty-third verse, you find a statement to that effect. Hence our business in life is to serve Him who has redeemed us. This one occupation should entirely absorb and engross us. Everything, therefore, which helps us to serve the Lord Jesus better is a good thing; but everything which hampers and hinders us in the main business of our life, though it may be good enough for others, is bad for us. The chief work of the Christian is to glorify God, and to this chief work everything must be subordinated. If a thing be lawful to me, and yet, while lawful, it hinders me in the service of God, it is not expedient; and therefore I am to renounce it. No man ever succeeds in anything who does not give Himself wholly to it: it matters not what it is, concentration is essential to perfection in any pursuit. He who would be eminent in any one direction must forego a great many other things which are perfectly allowable; these He must renounce for the sake of His one object. He will not succeed unless He sacrifices all other things to the one chief thing. So must it be with the Christian. The rule of His life is to be, "This I will not do, this I will not enjoy, this I will not allow to myself, because I could not serve God so well with it; and my business is to keep myself in the best possible form for doing my Master's work." We are to labor as much as ever we can for our Lord, and all other result of life must be to us as chaff to the wheat. It is with us, Paul tells us, as with a soldier. A soldier is a man who must not open shop, or become a banker or a farmer. He must not think of settling quietly in the town where for a while He is billeted. Why not? The reason is clear: even if there be no war occurring at the time, yet no man that warreth entangleth Himself with the things of this life if He would please Him who has called Him to be a soldier. Soldiering requires the man to be altogether a soldier, and it cannot afford to let Him be a tradesman or a farmer: He must not hamper Himself with that which would hold Him to the spot, and prevent His hastening to the field. The nation needs that its army be ready for any and every emergency, so that when the trumpet blows the regiment marches, the troop-ship steams across the sea, and the foe is confronted promptly. It is necessary that the soldier keep Himself in marching condition, and the less luggage He has to carry the better. So it is with the Christian: He is to aim at a condition best adapted for His holy warfare. He is not to be satisfied when He has said to Himself, "Is this right, or is this wrong?" He is to go further. I hope that many of us have long passed beyond that stage, for we have a judgment and discernment which tell us at once what is right and what is wrong; but we now ask a still 834 higher question— "Will this help me to glorify God, or will it not?" This is the enquiry of the higher life, and a godly man is careful in the answering of it. The best thing is bad if it hinders our vocation. Though the garment were made of silk, bespangled with jewels, and bedight with golden thread, yet must we as racers lay it aside if it would entangle us in our running. Though the burden were a bag of pearls, and every pearl were a king's ransom, yet if we are to run—and none can win but those that run—we must leave that bag of pearls in another's keeping, for our business is with the crown before us, and we must lay aside every weight, and the vesture of sin which does so easily entangle us, that we may run with patience the race that is set before us. At this time the Apostle says to us—I would have you without carefulness as to earthly things; and this because He would have us full of carefulness as to heavenly things. He wants us to be free from cares, that all our thought, anxiety, meditation, suggestiveness, inventiveness, burden-bearing may go towards the service of our divine Lord. We have only a certain measure of mind, and He wants all of it for the Lord Jesus, that we may walk worthy of our high calling. But towards other things He says, "I would have you without carefulness." How are we to be without carefulness? This must be the work of the Holy Spirit, for He is the Comforter, and the helper of our infirmities; but as far as we are to work with Him the question needs a careful reply. How are we to be without carefulness? **I.** I answer: we may hopefully attempt this in the power of God, first, **BY AVOIDING THOSE STATES WHICH INVOLVE CAREFULNESS.** Mark well, it is not given to many to select their place in life. More or less it may be committed to us to turn to the right or to the left on certain occasions, but men and women are thrown into certain conditions in which it may be their duty to abide in their

calling, though it may surround them with special difficulties. That calling may be one which ordinarily involves a vast amount of care and anxious thought, and yet they cannot get out of it. They ought not to leap the hedge which the Lord has placed along their way, for if they do they may fall into a ditch on the other side, and mire their garments, and so make matters worse. By crying to God for help, and trusting in His sure word, they will be able to bear the burden which God has put upon them, and it is their wisdom so to do. Yet there are points in 835 which we are allowed a choice about the state in which we would place ourselves, and here our text comes in as a rule of action. Paul, in the case before us, is talking about the marriage of Christians, and He bids Christians, in the first place, not to marry; for, says He, "I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how He may please the Lord: but He that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how He may please His wife." Now, observe the condition of affairs which led Paul to give this advice. Times of great persecution were present. Christians were continually being dragged into court, or set before the lions in the amphitheatre, or shut up in prison, or put to cruel deaths: in such circumstances few would desire to have families about them. The Christian man who had no wife or child could flee in a moment if it was right to flee; or when He stood before the bar of Nero He had not to think within Himself, "If I die, I leave a wife and fatherless children." When the single man put on His hat He housed all His family, and thus He could move this way or that way to preach the Gospel, or to escape from persecution, and His moving was no great affair such as would be involved in transporting a family from land to land. Paul wished the church to be like an army which is not encumbered with baggage: the circumstances of the time demanded that they should be unencumbered, like troops upon forced marches. Paul Himself carried all His property done up in a little bit of canvas, and it consisted of half a dozen needles and a reel of thread, with which He made tents wherever He went. He was thus without carefulness. In those hard and desperate times it was the best possible thing that a man could do, or a woman either, to remain single: they were thus in the best condition for flight, or suffering, or service, or death. It was not a time in which they could settle down, and engage in trade or agriculture; and He therefore gives as a recommendation that they had better not then be married. If we get into such times again we will give the same advice, but we are not certain that we should speak thus to-day, as a general rule. The circumstances are decidedly different, and we are to follow the great principle rather than the particular instance. I have known brethren who I am sure had a great deal more care before they were married than ever they had afterwards. Poor things that they were, they wanted somebody to look after them. I have known cases in which women have had great care and burden in their single state, and have found rest in the house of a husband; and it has been upon the whole the best for them in the truest sense: they served God better, and were freer from carefulness in 836 the married estate. That is the rule to judge by. But numbers of you never judge at all in this way. Many men and women rush into marriage when they know that it must involve them in all sorts of care and trouble, and deprive them of the possibility of doing anything in the Master's service. It is not for me to offer advice, for it is useless. I am often asked for advice, but I generally find that people have made up their minds long before they come to their minister, and only want Him to sanction what they have already settled; and therefore I very seldom give any counsel. Still, I shall lay down the general principle, which every Christian man and woman must accept- "I would have you to be free from cares," You are to put this to the front, that you are not your own, you are bought with a price; and about this matter of marriage, as well as everything else, you are to consult the will of your Lord and Master, and you are to put this as the question, "Shall I glorify God better married or unmarried? May I hope that I shall not so greatly increase my carefulness as to distract myself from serving my Lord? There is something to be said on each side, but may I hope that the balance may be struck so that I shall really be the better servant of Christ in the marriage state? If so, I may enter upon it; but if not, I am not to gratify myself at my Savior's expense. I may not marry if I should then cease to be as good a servant of Christ as I am now." None of you are too good servants of Christ: I have never met with any that were. We cannot afford to lose anything which we have already, for we are not even now all that we ought to be. No, we must give ourselves whole-heartedly to Christ, and remember the admonition of the text, "I would have you without carefulness." We have got over that somewhat difficult part of our road which is concerned with marriage. We come to another which is very plain, but needs to be spoken of; namely, the matter of increased worldly business. Some forget this advice of the Apostle altogether, regarding it as a check upon enterprise such persons take up a number of businesses, and consequently increase their cares indefinitely. Now, if you can serve God better by having a dozen shops, have a dozen; but I have known persons whom God blessed in one shop, and they lost the blessing when they must needs open two or

three. In a moderate business they obtained a livelihood and all that they could want, and they were able to get out to the house of God, and to have spare hours for the service of God in the Sunday-school, and in preaching, or other forms of Christian service: thus they were in an enviable position for usefulness, and ought to have been pillars in the house 837 of the Lord. But they were not content with a state so favored. Nothing would do for them but they must have shop number two-three-four, and then, of course, they were too busy to go out on week-evenings, to lectures, classes, or prayer-meetings. When invited to take their part in the Lord's work, they replied— "You see, I cannot get out; you must excuse me, I am so tied." Just so. Of course you must look after business now that you are so immersed in it, but how came you to get into such a state of bondage that you cannot get out to the worship or service of God? Is not your excessive toil your own fault? If you have brought yourself into such a condition that you cannot give to God His due, is it an excuse for your not being able to do it? The disability is entirely of your own creation, how can it excuse you? If this were the time, I could mention persons who were members of this church whose departure from the way of righteousness was owing to a grasping spirit; and that grasping spirit has in certain cases led to a foolish rush after riches, which has ended in poverty and discredit. They had as much as they could have managed, but they wanted more, and more, and more; and to get more they ventured upon ways and methods which were questionable. By-and-by the means of Grace were neglected because they must attend to business. Very soon, for the same reason, they could not get up on a Sunday morning: they were so tired; they did not get the shop shut till twelve, and then there was clearing up till half-past one, and they could not get out on a Sunday morning. Worse than that, after a while they just looked over the ledger a little on Sunday afternoon. Soon the very vitals of godliness were gone, and not long after that, the name to live went also; for the power of godliness had entirely departed from them. "I would have you without carefulness," and therefore to the most enterprising brother I would say—Brother, do not fill your pocket at the expense of your soul. Do what is best for the best part of yourself; and that best part of yourself is the soul which deals with God and eternity. God can prosper you and make you exceedingly happy with a more manageable business, and He can make you miserable if you willfully increase your cares. The Lord Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which He possesseth." Therefore, as I would have you without carefulness, look well, my dear friend, before you launch out into that new affair, or take that off-hand farm, or enter upon that speculative operation. Do not wade into risks so deep that you will be drowned in anxiety. Remember how Napoleon tried to do too much, and did it, and did for Himself. Men of large capacity may rule an empire, and yet serve the Lord admirably, but the most of us had better be satisfied with a smaller sphere. 838 At any rate, let us not heap up such a load of our own that we shall not be able to bear the burden which our Master would have us carry for His love's sake. Do not look so cross, good friend, or I shall think that my advice is more necessary to you than it is pleasing. The day may come when this warning will be better understood by you than at this moment. Some Christian men need to have a touch on the elbow about public engagements. For my part, I believe that everything which concerns a man concerns a Christian, and that God never wished His servants to leave the government of this realm to all the place-hunters and unprincipled selfseekers who look for a seat in Parliament. Christian men ought to see to it that right is promoted and justice done. To abandon Law-making to the worst of men would be infamous. So with everything which concerns the public weal: I believe that we are to turn the scale for truth and righteousness, and are not to let the devil have His way, and give jobbery and oppression the run of all the parishes in England. But there is a limit to a man's acceptance of public office, and let that limit be watched carefully by all the Lord's children. Let the rule be; first our God, and then our fellow-men. What if I be a patriot, yet first of all the New Jerusalem is the place of my citizenship. I am a pilgrim and a stranger; and even though I seek the good of these aliens among whom I dwell I must still keep my eye upon my own native country, towards which I am speeding. A man must not be doing twenty things in public life, and neglecting the calls of the Lord Christ. If He does this He will have care upon care, and will weary and trouble Himself with things of no profit, and He will not care for the things of God as He should. Brethren, "I would have you without carefulness:" you are the servants of God; do not make yourselves the slaves of men. Here I wish to say another word to some whose occupations prevent their attendance at the house of God. I am not going to censure or judge any, but I will say this: whenever I hear of a young man who has a situation with a moderate salary, who is able to get out to worship, and has the whole Sabbath-day to Himself, so that He can help in the Sunday-school, and perhaps in some week-evening engagements, if I hear that He is offered twice as much money in a place where He must be shut out from worship and service, I hope He will look long before He makes the bargain. If part

of the Sabbath must go, and all week-night privileges must go, I would in most cases say, "My brother, forego the temporal advantage for the sake of the spiritual." There may be exceptions to rules, and I lay down nothing as a hard-and-fast rule, but still let this be the general guide in such matters— 839 "I would have you without carefulness." If it be so that He who has less has less care, let me have less. He who has a moderate income, with small responsibility, is a richer man than He who has twice as much, with twice as much responsibility, and only half as much opportunity of serving His God. For you, Christians, the best place you can have is where you can do most for Jesus; and the worst place you can have is where you are denied Christian privileges. No amount of salary can make up to you the disadvantage of being kept from the assemblies of the saints, or can make up to your soul the loss sustained by excessive labor in the house of bondage. "I would have you without carefulness." This bears very hard upon all those forms of speculation of which some men are so fond. A man says, "I believe that I can get rich in a hurry by a certain venture." Do not touch it. You will have no end of care, and it may bring absolute poverty upon you. You have heard of the man who hastened to be rich, and was not innocent. I am afraid that few are long innocent who haste to be rich. They clutch at everything on a sudden, and they are apt to include in that clutch a few things which do not belong to them. What devouring care must prey upon those whose trade is as risky as a throw of the dice? When business is mere gambling it ceases to be legitimate. Let speculators take heed of those dangers which necessarily attend all games of chance. I believe that every form of gambling, though it may take a business shape, tends more or less to harden the heart. As for the naked form of play, which risks upon the roll of a ball, it is murder to all the finer feelings of the heart. Nobody but gamblers could have cast the dice, all blood bespattered, at the foot of the cross of our Redeemer. Gambling brings men into a state of heart worse than almost any other form of sin. When a man is willing to risk His all practically on the mere toss of a halfpenny whether goods shall go up or down, He is usually a bad man, and if He is not He will be so before long; for that kind of thing does serious mischief to the tenderest tissues of the heart. If any Christian man attempts it, what a state of mind will He soon know! Can He pray? Can He meditate? Can He commune with the Lord Jesus? Can He be without carefulness? Where can be His trust? Where His faith in God? When He has practically committed His fortunes to the devil, how can He confide in His God? Gambling and prayer can never go together, except in the case of the reprobate: I suppose they are profane enough to unite the two, but therein they blaspheme Heaven most detestably. Brethren, abstain from those things which inevitably create undue excitement, anxiety, and suspense. I 840 speak as unto wise men; judge you what I say: I would have you without carefulness, and therefore I would have you avoid those states which involve it. **II.** Secondly, BY KEEPING AWAY FROM THOSE OBJECTS OF PURSUIT WHICH WOULD NATURALLY FOSTER IT, I would have you without carefulness. When a man makes the gaining of riches the first thing in life He cannot be without carefulness. Where His treasure is, there will His heart be also. There is the carefulness to get, the carefulness to hold, the carefulness to place out at interest, the carefulness to collect dues, and so forth. Yes, and this may be the case even with poor people, who may be as full of greedy care as the millionaire. Thrift is commendable; but covetousness is detestable. Men not only lay by for a rainy day, which is well; but they make saving the main object of their lean and hungry lives, and God's Glory and man's needs are alike forgotten. Now, if you live for anything but God—especially if you live to hoard up, with the determination that somehow or other you will be immensely rich, you must be full of carefulness: it cannot be helped. Suppose that you are of a nobler spirit, and you live with the view of gaining honor among men: you will with equal certainty be full of cares. I hope you will not say, "I must be honored. I must have my neighbors think well of me; and I will make a slave, or a fool, or a hypocrite of myself to please them." This resolve is detestable, and if you go into that line you will not be without carefulness, I can tell you; and with all your carefulness you will never succeed. To please everybody is as impossible as to make ice and bake bread at the same moment in one oven. Give up the wretched attempt. Be a man, and be not a mere man-pleaser. How blessedly easy I feel in my work for God! But I owe that ease to the fact that I have no one to please but my Lord. When I preach, the last thing that ever occurs to me is to ask myself whether any of you will like it or not. It is no wish of mine to give offense; but it has never occurred to me to think whether you will be offended or not. I do not think you would respect me if I made my preaching an occasion for seeking to please you. If it pleases God it will please you, if you are right; and if you are wrong, and it does not please you, well, it never ought to please you. This enables a preacher to give all His mind to His subject; the opposite feeling would distract Him, and make Him live the life of a toad under a harrow. Go into life in just that kind of 841 spirit. Do everything to please your fellow-man if it will do Him real good. Never be ungenerous, nor unkind, nor

uncourteous; but never live to please the world. No slave is so slavish as the wretch who draws His breath from other people's nostrils, and can only live if He be approved by His neighbors. Scorn such servitude. I would have you without carefulness, and you cannot be without carefulness if you seek to please men. Many persons are so ambitious to be very respectable that they never will be without carefulness: they have a pound coming in but they spend a guinea to be respectable, and so they cannot be without carefulness. I charge you do not care about being what is known in the world as "respectable." Be Christians, whether people respect you or not. That littleness which stamps out everything that is good or brave, in order to put a man into the fashion, is to be the object of our supreme contempt. Do the right. Serve God. Live for Heaven. Care little about man's esteem. Abhor the pride of life. Live above the world, or you will be eaten up with carefulness: it cannot be helped. Some persons have a favorite object in life—not God, but an earthly thing; and these cannot be without carefulness. Dear mother, love your children by all manner of means, but if that little one has become an idol, I am sure you cannot be without carefulness. I have known mothers kill their children because they did not want them to die. That is to say, they never let the wind blow on them, they kept them in a bandbox, screened the blessed air of Heaven from them, and so brought them up that they became weak and sickly, thanks to their mothers' indulgent care. Lots of children have suffered a martyrdom from too much nursing, and excessive carefulness has created cause for care. If it is not a child, if it is anything else that becomes the pet and hobby of life, you will soon find that you have plenty of care about it: a horse, a dog, a flower, a painting, may entangle men and women in nets of care. I have seen it, and lamented it. The more objects you set your heart upon, the more thorns there are to tear your peace of mind into shreds. I know people who dread every puff of wind, and every shower of rain, because a yacht might be tossed about, or a garden-party spoiled: such trifles may sensible people be troubled about. "What are we to do, then?" says one. Why, live to God; live to God wholly. Put every thing else into its true place. Children, business, every favorite pursuit leave them in the hands of God, for until you do this you will be cankered with carefulness of one kind or another, and be incapacitated for the joyful service of the Lord your God. 842 Thus have I given you two helpful rules: first, avoid the states which involve carefulness, and secondly, avoid the pursuits which involve carefulness. May the Spirit of God help you to carry them out. **III.** But now, thirdly, and better still, I would have you without carefulness BY EXERCISING A CHILDLIKE FAITH IN THE EVER-BLESSED GOD. He sends you troubles and trials, but be without carefulness, first, by never trying to anticipate them. Never meet them half-way. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, the strength it gives a man when He learns to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"! It would be a poor prayer if a man should cry, "Lord, give me a guarantee of my bread for six months." No, no; the Lord never taught us to ask for that: that forestalling of the demands of the future finds no petition written for it. Our Lord would have us cultivate the feeling that whatever the necessity of the day, whatever the requirement of the day, whatever the trial of the day, we shall take it to God as it comes, and He will then and there meet the case. Commit your way unto the Lord, and then be without carefulness. I will now tell you something better still. If you can manage to live by the five minutes, that is better than living by the day. I am not tonight, at twenty minutes past eight o'clock, allowed to fret myself about what is likely to happen at ten. I have Grace at this time for the present moment, but not for ten o'clock; why, therefore, should I hurry towards a trouble for which I am not yet prepared? Leave ten o'clock worries till ten o'clock comes. The hour that brings the trial will bring the strength. The hour that tests you will find God ready at your hand to help you. Live by the day: yes, live by the hour. The next thing is, if you would be without carefulness, be quite content with the Lord's will. Suppose you do not prosper in business as you would like, be content not to do so. Do your best, and leave your prospering in the hands of God. Suppose that after consulting a physician you find that your complaint is not removed; duly follow all right and wise prescriptions and directions, and then leave your health with God. With regard to those you love, when you have prayed for their restoration, and they are not restored, then say still, "Not as I will, but as you will." If you cannot suit your purse to your wishes, bring your wishes to your purse. Higher still, if God does not give you all your desires, do the other thing—submit all your desires to God. When your desires and God's decrees agree all will be 843 well. Whether God gives you your wish or you give up your wish will make no notable difference. You will be equally happy so long as your will is God's will, and God's will is your will. And I believe—and I speak experimentally—that, when you are racked with pain, if God teaches you to submit—and it is often a hard lesson—you can suffer in every limb, and yet sing in your inmost soul. This is the way to live without carefulness—first, not to meet trouble before it comes; and, next, when it does come, to be content, saying, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." The

next thing is to be quite sure about the love of God. He cannot make a mistake, and He cannot fail His people. If the worst thing, as it seems to us, should happen, it must be the right thing, because God has sent it. Be sure also that when our needs come, God's supplies will come too. The Lord is bound by His own promise to provide for all the real necessities of those who trust in Him, Oh, that we did thoroughly know God, and did fully believe in Him! Then would our peace be as a river, and our joy like that of birds when the sun is rising. Then should we sing- *"I have no cares, O blessed Lord, For all my cares are your; I live in triumph, too, for you Hast made your triumphs mine."* Another sweet thing would help us to be without care, and that is, fully to believe in the power of prayer, and in the fact that God does actually answer it. God will grant His children's desires, and answer their prayers. We constantly meet with instances in which God does most manifestly come to the help of those that walk before Him aright. I personally met this week with a notable case. A dear sister is left a widow, with three children. She wonders what she shall do for the morning's bread. There is none in the house. She bethinks herself that she formerly kept shop, and that she has a few goods left, a little stained and soiled, but still saleable at a price. She goes into her room, and prays God in her agony of soul to direct her to a customer. To her delight a person asks her whether she kept shop once, in such and such a road. Yes, she is the individual. Such goods as she used to buy at the shop this person cannot get anywhere else, and she much needs them. Could she tell her where she could get the like? Yes, these are the very goods that she had hoped to sell, and though a little soiled and stained the enquirer is glad to have them. The very person who wants them has come to buy them before she has crossed the threshold to seek a customer, and she is amazed at the goodness of the Lord. This honest 844 woman is told that it was a mere coincidence: she says that she knows nothing about coincidences, but she blesses the Lord that her wants were supplied for the time, and she means to trust Him for the future. I did not attempt to alter her resolution to rely in future upon God in time of trouble: on the contrary, I cheered her in it, for I would have her without carefulness. When my grandfather was a young man, before my days, He had a great family and a small income. He had a cow that He kept for His children, and He went to fetch it up from the meadow, and when it was near the house it was taken with "the staggers," and died. My grandmother said, "There, James, what shall we do now through the winter without the cow?" He replied, "My dear, God has provided for us, and He always will, though I do not know how;" and with a heavy heart He went to pray and lay His trouble before the Lord. I have heard the dear old man tell how that morning brought a post-letter, with ninepence to pay; and grandmother said, "Troubles never come alone. Here is ninepence to pay for this letter. Shall we take it in?" But when she did take it in, it brought twenty pounds from a society in London, to which the good man had never applied. He could not make out how they knew of Him at all; but the Lord knew, and led them to send the money on the day of His greatest need. These stories are a few out of many that are in my wallet, instances which I have gathered in my pilgrimage: I have seen enough, in my own lifetime, to fill a volume concerning the goodness of the Lord in answer to His children's prayers. When you are as sure that God answers prayer as I am sure of it then you will realize the meaning of the text, "I would have you without carefulness." Some people of my acquaintance are full of carefulness. I know a maiden lady now who possesses what many poor people would think to be wealth. She has a fixed, regular, and ample income, but she will not spend it because she must first save a certain sum. At first her ambition was to have enough in hand to bury her. Why, she has enough already to bury twenty of her; but she keeps on nipping and screwing still, and whenever you meet her she talks of how little she eats, and how dear everything is. She might live in plenty, and have something for the cause of God; but instead of that she has always an awful story about her expenses. I believe that if she were made into Empress of China she would be afraid that there would not be enough tea grown in China for her to drink. She is of such a spirit that she is a burden to herself, and a plague to all who are about her. When you once give way to grumbling and grasping, then you are careful, and careful, 845 and careful, till you become good-for-nothing in the service of God. Do, I pray you, brothers and sisters, try to get rid of this disease, for your fretful carefulness will make you a misery to yourself and to your friends; it will destroy your power to do good; and it will cut off your communion with God; for, if you do not trust God, God will not walk with you. I do not care to have a man of my acquaintance who does not believe in me. I cannot bear Him if He is always mistrusting me. And so it is with God: He will not commune with you or smile upon you, if you will not trust Him; but if you will leave everything with Him, and believe that your heavenly Father knows best, you shall have many a kind word from His lips, and you shall find what a good, gracious, loving Father He is. Why, you and I ought to be as happy as the birds of the air, and as merry as crickets on the hearth; for what a God we have, who will take care of us both in this life

and in the life to come! All things are ours—the gifts of God—the purchase of a Savior’s love. Even our troubles are the best troubles in the world. Our cross is a heavy one; but it is the best cross for us. Each man has the cross which best befits Him. You could not carry mine, and I could not carry your half so well as my own. Despite your peculiar trials, you are a happy and a favored man, and God has dealt infinitely better with you than you ever deserved or could have expected. Praise Him, then, and bless His name. Get out of the fidgets, brother, if you can. Get out of the worries, my dear sister. You are a good, dear housewife; and your husband says if He could get a little of the Mary into you, and a little of the Martha out of you, you would be a perfect wife. Is not this a practical suggestion? Let us see whether we cannot, each one, be improved by trying to be without carefulness. Let us each one give all our thought and care to this one object—How can I please God? How can I avoid sin? How can I be holy? How can I win sinners to Christ? How can I comfort my fellow-Christians? How, in a word, can I live as Christ would have lived? You never find Jesus worrying. If He weeps, it is for the souls of men; if He suffers, it is to redeem men from going down to the pit; and if He dies of a broken heart, it is a broken heart about the sins of others. As for Himself, what a delicious carelessness of holy confidence there was about Him! He went on board ship, and He knew that a storm would come, a storm that would try the poor little boat, but He lay down and slept. The disciples are all in a worry. They cry “Master, we perish!” And where was their Master? Asleep! You have often thought of the sleep of the Savior, and almost deemed Him negligent. Now, think of the grand confidence of the Savior in being able to sleep in a storm. If His disciples had been asleep too it would have been the best thing they could have done, for they could not manage the winds or the waves. If they had possessed the moral dignity which ennobled their Lord, and had been able to go down into the hinder part of the ship and to go to sleep with Him, they would have woken up in the morning in a calm. The best thing you, my dear brothers and sisters, can do in a great trouble may be to remember that text, “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Pray over your difficulty, and then go to sleep, and wake up and find it all over, for the Lord has worked a great deliverance for you. I knew one well who was always in trouble about how He should die. Dear good man, He refused to be comforted, but was often troubled about the horrors of the departing hour; until one night He went to bed, and shut His eyes on earth, and opened them in Glory. He never knew that He was away from earth till He knew that He was in Heaven, for He died in His sleep; and so it turned out that He had been worrying Himself about nothing. Leave everything with God. If I can trust my soul with Him, I am sure I can trust my body with Him: if I can trust my eternal condition with Him, cannot I trust Him with a matter of a five-pound note? What, rest on Christ for Glory, and not rest on Christ for bread! Come, come; the Lord get you out of that low, unbelieving state. I am nearly at a close, and so I press upon you my text. Like Paul, “I would have you without carefulness.” May you be so through the power of the gracious God who taught the Apostle Peter to say in the Spirit, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Amen. 847 **THAT HORRIBLE EAST WIND! NO. 1693 DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.** *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful.”-Colossians 3:15.* I do not know how it is, but during the last two or three days I have been called to sympathize with an amount of sorrow such as I have seldom met with before in so short a space of time. One messenger of misery has followed on the heels of another, each one with heavy tidings. Nor is that all; for I have also been perplexed with a large amount of sinning, quarrelling, and fault-finding. People are murmuring, grumbling, fretting, and fighting on all sides. So much has this tried me that I feel little fitted to act as comforter, for I need comfort myself. I have endeavored to cheer others till I have drunk of their cup of sorrow, and put my own mouth out of taste: I have tried to make peace for others till I am half afraid of losing my own; I have answered the people’s grumblings till I am tempted to have a growl or two on my own account. Perhaps I may relieve my own mind by the sermon which I hope to deliver. I said to one whom I greatly esteem, “I do not know how it is, but everybody seems out of sorts with everybody else just now.” His wise answer was, “THE WIND IS IN THE EAST.” This fact accounts for a great deal, for *“When the wind is in the east, ‘Tis neither good for man nor beast.”* This is that ill wind which seems to blow no man any good. Some humanities feel the east wind terribly: it sets their teeth on edge, and they feel that they must bite the first person they meet. I am glad to find some 848 sort of excuse for my fellow-Christians, and if I can find it nowhere but in the east wind, I will make the best I can of it; but I earnestly hope that the wind may soon blow from another quarter, and not come from the east again till we have had a little respite, and laid in a new stock of patience. If a cutting wind causes despondency, vexation, discontent, and bad temper, may soft gales visit us frequently, and bring us healing in their

wings. As fair weather will not last for ever, it will be well to prepare ourselves to breast the blast. It will never do for us to have a religion which can be killed by the wind: we must be made of better stuff than that. Yet this wind is blamed, and I wish therefore that it would take itself off. If I could find a snug corner where the cruel east wind was never felt, I should feel inclined to promote an emigration movement for certain persons whom I will not mention: as for myself, I am afraid that it would not suit me to be altogether screened from the wind, for trials are necessary to one who is called to this ministry. Troubles and east winds will come to the servants of God, and they are sent to do us good; for perhaps, if we could get our backs against a protecting wall, and sit for ever in the sunshine, with no east wind to interfere with us, we should go to sleep; or waking, we might come to love this world so well as to be loath to leave it. It would be a horrible thing for any one of us if the south wind should softly breathe upon our cheek, and whisper gently in our ear of long-continued joy to be found on earth; for then we should be tempted to sit down and say, "Soul, take your ease. You have at last found a place free from the trials of time; therefore eat, drink, and be merry, and let the future world care for itself." When I turn over in my mind the events of the last few days I do not suppose that there is more discord or discontent in the world just now than at any other time; but it happens that a number of black lines have all found their center in my person, and my thoughts have had to travel out in all those directions; all which is trying enough, but all the more so when the wind is in the east. It is a coincidence, but the like has happened before. I have had to unravel many tangled skeins in my time, out of love to others: I did not get the threads into a ravel, but people are very fond of bringing me their snarls to disentangle, and when I have a hope of succeeding I try my best. Gladly would I be a peace-maker, but it is much easier to make a snarl than to put it straight again, especially in the east wind. I have tried to set things right, and meanwhile I have asked myself, "Is there not a remedy for these mischiefs?" I feel assured there is such a remedy. Family discomfort, husbands and wives that cannot agree, domestic difficulties, 849 brothers and sisters that fall out, church troubles, members that are not treated kindly by others (not generally the kindest sort of people themselves, I notice), difficulties in business, difficulties in preaching—the world teems with these things When the wind is in the east. We meet with many people who cannot earn enough wages, others who do not believe they were ever well treated since they were born; others, again, who are highly deserving people, but have never yet been appreciated as they should be; and these all come out in crowds when the wind is in the east. Good men become rabid for something new, find fault with old friends, invite debate, and quarrel about nothing; and this happens most often when the wind is in the east. When this kind of spirit gets among Christian people it is very sad; but surely there must be a remedy for it. Many nostrums are proposed, many quacks are ready to prescribe this and that form of remedy for troubles and discords, but the results of the east wind are not to be removed in that way: a higher power is needed. I have heard of pills for the earthquake, and medicine for the comet; but I have no such patent physic for the east wind. All I have to tell you is borrowed from an old Book, in which the wisest prescriptions are to be found, prescriptions so excellent that, if they were followed, the inhabitant would no more say, "I am sick." This windy night I shall take you to the great Physician of souls, Jehovah-Rophi—the Lord who heals us, who is able to cure all our diseases and to give permanent relief from all evil, so that our spirits shall be at rest. I believe that we have a prescription in this verse which, if it be well attended to, will deliver you out of all troubles, make you sing all your lives long, and help you to travel from earth to Heaven, and be all the while as happy as the birds in the air. Here it is— "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful." If we dissect our text we shall find in it four pieces of advice. **I. First, POSSESS THE PEACE OF GOD—** "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." It cannot rule in your hearts if you have never felt its power; therefore, make certain that you are truly reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Many persons have peace, but, alas, it is false peace. They have the peace of a soft, gentle, timorous, time-serving character—a mean sort of peace, which, if it hurts no one else, often ruins its possessor. Some have the peace of ignorance, the peace of stupidity, the peace of utter indifference, false peace. These are the followers of those false prophets 850 who cried, "peace, peace," where there was no peace. Woe to the man whose peace of mind is like the deadly smoothness of the current just as it nears the cataract! Many are at ease in a condition which might make a wise man's hair turn gray in a night. They were never emptied from vessel to vessel, and therefore they are settled upon their lees; but they shall be poured out to their utter confusion. They think right well of themselves, but already the axe of judgment is lifted against them. The peace that we need to possess is the peace of God, which means, I think, first, peace with God. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to feel that the great cause of quarrel between our fallen spirit and the great Spirit is taken away—that we are reconciled to God by the death of His

Son—that sin, the great divider, has been cast into the depths of the sea, and that there is established between us and God a happy fellowship! I hope many of you are at this hour enjoying such peace. If you have it, rejoice in it. If you, then, be at peace with God, do not perpetually act as if that peace were questionable and doubtful. Do not sigh and cry as if the matter trembled in the balance. If we believe in Jesus Christ, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh! the joy of knowing that “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us,” and that therefore they can never return from so immense a distance- yes, never return at all, for the Lord Jesus Christ has cast them into the depths of the sea, and if they be searched for they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord. Blessed is that man who has peace with God through the atoning blood! Growing out of this there comes, next, a peace with God with regard to all His providences, which can only come through a complete and entire submission to the divine will; for some there are who are not at peace with God, even about a certain Providence that afflicted them years ago. They remain quarrelling with God about the decease of a beloved wife, or child, or mother, and they cannot forgive God for having taken a flower out of His own garden. If they were wise they would not thus rebel, but find in their loving Savior a recompense for all their losses. Was not that fine of Andromache, when she remembered that she had lost all her relatives except her husband, and, gazing on Him with delight, she said *“While my Hector still survives, I see My father, mother, brethren, all in you”*?⁸⁵¹ Cannot a Believer say the same of the Lord Jesus? Far be it from us to raise a question about what the Providence of God has already done! It must be right. The point is to keep on submitting to than Providence in what is now transpiring. If for the present the will of the Lord should send me poverty, obscurity, pain, weariness, reproach, I must be at peace with God about it all. If the Lord says to me, “Go across the sea, and leave all your friends,” I must not delay. If He says, “Preach unwelcome truth, which will make you enemies;” I must not hesitate. If He says, “Keep the house with rheumatism,” I must not come out of doors. If the Lord says, “Lie on your back and cough,” it is not for me to quarrel with Him, and say it ought not so to be. If He denies us that which we think would make us not only more happy but more useful, it is of no use for us to kick against the pricks. The divine appointment will certainly be fulfilled, and the misery to us will be in struggling against the yoke, in endeavoring to have it otherwise than divine love and infinite wisdom have determined it should be. If you can not change your place, change your mind, till your mind shall take to your place, and you shall love it. Why, there have been men so helped of God to conquer self that they have hugged their crosses. I think it is Rutherford who somewhere says that He was half afraid lest He should begin to love His cross better than Christ. That is a fear which will seldom need to cross our minds; but, oh, we ought to be perfectly satisfied, perfectly content with that which pleases God! “If this be the Lord’s will it is my will “: such a saying comes from a happy heart; but if God has one will and we have another, it is clear that the peace of God does not yet rule our hearts. Though forgiven, and though the grand cause of quarrel is gone, yet we are raising minor points of difference, and these gender strife. It is like a great lawsuit that has been decided on all the grand features of the case, and yet here is the plaintiff picking little points, and raising little questions, and getting up fresh litigation. The point with us is to say, “It is all given up. Whatever you willest, Lord, I will; or at least I wish to will. I ask for Grace that I may will it, because you willest it.” This voluntary submission to our Father’s appointment is the peace of God. This peace of God is, also, peace such as God commends-such as God approves of. That, you know, is first, perfect peace with Himself, and then with all men-certainly with His people, but also with all mankind. “If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.” Take heed that you do not offend; and if you are offended by others, do not offend in return, but accept the offense in patience; forgive it and forget it. Forbear, ⁸⁵² and, when you have done so, forbear, and, when you have done so again, forbear, and, when you have forborne seven times, still forbear. I will not repeat the advice seventy times seven, though if I did, I should not go beyond the measure of forbearance and of forgiveness which the Lord Jesus would have us display. Be so at peace with God that you feel perfectly at peace with your fellow-men. Whenever I have suffered a grievous wrong, it has been a satisfaction to me to feel that, if my Lord Jesus Christ made atonement for my offenses and my wrongs, I can look at His atonement as an atonement for the wrong done to me as well as to God, for He satisfied all parties in that quarrel. Gladly do I say, “Surely, this poor soul may well be forgiven by me, for you have died as the sinners’ Substitute.” In comparison with my own offenses against God I may well look upon this man’s offense as less than nothing. What if men should do the worst they can do to us? What is it? What if they slay us? It is but a small loss to a Christian to die. Therefore let us harbour no malice, but feel, “No; we have entered into the truce of God, and we are the friends of every man that breathes.” For my own part, I have a crusade against the

devil and all evil; but the truce of God is upon me with regard to all my fellow-men, and from now on that peace which was proclaimed at Bethlehem by the angels shall stand for me- “Peace on earth: good will toward men.” This is a sweet part of the peace of God; cultivate it carefully. But this peace is called the peace of God because it is peace which God works in the soul. I think I hear you exclaim, “To have such a peace as that-a perfect consciousness of full forgiveness, complete acquiescence in the will of God, perfect forgiveness towards all mankind, and an intense desire to live in perfect peace with all, both saints and sinners-how can I get such a peace within me?” Ah, indeed, how can you? It is impossible to unrenewed human nature. Man by nature is worse than any one wild beast, for He is a menagerie. There is lion in Him, and there is serpent in Him; there is tiger in Him, and there is wolf in Him; there is dog in Him, and there is devil in Him. He is half beast and half devil through the fall. I do not caricature Him; His body allies Him to the beast, and sin makes Him a child of Satan. Mr. Whitefield used so to describe fallen nature, and He was pretty near the mark. How shall this wild beast be taught to love? Shall the lion eat straw like an ox? It never will till it leaves off being a lion. It cannot do so; it has not fit teeth for eating straw, nor a fit stomach for digesting grass. It cannot live on straw, like an ox, till God changes it, and gives it an ox-like nature. So it is with us: we need a new nature before we 853 can possess this peace with God. But how is that to be done? Shall the Ethiopian change His skin? No; He cannot do that; and if He could, it would not equal the miracle which we require. Our default is not skin deep only, it is much more than that. Changing skins is difficult, but changing hearts is impossible except to God. Shall the leopard get rid of His spots? Well, that is difficult; but still the task of taking spots out of leopards would be small compared with the miracle of taking evil out of the very core of our wildbeast- like heart, and putting into it the peace of God that makes us love. God only can do it. God’s own mighty Spirit must put forth that same energy with which He will raise the dead out of their graves at the Resurrection; for nothing short of creation and Resurrection power is able to transmute this beastly, devilish heart of ours into a heart in which the peace of God shall reign supreme. Well is it called the peace of God. My dear hearer, do you know this peace? If so, you will understand that, because of its excellence, it is called the peace of God. It is a Hebraism: for among the Hebrews they called certain mountains that were higher than others the hills of God; and certain gigantic trees, such as the cedars of Lebanon, were the trees of God that were full of sap. So the peace that is greater than every other peace is called the peace of God-it means the holiest, deepest peace. It is “perfect peace “-peace that nothing disturbs: deep peace-“the peace of God, which passes all understanding””: solemn peace at which you almost stand in awe-a hush within the soul in which there is heard nothing of discord or of fear, but a stillness reigns like that which was maintained in the Holy of Holies, within the veil, where seraphim were silent above the mercy-seat. “The peace of God” signifies the peace that never ends, everlasting peace; the peace that will live with us throughout the whole of our mortal sojourn till we come into the land of the immortal. *“There shall I bathe my weary soul In seas of heavenly rest, And not a wave of trouble roll Across my peaceful breast.”* “The peace of God.” Oh, I have known it! You, too, my brethren, must have known it when the Lord Himself has dwelt within your hearts, and kept all adversaries far away. You have then known days of Heaven upon the earth. It has left nothing to wish for except the perpetuation of itself, for you have been satisfied with favor and full of the goodness of the Lord, 854 filled with all the fullness of God, anchored fast, settled, grounded, established. *“My heart is resting, O my God! I will give thanks and sing. My heart is at the secret source Of every precious thing.”* That is the peace of God. Win it, dear Friends, and wear it. By God’s good Spirit enter into this serene haven. Rest in the Lord, and be happy in Him, for He is our peace! When the Lord and Giver of peace once comes to tarry in your heart let Him rest there; and charge all about you, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that they stir not up nor awake your love until He please. **II.** But now the second piece of advice that grows out of the text let us consider. If you possess this peace of God, let it occupy the throne: LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS. In order to there being any peace in the heart, or anywhere else, there must be a ruler. Those people who are for putting down all kings and principalities and powers may bid farewell to peace. Anybody who is inclined to anarchy should read Carlyle’s “French Revolution” through with care, and ask Himself whether the worst king is not, after all, a deal better than the despotism of the mob, the carnival of misrule, wherein every man does that which is right in His own eyes, and all eyes love darkness rather than light. Let loose the reins of government, let everybody be equal to everybody else, and a little bigger than everybody else as well, and you will soon see what confusion ensues. See how it is in a house! I hear that there was great deliberation over those census papers in many families to know who was the head of the household; but I am quite clear that it was not a happy household where that question took long to answer; for the husband is the head of

the wife, and where He is not so, everything is out of order, monstrous, outrageous. Where the head is not the head, the hand is not the hand, the eye is not the eye, the heart is not the heart; and nothing is itself at all. All is what it should not be, and all is misery. You must have a governing faculty somewhere; and, within your own soul, if nothing governs, I tell you boldly the devil governs. That man who does not control Himself is controlled by the devil, for He must have a master somewhere. We cannot have two masters, but it is quite as certain that we 855 must have one. One power or another will master you. Shall it be your Creator, or His enemy? your Savior, or your destroyer? It is a blessed gift of Grace if a man is enabled by the Holy Spirit to say— “The peace of God shall rule in my heart.” Paul advised this: “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”: if it is in your hearts at all, it must rule, for it has power to put down all rebellion. You know, when we have a government and a magistracy with power at their back, if a riot arises, we appeal to the lawful power to come and protect us, and put down the uproar. So in our hearts, if we have a master principle, and that master principle is the peace of God, we may warrantably pray, “O Lord, put down this riot. I am tossed to and fro in my heart about my circumstances: I do not like them, and I quarrel with God about them. Come, peace of God; come, and put down my murmuring. Come and calm my wicked, discontented spirit.” Or do I feel some discord in my spirit towards one whom I ought to love? I must cry, “Come, peace of God. Come, and arrest this bad temper of mine. Handcuff it. Take it off to prison. Give it hard labor and short commons; bring it down till it is no longer able to rebel as it does. Come, peace of God, and help me in the struggles of my daily life, that I may not break out into anger, and wrath, and malice, and all uncharitableness. Come, peace of God, put forth your mighty power over my soul.” This is the great remedy for the discord within and the discords without: the grand cure for all distempers of the east wind, and all besides. Yield yourself to the umpireship of the blessed peace of God, for I find that the Greek word has that force— “Let the peace of God umpire in your hearts.” You know the umpire in the Greek games decided how the runners should run, how the wrestlers should wrestle, and He ruled a contest to be, or not to be, according to the Law of the festival. He said, perhaps, that such and such a blow in the fight was a foul blow, and if He said so, there was no questioning Him: it was decided. He stood at the winning-point when the runners came in, and He declared a certain swiftfooted racer to be the winner. No man ever questioned the dictate of the umpire. His voice ended all debate. He was the man who decided in the games, and whose verdict was never to be disputed. Now, the peace of God is to do the same in our hearts. We ought to be resolved to judge all things by the peace of God. “What ought I to do in this case? Must I humble myself? I do not like it, but how ought I to act? Shall I yield?” Pride says, “Never! No, no. Play the man. Never give in.” But what does the peace of God say? It says, “Yield: submit.” Christ says, “I say unto 856 you, That you resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to Him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the Law, and take away your coat, let Him have your cloke also.” Christ decides that it will be good to be a sufferer rather than a revenger. We ought to have the peace of God ruling in our hearts so as to let it decide our course, and lead us to do that which is consistent with our own peace with God. I do not know how you find it, but I know that I cannot afford to be angry. It takes so much that is valuable out of me. I am sure it does. It does a man an immense mischief physically; to some men it is a dangerous thing to get excited, it even endangers their lives. But, spiritually, I believe that to get into a state of enmity towards anybody is one of the most grievous diseases which can befall a Christian. In such a case you cannot pray as you did; you cannot read some passages of Scripture as you did; you cannot look the Well-beloved in the face, and say, “I am acting in a way that pleases you.” It is, therefore, a very serious thing for a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to break His own peace-serious to Himself as well as to those that are round about Him. I pray you, therefore, dear Friends, let the peace of God decide for you in all trials of temper, and endurings of wrong, and questions which lead to debate and separation. Set peace in the chariot, and let it hold the reins; for anger will, like Phaeton of old, set the world on fire. Oh, Peace of God, rule you me! Pray God that the power of this peace may be constantly upon you. If you lose your peace with God you lose your power to judge under difficulties; you lose your power of self-control under provocations, you lose the best sovereign that ever held a scepter. I believe that if a man is walking with God in the light, and enjoying full fellowship with Heaven, He may go down into any meeting, however turbulent-into any society, however discordant the elements may be-and yet He will be wise to answer, wise to be silent, wise to do, or wise not to do; for the peace of God will keep Him calm and quiet. Once let the mind be thoroughly disturbed and unhinged before the Lord, and you are weak as another man, and you say that which you will have to unsay, and you do that which you would wish to wipe out with your tears. When rest of soul is gone, hard things are spoken and hard things are done, which would not consort

with communion with the tender Lord. Let the peace of God always rule, or otherwise you will not always be safe. Especially let the peace of God rule your affections. Be satisfied that you love God, and that your heart cleaves to God, and does not follow after any other. Be at peace with God as to your heart, and, when that is 857 so, and the affections are dominated by conscious love to God, it is then that you fight the battles of life with comfort to yourself, and with honor to the name of Him to whom you belong. **III.** Very briefly, I want, in the third place, to say, **STRENGTHEN YOURSELF**, dear friend, **BY GOD'S SPIRIT, WITH ARGUMENTS**, in order that you may let the peace of God rule in your hearts, and may be kept from any breach of that heavenly peace. Remember, you can only yourself be happy in heart and healthy in spirit as long as you keep the peace of God. You are sure to become wretched and unhappy, you are sure to stumble here and there into faults, if that peace of God be gone. As you would be in the best possible trim for walking with God in joy while here below, look to your peace. This is no mean argument; try to feel the force of it. And, next, only thus can the church of God prosper. I am grieved when I receive members from other churches, who come because they say that they are weary of the incessant bickerings and jealousies which have disturbed their rest. I am sure that there can be no blessing where there is no peace. A house divided against itself cannot stand. A church disputing is a church committing suicide. Many and many a church has come to its death by bleeding inwardly through strife; otherwise it might have defied the whole world, and Hell itself. It is generally the little churches that squabble most: if they cannot excel in anything else, they certainly claim the first rank in quarrelling. A few Christian people get together to serve God, and the devil comes in at once and sets them by the ears: they are good men and true, but Satan bewitches them so that they dispute about nothing at all. Whenever I have to settle a dispute, I always like to have some big, bad thing in it. This I can point out, and we soon agree to set the matter right. When I cannot with microscopes on my eyes find out what it is all about, I find that brothers and sisters are hardest to be reconciled. It is easier to shoot an owl than a gnat. Little differences rankle like tiny thorns, and you cannot get them out of the flesh, Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon the churches, and turn them into masses of fire; then they would not fall to pieces through intestine strife! When souls are being won, when the Gospel is being enjoyed, when Christ is being glorified, when the church is marching on, conquering and to conquer through the divine power that is in her, then is there peace within her borders, and her citizens are filled with the finest of the wheat. But once let the life of God run low, 858 and let the Spirit of God depart, then peace departs too. Oh, may God save this church and save all the churches from missing this blessed peace! Let the peace of God rule in your heart, dear brother, dear sister, for the church's sake. Remember, next, that God cannot be glorified unless there is the peace of God in our hearts. My dear friend, if you are always troubled, and fretting, and anxious, I do not see how you can glorify God to any large extent. Seek more faith, more trust, more confidence, more calm of mind, and you will personally glorify God. I am sure a Christian man who always finds fault with everybody is of little service to the cause and kingdom of our Lord. He who, wherever He goes, acts like a carrion crow, that soars aloft with no other design than finding out where a carcass may be, that He may light upon it—He, I say, is not a man after God's own heart, neither will He advance the Lord's work among men. When you love your fellow Christians so that their faults are covered by your charity, and you rather admire their excellences than publish their infirmities, then it is that God is glorified by you. A happy, peaceful people of whom men can say, "See how these Christians love one another—these shine as lights in the world, and the darkness feels their power. The passage from which our text is taken offers us other reasons. It says this— "To the which also you are called." You were called to the peace of God. My dear brother, if you are not a peaceful man you have not inherited your true calling. When the Lord called you out from the world, He called you to be a peace-maker. He called you on purpose that the Spirit of peace might be shed abroad in your heart, and that afterwards you might carry that peace with you into your own family and amongst all your neighbors, and spread it everywhere. The Lord Jesus never called a man to be a maker of strife. If a Christian woman, as she calls herself, goes from house to house with tittle-tattle, she was not called by God to do so: of that I am certain. A man goes into His pulpit, and preaches a personal sermon on purpose to empty out His own spleen. God did not call Him to that, for God loves not firebrands. The man may have been sent as a messenger from other regions, but certainly not as an ambassador from Heaven, when He preaches gall and wormwood. Some seem, wherever they go, to make mischief as speedily as possible: their mission is contention, whereunto they certainly were not called of God. You who are the true heirs of Heaven are called to peace; seek peace, and pursue it. Wherever you go, labor earnestly to make peace. If you see two boys fighting, make them leave off. 859 If you see two girls in a bad temper, try to make them happy with one another. If you

see two people disagree in business, do not back one of them up, and cry, "Go to Law with Him," but plead for peace and mutual concession. "Blessed are the peace-makers." Whatever you may be in a household, whether father or child, husband or wife, master or servant, son-in-Law or mother-in-Law, let your soul be seasoned and savoured with that blessed word, "Peace." There is always a war party in England: I fear the Jingo is no foreigner, but the genuine offspring of the British bull-dog. An unconverted Britisher is all for blood, and fire, and Glory; and as the unconverted are the majority among us we remain a fighting nation. Fighting-how we delight in it! Down with the Afghans, down with the Zulus! The Boers-destroy them! We cannot get our fill of Glory and honor unless we get knee deep in blood. The policy of peace is voted dishonorable, and so we go from land to land till there is hardly a nation which has not been stained with blood by British hands. How fiercely these English talk: but it is not Christian talk. May the Lord teach us the language of peace. Be you at peace, "whereunto also you were called." And then, notice next, "Called in one body." There must, therefore, be peace among Christians, because we are called in one body to peace. What would you think of my hand, if it should say, "I will have no peace with the eye. That prying eye looked sharply at me the other day and spied out a spot; I will put it out"? We shall not enjoy much prosperity if the members of the body thus disagree. Suppose my foot should say, "I am not going to carry that heavy body about. See what I have to suffer through it at times." Suppose my knee should say, "I will not have it. I have been tortured quite enough with rheumatism; I will no longer carry that heavy fabric." What will become of me if the members of my body thus fall to quarrelling? And what is to become of the Glory of Christ if His members live in contention? What is the Head to do if the members who make up His one mystical body have nothing to do but to be striving one against the other? Oh, no. If you have any differences, end them to-night, I pray you, if you can, even though the east wind is so piercing. If you have unwittingly done anything that grieves others, try to remedy it. Or if others have grieved you, end the matter by sweet and swift forgiveness. Let it be all ended with the east wind. We are called in one body; therefore let us dwell in hearty peace; and may God the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of peace, bring us into the peace of God, and keep us there, for thereunto also we are called in one body. 860 **IV.** The last point upon which I shall speak is this-to keep yourselves right, OCCUPY YOUR MINDS HEALTHILY. "How?" say you. The text says, "Be you thankful." That is the way to keep up our peace with God. "Be thankful." Do not complain, but bless His name for everything. Do not quarrel with Him, but be thankful. Say, "Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." That is the way to be at peace with Him-to be thankful at all times. Bless God for your mercies and for your miseries; bless Him for your gains and for your losses; bless Him for your enjoyments and pleasures, and also for your aches and pains. Bless Him for every hard thing that comes from Him, for there is as much love in the hard as in the soft; and God is as kind when He uses the rod as when He gives a kiss. "Be you thankful!" Bless Him from morning to night, and all through the night watches. What a mercy to be out of the hospital! What a mercy to have the use of one's limbs and reasoning powers! What a mercy to be out of prison! What a mercy to be out of Hell! "He has not dealt with us after our sins." Be thankful. Last Sunday morning when I read this chapter in the great congregation I tried to ring it out as loudly as ever I could; and I would like to ring it out as with a whole peal of bells now. Set them all ringing a marriage-peal, if you like—"Be you thankful! Be you thankful! Be you thankful!" Up, you murmuring! Up, you discontented! "Be you thankful." Rouse yourselves, you sullen ones! You that think you have a heavier load to carry than is meet, and say, like Cain, "My burden is greater than I can bear"- "Be you thankful!" All of you, young and old, "Be you thankful." That is the way to keep up your pence with God, and your peace with your fellow-men. Well, but it does not mean only, "Be thankful to God," but be you thankful to your fellow-men. Too many receive all kinds of Christian kindness as a matter of course. They look upon the spontaneous kindness of their brethren as a sort of right. Now, that the poor should be helped by Christian generosity is certainly according to Scripture; but this is an obligation not of debt but of Grace. Whatever is done in almsgiving and charity should be gratefully and heartily received. It is an unholy spirit which scarcely has the courtesy to say "thank you." Towards one another we ought to have a thankful spirit. How thankful the child ought to be to His mother and His father! What a happy home we should have if children recognised the deep debt of obligation that is really due to those who have nursed them and cared for them so long! How obliged, I think, the husband 861 ought to be to His wife for all her tender kindnesses-those hundred unseen ministries of love! How grateful, I think, the wife should be to her husband, for all His labors and anxieties! She receives a thousand things from Him which make life comfortable. If we live in mutual gratitude, feeling that we are, each one of us, indebted

to all others, how merrily will the household wheels go round, and what families of love we shall all gather around us! I, of all the people in the world, am most in debt to everybody; and I feel it deeply and truly. There is hardly a person that I look upon from this pulpit but I owe something to His or her Christian love. Everybody has been kind to me, and I am not unmindful of it. When I have lain upon my bed sick and ill, I have marveled at the kindness of you all. I wonder why you treat me so lovingly. In all holy work, whether it be College, or Orphanage, you have been my ready helpers, and you are still. I cannot help saying, "God bless you." Surely the wind is changing a point or two: we shall find it blowing from another quarter when we leave this Tabernacle. I feel intense gratitude in my soul towards the dear brethren who surround me, and the sisters that work with me for Christ. You have often made me happy and cheered my spirit by the kind and generous way in which you have worked with me for the Lord, bearing with all my infirmities; and I believe that it is because I feel thankful that I feel peaceful, and so remain the center of your unity. I am not inclined to quarrel with anybody: I would sooner run a mile than I would fight for half a minute. There is nobody in the world that I would like to contend with: my heart is full of good wishes to all men. It has been a sort of rule with me to measure a man before I fight Him: if He is bigger than I am I know He will beat me, and so I decline battle; and if He is smaller, and I can easily beat Him, it would be cruel and cowardly to do so. Nobody in the world is worth contending against as to our temporal interests. Even necessary Law is troublesome and vexatious. Be you thankful, then; and if, with thankfulness to God and thankfulness to those around you, you can fill up the day, oh, how happy will the days be! In the family and in the business God will be glorified; the church will be sweetened and welded together: we shall see better times, and shall no longer grumble at the east wind. May God bless you! 862 **THE USE OF THE BOW. NO. 1694 DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.** "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan His son: (Also He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)"- 2 Samuel 1:17, 18. THE translators have acted very properly in inserting the words, "the use of," for that is what the passage means; but if you read it without those words the sense is still the same—"He bade them teach the children of Judah the bow," that is to say, how to use the bow. In modern times, critics have said that by the expression "the bow" is meant the song which David composed; and to sustain their notion—they quote from the Koran of Mahomet in which they tell us that there is a certain chapter called "the Cow," and therefore David called His song "the bow," as if so late an instance of oriental usage was at all to the point. I aver that there is nothing whatever in Scripture to justify the statement that the words "the bow," can be applied to David's lament. No doubt some of the Psalms have titles given to them; but there is never an instance of a psalm being quoted by its title. It is quoted by its number, never by its name. I accept the passage as our learned translators understood it—David bade them teach the children of Judah the bow. If any enquire, "What then is the connection? Why should David teach the people the use of the bow because Saul and Jonathan were slain? Why is the military order concerning the use of a certain instrument of war inserted here, when the passage is full of lamentation?" I answer—most fitly, as I shall have to show you. It was the best memorial of that skillful archer Jonathan, and of the other princes who had fallen by the arrows of the Philistines, that from the 863 disastrous day of their slaughter David caused His own tribe over which He had chief power to be trained in the use of that special weapon of war. **I.** But now to our work. From my text I want to gather a few useful lessons. And the first is this: **ACTIVITY IS A VALUABLE SOLACE FOR SORROW.** The people were very grieved; for Saul and Jonathan, the king and the crown prince, were slain. David indulges their grief: He writes them a plaintive song which the daughters of Israel may sing. But to take off their minds from their distress He at the same time issues the order to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, for activity is an effectual remedy in the time of sorrow. Certainly the opposite of it would tend towards blank despair. Are any of you in great grief? Have you suffered a supreme loss? Do not be tempted to brood over your affliction, and to think that you ought to be excused from further service. Do not shut yourself up alone to ruminate upon the great ill that has befallen you, so as to nurse your wrath against God this can do you no good whatever. Rather imitate David, who, when His child was sick, fasted and prayed; but when it was dead, went into the house and ate bread, for He said, "Can I bring Him back again? I shall go to Him, but He shall not return to me." I beseech you do not fall under the temptation of Satan to cease from your daily activity, and especially from any holy service in which you are engaged for Christ. It may be that your sorrow is not a bereavement, but disappointment in your work. You have not won those souls that you looked to win, and some that you thought were converted have gone back; and now Satan tempts you to do no more—never to

cast the net again, for you have toiled all night and taken nothing—never to sow again, for you have wasted your seed by the highway, and birds have devoured it. This is a suggestion of the evil one. It will lead you into deeper anguish. I would say to you, O mourner, get you up from the couch of ease! Shake yourself from the dust, O virgin daughter of Zion! Sit not down upon the dunghill in your grief, but bestir yourself, lest you sink into blacker woe, and your bitterness become as wormwood and gall. While inaction will lead into blank despair, I am certain that work distracts the mind from the sad point upon which it is apt to thrust itself. Nothing is more healthy than to have work to do. I have seen persons of leisure give way most terribly in the case of the loss of children; while I have known laboring people, who, I believe, have been as sensitive in heart, who have kept up bravely. Under God, I have attributed the difference to the fact that 864 the poor woman must go to earn her daily bread, or must get about her domestic duties whatever happens, and the poor man must do His daily task, or else the family will be in need; thus toil has proved to be a blessed necessity by withdrawing the mind from the sorrow which would have engrossed it. You have heard of Alexander Cruden. Perhaps you do not know that He was crossed in love, and met with certain other trials which drove Him nearly mad; and yet Alexander Cruden did not become insane, for He engaged upon the immense work of forming a concordance of sacred Scripture, which concordance has become the great instrument by which we search the Word of God. This work kept Him from becoming altogether insane. If I had to prescribe to “a mind diseased,” I would say, “Enter upon good work, and keep at it.” Dear Friends, if you are in trouble, and Satan tempts you to get alone, and to cease from the work of the Lord, resist the injurious suggestion. God the Holy Spirit is most likely to comfort you, and to apply the precious promises of His word to your soul, if you pursue your Master’s work with all your heart. Attend to His business, and He will attend to your business. Tell poor sinners about His wounds, and He will bind up your. Forget your cross in His. Forget your griefs in the griefs of the sons of men who are perishing for lack of knowledge; and you shall find the readiest way to consolation. A valuable solace for sorrow is activity, especially, I think, in reference to new work. It will help you much if a new trouble suggests to you new service. Old work does not always take off the mind from its vexatious, for we are apt to do it mechanically, and as a matter of routine; but something altogether fresh will aid us sweetly to forget our trial. Oh, to strike out some new path! To invent new honors for Jesus, new enterprises for His kingdom, new attractions for His Gospel—this will help to charm away our griefs. With many, the doing of any kind of service for Christ will be quite a novelty. I grieve to say it. These people are desponding. I am not so grieved at that, because if any man will not work, neither shall He eat; and if a Christian will not serve His Master, He shall not feast with the King’s worthies. Oh, how much of joy many of you miss by not doing more for the poor, more for the ignorant, more for Christ! The poet Rogers tells us and He throws the story into poetry which I forget—of a rich man in Venice who was the subject of despair, and became such a hypochondriac that He went down to the canal to drown Himself; but on the way He was met by a poor little boy who tugged at His skirts, and begged for bread. When the rich man called Him an impostor, the boy besought Him to come home with 865 Him, and see His father and mother who were dying of starvation. He went up into the room, and found the family literally perishing for lack of food. He laid out the money which he had in His pocket in making them all glad with a hearty meal, and then said to Himself that there was something worth living for after all. He had found a novel enjoyment, which gave a fresh motive for living. I would like to ask you who have suffered a great trouble whether the Lord may not be pressing you by this means into a new path of delight, directing you to a fresh method of glorifying God and doing good to your fellow-men. I will sing you a song if you will, as sorrowful as David’s lament; but I would rather teach you the use of the bow. I believe that I shall minister better to your comfort if I enlist you as soldiers in Christ’s army, and teach you to use His weapons, than if I should console you with the most plaintive minstrelsy of sadness. Do I speak to any here present who endure great earthly afflictions, but know nothing of spiritual things? Is it not the case that God often brings His wandering children to Himself by distresses? The way in which you are to be comforted, dear Friends, is not by going into the world again, and seeking further pleasures there. If God means to bless you, He may allow you to become so hungry that you may wish to fill your belly with the husks. You have spent your living riotously, and now you are ready to despair. Round by that dark corner of despair may be the way to your Father’s house. To expel your present temporal grief you need a spiritual grief concerning sin. If you learn of Jesus at this hour to repent of sin, and to put your trust in Him, your soul will be roused to say, “I will arise, and go unto my Father,” and then you will lose your hunger, and forget the swine-trough. Where? Why, amidst the music and dancing of your Father’s house, and in the joy of hearing Him say, “Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead,

and is alive again; He was lost, and is found.” Yes, David was right. The way to raise the people out of their despondency was to teach them the use of the bow; their own arrows would slay their griefs: and the way to get you mourning ones out of your sorrow is to teach you those holy activities which lead a soul to trust in Christ, and to find salvation at His feet. That is the first lesson which, I think, the text most sweetly teaches. **II.** A second lesson is that AN ADMIRABLE USE OF DISASTER IS TO LEARN ITS LESSONS. What was the disaster? Saul and Jonathan had been shot by archers. The Philistines were evidently strong in the use of the bow; but 866 Saul’s army was short of archers, and so they were not able to smite the Philistines at a distance. Before they came to close quarters, where Israel might have been a match for Philistia, the arrows of the Philistines had reached their king. Had they known how to use the bow, they might have been conquerors; and therefore David hastens to teach the men of Judah the use of the bow. Beloved friends, I will suppose that you have met with failures: I refer to disasters peculiar to yourselves. What shall you do? Sit down and fret and trouble yourselves, and give up in despair? God forbid. As the men of Judah learnt the use of the bow through their being beaten by the bow, so do you gather wisdom from that which has befallen you. Have you been made to fly before your adversary? Then find out where your weakness is. Search and see. Is it a sin indulged? Is it some point where you ought to have been guarded, but where you have been unwatchful? Is it weakness in prayer? Is it neglect of the Word of God? Is it indifference to divine truth? Is it coldness of heart? Or what is it? If you have been defeated, there is a cause for it. If you have been cast down and brought low, say unto God, “Show me wherefore you contendest with me.” Has the Lord a controversy with you? Be not content till you have got to the bottom of it, and found out the root that bears this gall and wormwood. Is not this the way of wisdom? May it not happen that the cause of the disaster is that God is not with you? What if nothing prospers with you? What if it is vain for you to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carelessness, since the hand of God is against you? What if you are to have no pleasure in the things that once gave you satisfaction, because God has set you as a target for His arrows, and in wrath is shooting at you? It may be so. Or you may not be one of His children at all as yet, and He may be tossing you to and fro like a ball, that you may never find rest until you humbly come and cry to Christ, and seek mercy at His hands. Look and see whether it be so. It is of no use to worry about the disaster; search out the cause of it. Strive to learn the lesson which it is meant to teach you. Is there any secret sin with you? Perhaps by looking at the defeat you may learn the way to victory. David judged that if they were defeated by the bow they might yet win by the bow. It is right to learn from our adversaries. There is something to be learnt from Satan. If He goes about, let us be diligent; if He seeks whom He may devour, let us seek whom we may save; and if He watches carefully to find out our weak points, let us watch those whom we would bless to find 867 out how we may best reach their hearts. Many a man has grown rich through poverty, healthy through sickness, and holy by being made conscious of sin. When He has been struck down, then has He cried out to God, and God has lifted Him up. Woe to that man who will not “hear the rod, and Him that has appointed it.” I pray that you may diligently learn the lesson which every disaster would teach. May not a misfortune which happens to a church and to Christian people be to them a call to action-to general action? Saul had a little standing army, and did not drill all the nation for war; but David says, “I will teach all my own tribe the use of the bow.” Now, whenever a church begins to get low, dull, stupid-and many churches go in that direction-when everybody seems to be asleep, and the minister’s sermon is a kind of sanctified snore, and all the worship is steeped in slumber, why, what is to be done? Then is the time to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, and to wake them all up to holy enterprise. Say to them, “You must not allow a few to be doing the work of Christ, but all must do it. You must all be taught the use of the bow.” It was the Glory of the Moravians that all their members were missionaries; and such ought to be the Glory of every church: every man, woman, and child in the church should take part in the battle for Jesus. This, by God’s Grace, is the cure for spiritual decline: teach the people the use of the bow. Let us learn lessons from defeat. Let us learn from the sin which has cast us down to cry unto God, the mighty One, to hold us up. If we are at this time under some great failure in life, let us learn greater care: if we have been permitted to err, let us learn to watch. Do not sullenly confess, “I have done wrong but repent of it, and ask God for Grace that you may be upheld in future, like Peter, who was stronger after His fall than before it, and was set to strengthen His brethren. What is done cannot be undone, but we may so learn from it by God’s teaching that we may never do the like again. May God grant that this may be the case. If it were proper, I could sing to you to-night a song of mourning over the disasters of a soul, or of a church; but I believe that I should not do you half so much good as by stirring you up to learn the use of the bow, that is to say, to rectify your errors, and supply your defects. **III.** Now,

thirdly, another lesson. A NOBLE MONUMENT TO A FRIEND IS TO IMITATE HIS EXCELLENCES. How does that come from the text? Why, thus. When Jonathan and David communed together they fixed the meeting 868 by Jonathan's shooting certain arrows: it is evident that Jonathan was a man who greatly favored the use of the bow; and though His father did not largely introduce it into the army, yet Jonathan was well skilled therein. "Well then," says David, "in memory of Jonathan, instead of piling up a great monument, we will teach the children of Judah the use of the bow." Come, brethren, let this be your memorial to your dear father—if He was a child of God, be like Him. If you want to keep in memory your beloved mother, exhibit in yourselves the virtues that shone in her. That sweet child of your has gone to Heaven, and can never be forgotten, and her likeness hangs over the mantelpiece. I mean that dear little child who sang of Jesus when she died: if you want to remember her beyond all forgetfulness, then love her Savior, and go where little Jane has gone. No memorial is more fit than imitation: be yourself the monument by exhibiting within yourself all that was good in the dear departed one. How specially true is this in connection with our divine Lord! I see the Romanist continually putting up crosses by the roadside, and sometimes on these there are hideous representations of a person dying by crucifixion, and there are nails, and sponge, and spear, and I know not what. This arises out of a natural desire to perpetuate the memory of the crucified Redeemer; but you will do far better, dear brother, if you are yourself crucified with Christ, and if you exhibit in your own person that divine selfdenial, that blessed love, that superlative holiness, which were found in Him. Some will build a church, and lavish money upon architecture. I shall not condemn them, for their splendid generosity may savor of the spirit of that woman who broke the alabaster box, and poured the ointment upon the Savior's feet; but I would suggest that to build up within one's self, by the power of God's Spirit, the Christ-like character is a better memorial than the best piece of architecture that can ever be put together. What if you should employ the greatest of statuaries, and He, with cunning hand, should mould the marble till it emulated life? Would not the monument mainly keep in mind the artist, and rather make men think of the costliness of the work than of anything else? Whereas, if you become yourself, not in marble, but in living flesh, the image of Christ, then men will take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learnt of Him, and this will keep Him best in memory. If we do what Christ would have done under our circumstances, we shall be exhibiting a far better memorial of Him than wealth can possibly purchase. When David taught these people the use of the bow, every time they stringed an arrow they might remember 869 Jonathan; and whenever a regiment of archers went through the streets to the butts they brought Jonathan before the public mind. David instituted this form of royal artillery on purpose that Jonathan might be kept in mind. And you, dear Friends, every time you go forth to do the service of God, obediently and zealously, as Jesus did it, you put men in mind of Jesus, and they say, "God has set these men in the world to be witnesses for Christ, to keep His name alive in the earth. These men are a blessing because Jesus Himself has blessed them." I would thus stir you all up to endeavor all the days of your life so to live and serve God that the name of Jesus Christ shall be kept alive in this nation, and throughout the world. **IV.** Lastly, and but for a moment, I think that the form which this military order took, to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, may be allegorically applied to-night to you, dear Friends. **IT IS A GREAT ADVANTAGE TO BELIEVERS TO LEARN THE USE OF THE BOW SPIRITUALLY.** First, there is the bow of prayer. Its use has not gone out of date; but I wish that all of us knew how to shoot the arrows of the Lord's deliverance much better than we do. Holy men of old would pick out an arrow, and when they had chosen it they knew how to use it. They knew what they wanted, and they prayed for it. They fitted their arrow on the string: that is to say, they took God's promise, the promise that answered to their desire, and fitting the one to the other, they took straight aim at Heaven, and watched the flight of the arrowy petition. They knew to whom they were praying, as well as what they were praying for, and why they expected to be heard; and so they drew the how of prayer with all their might. When the man of God went up to the top of Carmel, and there took His bow and drew it, there was no fear of His missing the mark; or if, perchance, the arrow had not force enough, He would pull the bow a second time, and a third time, and a fourth time, and a seventh time, till at last the arrow struck the mark. He would not come down from His watchtower till He knew that the arrow of His prayer was lodged in Heaven. In all times of tribulation what is wanted is that the children of Judah should know the use of the bow of prayer. When we heard of those fearful assassinations in Ireland, the news reached the bulk of us on the Sabbath-day, and men of God went to their loopholes of retreat, and shot up to Heaven prayers for poor Ireland. It was the best thing that could be done. I have more faith in prayer than in police and prisons. In any time of national need the men that save a nation are the men of prayer. What, not the wise statesmen?

Certainly, wise statesmen; but 870 who makes them wise? God has power over all minds, and, in answer to the prayer from this pulpit, He can visit yonder mind in St. Stephen's. From a humble cottage in the western highlands there may go up to God a cry that shall come down upon the Prime Minister, and direct His thoughts. Remember what Queen Mary used to say when she wanted to bring popery back to Scotland. She said that she was more afraid of John Knox's prayers than of all the armies that the Scottish lords could get together. She was right for once. When men overlook prayer they overlook the greatest factor in human affairs. The mystic rod of God is in the hand of many a Moses still among us—a rod which brings victory to Israel, and defeat Amalek. The strength of the church lies not in the oratory of the pulpit, but in the oratory of the closet. That church of God that shall do most for the world is the church that shall do most with God. He can rule men for God who is ruled by God for men: He that gives up His soul to God that God may write His will upon His life is the mighty man. The man who has had the will of God worked in Him by the Holy Spirit, and can work it out into fervent prayer, is the man who, though princes and potentates know it not, sits nearer to the helm of affairs than they can reach. I could write you a plaintive hymn about the woes of Ireland, and about the sins of men and the evils of the times; but I had far rather teach you the use of the bow of prayer; for then, if you could send your longings up to the Lord, fall many a blessing would come upon the land, and the adversaries of the Lord would be discomforted, and peaceful and happy days would dawn. Perhaps I speak to some here who do not know anything about praying. I dare say that the brother is here who listened to a sermon on Peckham Rye, which was rather a wild one, I am afraid. In that discourse the preacher said to all His congregation that if they would go home and ask God for anything the Lord would give it to them. I cannot endorse so wild a statement. However, this man thought that the preacher having said it, it was true, and having never prayed before in all His life, He put the question to the test of a certain event; and that certain event fell out as He desired. Then He began to tremble, for He judged that assuredly there is a God. Now, I do not say to you, dear Hearers, that whatever all of you shall ask in prayer you shall receive. I would not say that to you ungodly ones. But I do say that if you will ask for mercy and salvation and eternal life, and anything that is promised to believing sinners, you shall have it. I wish you would try the experiment, for you would find that the Lord never breaks a 871 promise. If you read a promise made to a sinner, it is made to you: go and plead it, and the Lord will grant it. I will be surety for Him that He will keep His word. Trust Him and try, and thus learn the use of the bow. God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen. 872 **THE ORPHAN'S FATHER. NO. 1695 DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. "For in you the fatherless finds mercy."—Hosea 14:3.** THE Lord God of Israel, the one only living and true God, has this for a special mark of His character, that in Him the fatherless finds mercy. "A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation." False gods of the heathen are usually notable for their supposed power or cunning, or even for their wickedness, falsehood, lustfulness, and cruelty; but our God, who made the heavens, is the Thrice Holy One. He is the holy God, and He is also full of love. Indeed, it is not only His name, and His character, but His very nature, for "God is love." Among the acts which exhibit His love is this—that He executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed, and specially takes under His wing the defenceless ones, such as the widow and the fatherless. This is very notable if you look into the subject in connection with holy Scripture. We see this soon after the giving of the Law. We have the Law in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; and in the twenty-second chapter of the same book, close upon the heels of the Law, you have God's Word concerning the fatherless. Listen to Jehovah's words: they are strong and forceful; there is a thunder about their sound. "You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If you afflict them in anywise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." These are the words of that Jehovah who spoke the Ten Commandments on Sinai. See how very near to the heart of our God lies the cause of the widow and the fatherless. 873 The Lord gave the Law a second time in the book of Deuteronomy. If you turn to the tenth chapter of that book, at the seventeenth verse, you will find such a statute as this— "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor takes reward: He does execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving Him food and raiment." Those are two strong and striking proofs of the fact that the cause of the fatherless lies near to the heart of God. Laws were made on their behalf, and among the rest was the institution of tithes. I have read some amazing statements upon the divine right of tithes. It seems to be established in the minds of some that if God gave the tithes to Levi He must, therefore, have given them to Episcopalian

ministers: an inference which I fail to see. I should just as soon draw the inference that He had given them to Baptist ministers; certainly it would be no more illogical. The idea of our being priests, or Levites, in order to get compulsory tithes, would be too abhorrent to be entertained for a moment. But while I have often seen the divine right of tithes stated and argued, I have never heard it urged that the tithes should go to those for whom God set them apart under the legal dispensation. Now, if you will turn to Scripture, you will find that the tithe of all the produce of the land was to be given to the Levite and to the stranger, and to the widow and the fatherless; and whenever tithe comes to be properly distributed, if there be any divine right in it at all, it will most certainly be given to the widow and the fatherless. We should agree to its being given in part to the Levite when He turns up, but as we do not know who the Levite is at present, we may keep His portion in abeyance till He appears. But the widow and the fatherless are still here among us, and the poor shall never cease out of the land; and as the institution of the tithe was as much for them as it was for the tribe of Levi, let them have their share. The tribe of Levi had certain rights, because, while the other tribes had each one a portion, that tribe had no inheritance, and therefore took out its share in having a part of the tithe, and certain cities to dwell in. Read Deuteronomy 14:29- “And the Levite, (because He has no part nor inheritance with you,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you doest.” I do not know that Episcopalian clergymen have given up their earthly inheritances any more than Nonconformist ministers, and I cannot therefore see that they have the 874 Levite’s claim; but I see clearly the right of the widow and the fatherless, and I pray that the day may come when they will get their share of what is undoubtedly theirs, if it is anybody’s at all. Another ordinance was made about the widow and the fatherless- that when the people gathered in the harvest, if they omitted a sheaf of corn, they were never to go back for it, but were to leave it for the widow and the fatherless. “When you cuttest down your harvest in your field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, you shall not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” In gathering in the corn the field was not raked, but all that fell was left to the widow and the fatherless. It was expressly commanded that when they gathered the grapes they were never to gather a second time, but were to leave the bunches to be ripened for the widow and the fatherless. “When you beatest your olive-tree, you shall riot go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.” Nobody was forgotten in the divine rule when Jehovah was King in Israel; but especial mention was continually being made of these two classes-the widow and the fatherless, and the poor strangers that happened to be within Israel’s gates. “You shall be kind to the stranger,” said the Lord, “because you were a stranger in the land of Egypt, and you know the heart of a stranger.” I call your special attention to this, and beg you to look through Scripture, and see how again and again God calls upon His people to take care of the widow and the fatherless. Job, that upright man whom God accepted, disclaimed for Himself the charge that He had ever forgotten the widow and the fatherless; and you know how, under the New Testament, it is written, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep Himself unspotted from the world.” It is established, then, that God, even the God of Israel, is one in whom the fatherless finds mercy let us take care of them too. “Be you imitators of God as dear children,” and select as the objects of your charity those whom God specially cares for. This, however, is not my subject at this time. I wish you to become yourselves objects of the divine charity by coming to God as orphans, and putting yourselves under His protection, that you, like the fatherless, may find mercy at His hands. If we ourselves are sad at heart, troubled in spirit, 875 full of needs, full of wants and trials, let us be encouraged to come to God, because in Him the fatherless finds mercy. First, here is encouragement; secondly, here is encouragement as to what to do; and, thirdly, here is encouragement as to what to expect. **I.** First, here is ENCOURAGEMENT. Here is encouragement, though such as none spy out but needy ones. You notice that the people who said, “In you the fatherless finds mercy,” are the people who had fallen by their iniquity, and who were bid to return unto the Lord, saying “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” They were a people who renounced all self-confidence, and cried out, “Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods.” They were a people with whom God’s Holy Spirit had so dealt that they were stripped of their pride, and made conscious of their guilt. Then it was that they spied out this precious fact, that in God the fatherless finds mercy. A tear in the eye is a fine thing to clear it. He that never saw His sin has never seen the mercy of God. David never sang of the lovingkindness and tender mercies of God so well as in that fifty-first Psalm, when He

mourned His great sin. A broken-hearted sinner has a sort of instinct for finding out the tender points in God's character. The ungodly man who is self-satisfied, and has never been made to know the truth about His condition, often likens God to an austere man, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed; but once let the man know His guilt and mourn it, and then He looks with all His eyes to God to spy out mercy in Him; and He is the man who delights to learn that God is merciful to the fatherless. This becomes a fountain of hope to Him. Have I here any sin-stricken sinner? Are you desponding and despairing? Did you come here feeling that there could be no mercy for you? Catch at this word. "In you the fatherless finds mercy. He is a merciful God; He is tender, kind, considerate. He evidently looks after the helpless and hopeless. He is the patron of those whom others desert. Widows without friends, the fatherless without protectors—these are the care of God. May you not hope that He will care for you? May you not in the depth of your sin and brokenness of heart come to Him and say, "O Lord, I hear you are the Friend of the friendless, be a Friend to me"? It looks like a candle put in the window of your Father's house to guide you home through the darkness. May God help you to see it; but I know that you will not care to see it if there is not a tear in your eye, for none but the needy perceive this gracious truth. This encouragement is, moreover, one which is a strong inducement to cast away all other confidences. If God be the Friend of the fatherless, He may be a Friend to me: would it not be well for me to trust Him, and leave off trusting those other things that I have relied upon? You see how the text runs, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses." These were their great trust and confidence, and then they go on to say—neither will we worship false gods, for we can see that the true God is kind, kind to the fatherless ones, and therefore we may come and trust Him. When a man gets some little hope, then He says to Himself, "I will even venture to look to the Lord." When the prodigal son in the far-off country had spent all His living, what was it that brought Him back? Why, it was this thought— "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare!" This made Him resolve to go home again. I know what the devil will do: He will tell you that there is no mercy for you. He is an old liar. There is abundant mercy for the greatest sinner. What does the devil know about it? He never sought mercy, and He has never had any, and never will have any, for He will never seek it; but for you, poor soul, there is bread enough and to spare in your Father's house; and why do you perish with hunger? Why not arise and go unto your Father? If God be the Father of the fatherless, this should induce us to hasten to Him, and rest in Him. "May I trust in Jesus Christ?" says one. "May I?" Of course you may; it is your sin if you do not, and, indeed, the chief and most ruinous of sins. Many of you are trusting in your sacraments and your priests, or in your good works and your prayers, or your own feelings, because you think that you may not trust Christ. But you may! for He who takes the fatherless under His blessed wing invites you to come to Him. "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If He had ever repulsed one, He might repulse you. But since the fatherless find mercy in Him, and all that come to Him find mercy in Him, come along with you, and trust in the merciful One at once. Furthermore, there is much encouragement in my text, because it gives us a clear look into the heart of God. I always like to see how a man treats children. You learn a great deal about a man when you see that. Some men abhor children, and almost wish that they could exterminate them. As to the fatherless children they say, "Let them go to the workhouse: we cannot be troubled with them." The gentle-hearted one never sees a little child in want without feeling the utmost pity. I feel more sorry for a suffering child 877 than even for a man or a woman. Adults have a measure of a power to help themselves; but if there be poverty in the house, the little one may pine away, but it cannot get relief. Little boys and girls have suffered much in this great city when their parents' home has been desolated by poverty, frequently caused by drink and other sins. Who knows the sufferings of the little ones when father dies? I confess it touches my heart that little children should suffer as they do. When men are wicked, one is almost thankful that there should be poverty following their sin to whip them out of it; but these lambs, what have they done? Any tender heart feels this. Is not this a wonderful text which lets us gaze into the heart of God while we read, "In you the fatherless finds mercy"? Great God, the seraphim adore you. Angels, day without night, in serried ranks stand waiting to do your bidding. Your voice is the thunder, and the glance of your eye is the lightning. At your bidding kings die, dynasties decay, and empires are blotted out, and yet you carest for little children and widows. It is very beautiful to me. I feel as if I could trust Him all the better for that, and come with my daily burden and daily cares— yes, and my sins too, and feel sure that He will not refuse me. This is the Father of Jesus, I am sure of it. Oh, how like the Son is to the Father, for if the Father is thus the children's Patron, what think you of the Son, and of His likeness to His Father, when He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Does

not this encourage you to come, as you see the heart of God laid bare in the blessed statement of the text, “In you the fatherless finds mercy”? There is this encouragement too, that our cases are like those of the widow and the fatherless. The orphan has no father, no helper, no means of sustenance. And you, my hearer, are in that state, without God. If there be no God, you have no father. If you have no God to trust to, you have no protector, and you are undone. There is no light for you if God be not your light, no hope for you if Christ be not your hope. Do you feel that? Well, then, you are an orphan; you are a fatherless one. Come along, for Jesus has said, “I will not leave you orphans. I will come unto you.” Come to Him, and look up into the face of the orphan’s Father, and say, I plead that word of your, “In you the fatherless finds mercy.” Lord, let me find mercy, for my case runs parallel with theirs. If there is a heart here that wants encouraging, it will spell out my meaning. But if you do not need it, and some of you do not, for you are fine fellows, full of your own righteousness, then I have nothing to say to you but this, 878 “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” **II.** Secondly, for every poor, needy sinner here is ENCOURAGEMENT AS TO WHAT TO DO. First, if you want to find salvation to-night, take the text as a sort of spiritual guide-book, and plead your need. Do not say anything about your merits: the less said about them the better. Your position is like that of the Irish servant, who said, when asked for His character, that the gentleman at His last place told Him He would do better without His character than with it. You are just in that case, only that you will be asked for your character, and the best thing you can do is to say, “My character is as bad as it can be”; and then plead for mercy. “Lord,” it says in the text, “in you the fatherless finds mercy. It does not say that they are good and holy, but simply that they are fatherless. It does not say that they find reward, but that they find mercy. Lord, that is all I have to say to you. I am in need—I am in awful need; and because I am such a sinner, it makes my need all the worse, for that is where my need lies; I need righteousness; I need a new heart; I need a right spirit. I need a total change. I need everything, for I have nothing but sin and misery. O Lord, I only urge that as you do help the fatherless, simply and only because they are needy, I pray you save me irrespective of my character, for my need is great. The next lesson for you is this; be sure to take a hold of this text by the handle, and ask for mercy. “In you the fatherless finds,” -what? Findeth mercy. Mercy is the handle of the text. When you go to God, ask for mercy, not for justice. A mother once went to the Emperor Napoleon to ask for mercy for her son. He had committed some breach of the French Law; and the emperor replied, “Madam, this is the second time the boy has offended; justice requires that He should die,” She answered, “Sire, I did not come to ask for justice. I beg for mercy.” He answered, “He does not deserve mercy.” “Sire,” said she, “it would not be mercy if He deserved it. I ask for mercy.” When she put it in that way, the emperor replied, “Well, then, I will have mercy.” My unsaved hearer, you deserve to be in Hell tonight. It is of the Lord’s mercy that you are not consumed. Do not dream of asking for justice, for justice will be your ruin; but get a hold of this word, “Lord, I ask for mercy,” and if something whispers, “Why, you have been a hardened sinner,” say, “Lord, it is true; but Lord, I ask for mercy.” “But you have been a backslider.” Reply, “Lord, that I have; but I ask for 879 mercy on that account.” “But you have resisted and rejected Grace.” “Lord, that is true; but I shall want all the more mercy because of that.” “But there is nothing in you to argue for forgiveness.” Say, “Lord, I know there is not, and that is why I ask for mercy. I put it wholly on that ground. Display your mercy in me, I beseech you.” That is the way to plead. Mind you keep to it. That is the straight way. You will get Heaven so, for you will get Christ so, since His mercy endures for ever. “In you the fatherless finds mercy.” Learn another lesson, you that want to get peace with God at once, and I hope that some of you do. Cast your sin, trial, and sorrow upon God. The text says, “In you the fatherless finds mercy;” so the business of the fatherless ones is to come to God, and just look to Him for mercy; and that is your business. Do not, I charge you, look to anybody else but the living God to help you. It is a snare, and a horrible one, for people to trust to priests; and I will say, in addition to that, to trust to ministers, to trust to any man whatever. I have known persons when they have heard an address and have been impressed, to say, “Oh, I shall find Christ in the enquiryroom!” That enquiry-room may be a snare to you if you talk thus. You want to speak to the man who preached to you, do you? Do not speak to Him; go to Jesus direct. “But I wish to see that good man who spoke to me the other day.” Very well, so you may by-and-by, but mind you do not put that good man or that good woman in the place of Christ. The text says, “In you the fatherless finds mercy,” and it is in Christ, and in Him alone, that mercy is to be found. Go directly and distinctly to Jesus, and, by the help of His Spirit, you can do that while sitting in the pew. God is everywhere. Let your spirit be conscious that God is present, and now let your heart speak to Him. To Him confess your sin do not pour that rubbish into the ear of mortal man. To God lay bare your heart, and to

Him alone it is not a fit sight for any human being. Tell the Lord Jesus all your wants and woes, and He will help you, for in the Son of God is the help of the sons of men. Oh, that I knew how to speak these things, but they will surely go home to those who are in spiritual need! You that are not in need, you that are good, you that are self-righteous, will see nothing in the text for you. No, and there was not meant to be, for the Lord has a people that He will draw unto Himself, and these people are known by this-that they are weary of themselves. God's chosen people exercise the natural are of the weak, namely, clinging. They are made to feel their poverty and their need, and then when they 880 hear of the fullness of Christ they haste to lay hold on Him. Have you never noticed how the plants that God has made weak are all endowed with a natural faculty for clinging? One of the first things that the vine does is to put forth its tendrils for something to cling to. The hop, the woodhine, the sweet pea, they have all a little hook ready to lay hold on a support. Now, if God is about to bless you at this hour, you have a little tendril that is being put out to find something to lay hold of, and as the gardener carefully puts His stick for the sweet pea, or as the farmer puts His pole for the hop, I have tried to set my text in your way. I would set the blessed Lord before you, and say, In Him the fatherless finds mercy, cling to Him; cling to Him. It is your life to do it. Cling firmly! The limpet by the sea-shore can do little, but it can cling, and so it does cling, and very firmly too. That is the one thing you can do, poor sinner, and I pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to do it at once. God help you at this moment to cling to Christ, and if you do, you are saved, yes, saved at once. In Him the fatherless finds mercy. Cling to Him, and you shall find mercy too. **III.** Now, lastly, here is ENCOURAGEMENT AS TO WHAT TO EXPECT OF GOD. "In you the fatherless finds mercy." What do the fatherless expect of us when we stand in God's place to them, and take them into our Orphanage, and try to be as a father to them? What do they expect of us? Well, I do not know that the younger ones have intellect enough to know all they expect, but they expect everything. They expect all that they want, and, though they do not quite know what they do want, they leave it to us. They believe that all will be found that they require. I like a poor Christian who does not know all He wants; but yet knows that His God will supply all His needs. He trusts Jesus for all. He trusts His heavenly Father as a child: He does not know what He may require to-day, and require in the unknown future, but then His heavenly Father knows, and He leaves it all to Him. As our orphan boys grow older, however, they begin to have a perception of their wants, and they trust that they shall have everything provided which their own fathers would have provided for them, and more, perhaps. So is it with us when we come to the great Father. We say: all that I would provide for my children, if I had everything, and could give them all that wisdom could desire, my God will provide for me, for He will be a Father to me. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more shall He, who has taken you into His family, though you once were fatherless, give all good things to you. You shall have food and raiment, and sufficient for this life. You 881 shall have protection, guidance, instruction, and tender affection. You shall have a touch or two of the rod every now and then, and that is among your choice mercies; but you shall also have all the cherishing of His sweet love; and by-and-by, when you are fit for it, He will take you home from school, and you shall see His face, and you shall live for ever in His house above, where the many mansions be. Oh, if you come and put yourselves by a simple faith into the blessed custody and keeping of God, He will admit you into His Salvation Orphanage, and He will take care of you, and you shall find Him a better Father than you will be to your own children-a better Father than the best of fathers could ever be to the best beloved of sons. "I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." I will not say more, but I should like to leave John's choice sentence as my last word. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should He called the sons of God!" Blessed be your name, O Lord, that we also have been led of your Spirit to prove that in you the fatherless finds mercy! 882 **THE BIRD ESCAPED FROM THE SNARE, NO. 1696 DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."-Psalm 124:7.** THIS text describes a soul-matter. The Psalmist is not speaking of a temporal deliverance, although even in that sense an escape from death would be a theme worthy of His sweetest song. He says, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers," thus denoting a spiritual rescue. The man's soul is the soul of the man; and though some give all their attention to the body, their folly is great. It is as though a man should spend all His substance upon His house, and have no bread for Himself to eat. Do I speak to any who never think about their souls? Do you really believe that you will die like dogs and horses? I cannot believe that you have such brutal views of yourself. Believe me, you have within you an immortal spirit, which will outlive the sun. If you have hitherto been

careless of your nobler part, may God's Spirit teach you wisdom. I pray that you may so think of your soul that our text may become deeply interesting to you, so that you may join in its song of deliverance. I have called the text a song; does it not read like one? "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." It is a canticle of certainty. It does not say, "We hope that we have escaped, and we trust that the snare is broken;" but "The snare is broken, and we are escaped." "ifs" and "buts" make no music. Poetry flees when peradventures enter. Certainties are melodies. We hear people speak of "dead certainties," but the Christian rejoices in living certainties, and is 883 wretched till they are His own. Rise then, my beloved, above the fogs and mists which cover the marshes of carnal questioning; climb the mountains of full assurance, and stand there with your foreheads bathed in sunlight, breathing that serene atmosphere which is untainted by a cloud of doubt. The text reads like a song, not only because of its certainty, but also because of its joy. It has the wing and the throat of a lark; see how it rises from the net to God—"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers," Anon it takes another rise—"The snare is broken." And it mounts yet again with still greater joy—"And we are escaped." The words melt away into the music of Heaven as the spirit perfectly escapes from the snares of earth. The metaphor used in the text is simple, but yet beautiful and instructive. Pardon me if I make as much of it as I am able to do. First, we have here the bird; secondly, the snare; thirdly, the capture; and fourthly, the escape we may then add a lesson from it all. **I.** First, we have here the soul compared to A BIRD. It is a little bird too—a sparrow, or one of the sparrow kind. "Our soul is escaped as a little bird"—not as a great bird that could break the net and free itself by its own force. A little bird fitly represents our soul when we are lowly in heart. In our unregenerate condition we think ourselves eaglets at the very least, but we are not great creatures after all. We talk of great men: we are all little in God's sight. "Lord, what is man, that you are mindful of Him?" Sparrows were very cheap in our Lord's day because of their littleness; in the market you could buy two for a farthing, and five for two farthings, so that they threw an odd bird in when you bought at such a wholesale rate as two farthings' worth. Sparrows were inconsiderable things, "yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father," If He cares for sparrows, be sure He cares for souls, and when you think least of yourself, yet believe that the Lord regards you. Again, our soul is like a little bird because it is so ignorant. Birds know little about snares, yet they know so much that "surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Even this slender wisdom is more than men display, for they fly into the net when it is spread in their sight; yes, into the same net out of which, in God's Providence, they have just been permitted to escape. Man naturally is the essence of folly; and He is desperately set on destroying Himself. He must "see life," He says, and 884 therefore He haunts the gates of death. He reckons the fowler to be His friend, and dreams that He spreads His nets for purposes of friendly hospitality. He does not know that the fowler is hunting for His life, and will destroy Him if He can. So foolish are we and ignorant, we are as birds ready for the lure, till the Lord teaches us wisdom; and even then we need hourly keeping, or we are entrapped by the destroyer. Our soul is often like a little bird because it is so eager and venturesome. How birds will trust themselves in winter around traps of the simplest kind if but a few crumbs are used as bait! Alas, men are equally foolhardy: they see others perish, yet they follow their ways. Many sip of the intoxicating cup, yet declare they will never be drunkards; they pilfer littles, and yet despise a thief; they indulge in wanton words, but vow to be chaste as snow; they go into questionable places of amusement, and hope to remain pure. Oh, silly birds! I mean silly souls! Thus the fowler fills His bags. Young people associate with ungodly persons, and say, "We are not so weak-minded as to be led away by them"; thus displaying a weak mind by that boastful speech. Youths tell us that to read skeptical books, and impure novels, and to hear lewd songs and spicy language will do them no harm. Believe no such flattering falsehoods, or you will rue the day. "You don't catch old birds with chaff," says the simpleton; and He hops into the net. "Younger birds must not come here," says He; "it is dangerous for them, but I am safe enough." Yet old birds' necks are wrung as well as those of young birds; and experienced men are as foolish as the juveniles. When a man says, "It is no temptation to me," it may be true, for soot will not blacken a sweep. Little birds, beware: the fowler promises pleasure, but the end thereof is death. The little bird, also, when once taken in the net, is a good comparison with the soul captured by sin, for it is defenceless. What can it do? A mouse might eat the ropes and set free the lion, but no mouse will liberate the sparrow. He will have a short flutter, and we shall hear no more of Him. When a man is birdlimed by a vice, the more He flutters the faster He is held by it. What is more defenceless than a soul in the net of sin? What little power men seem to have against their habits! They boast that they can stop anywhere-but, alas, they stop nowhere. "Oh, I have only to come to a determination." Yes, "only to come to a determination"; but to that

determination you will not come. When men become entangled in the meshes of sin, their power to escape is gone. Jeremiah asks- "Can the Ethiopian change His skin, or the leopard His spots? Then may you also do 885 good, that are accustomed to do evil." Such is the entanglement of habit, the slavery of lust. While they are thus defenceless, we must notice, too, how alarmed they often are. The bird is no sooner in the net than He is frightened. Poor thing, how gladly would He escape if He could! Souls are not always so. They will be taken in Satan's snares, and yet say that they are happy. Custom in sin kills conscience of sin, "A short life and a merry one," say they, as if there could be any true merriment anywhere except in the great Father's house, where they begin to be merry, as if they had never been merry before. Many souls have enough of conscience, and of enlightenment by the word, to alarm them when they find themselves entangled in sin; and then they beat about, and hurt themselves, but, alas! notwithstanding all their efforts, unless a stronger hand than theirs shall break the net, they will perish by the fowler's hand. Our souls, once more, are like to birds because they are the objects of snares. If the Pharisees would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, certainly Satan will compass all the universe to ruin a single soul, for He delights in destroying the souls of men. Nor is it Satan only, for all the world seems to have taken to this fowling; and men who would not lift a finger to save their fellows will go far to ruin them. Oh, little birds, there is no place on earth safe for you till Jesus covers you with His protecting wing! II. Secondly, we will now speak of THE SNARE. The text speaks twice of the snare. It is wonderful what a variety of snares there are for birds. The tombs of Egypt exhibit the art of bird-catching, and show us decoys, traps, nets, and so forth. Such arts are still practiced by fowlers. The main point about the snare is that it is concealed. So, when the archfowler comes after the souls of men, He will not usually spread His net in their sight. Some silly birds can be taken in that way, but the most of souls need that the temptation should be veiled. Always suspect that in a temptation to sin there is more than you can see. Never say that it is a little thing; for great evil lurks in a little fault. Death and destruction hide under apparently small offenses. Oh, if we could see everything as God sees it, then we poor silly souls might be in far less danger! But, alas, Satan covers the hook with a tempting bait, and we are taken. 886 Snares and traps are usually attractive. The poor bird sees seeds which He is fond of, and He goes for them, little judging that He is to give His life in exchange for brief enjoyment. So is it with Satan. He tempts us with pleasures, with the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life: we taste the sweet, and are pierced with the smart. Did we perceive the intent of the great enemy of souls we should fly from sin. You know the old sentence, "Fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts": even so fear a temptation to sin, even should it offer you all the kingdoms of this world. May God keep us from the attractions which conceal the snare! But Satan's snares, like the fowler's, are sadly effectual. Look at the quantities of small birds that will be found for sale in the markets: fowlers must be exceedingly skillful to catch all these. If we could walk through Satan's market, what a multitude of souls should we see in His bands! Multitudes upon multitudes are the victims of their own passions, victims of that hellish art which makes evil appear to be good. God save us from being taken in these most deadly snares! What are these snares? I cannot mention them all, for they are legion. Snares tuck our bed, and snares attend our board. Snares are in the street, and snares are in the field. Snares are on the table, snares are in our daily walk. But the chief among them are temptations to sin. The Evil One endeavors to lead us into a false way, which will be congenial to our taste. We have each a peculiar weakness, and He knows how to adapt Himself to it. He has been a student of human nature for so long a time that He knows more about man than man knows about Himself, and He, therefore, chooses that bait which is most likely to attract us, Oh that we may have Grace to keep clear of pleasurable sin! The rabbis said to the Nazarite who was not to drink wine or strong drink, "O Nazarite, go about, go about; and do not pass through a vineyard." So, child of God, it will be well for you to go about, and not enter into temptation. Your Master bids you pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Against temptation we are to watch and pray as well as against the sin that is likely to come of it. Another snare is erroneous doctrine. There is plenty of that abroad at this time. Be warned. You can have doctrine high, and doctrine low; doctrine broad, and doctrine narrow. You can have it how you like, for nowadays every man makes His own Gospel, and sits in judgment upon the Word of God. Dearly beloved, hold fast the truth, and be not decoyed by error. If any come with a new Gospel, turn away your ear from their deceptive 887 teaching; for false doctrine is the poison of asps, and the venom of Hell lies therein. Even Christian people are in danger from another snare, namely, deceitful action. The tempter whispers, "You need not do cvii, but there are different ways of judging right and wrong, and it is best to go by the custom of the trade," Satan puts things very prettily when He means to ruin us. You have somebody else's money entrusted to you. Of course, you would

not steal it: but you can use it for a little, and then replace it. It is true, if it should be lost, people will call you a thief; but then you are not going to lose it: you are going to double it by your cleverness. That is the snare. At other times the temptation is in this form— “Be sure to buy the thing if you would like it, though you have no money with which to pay for it.” You would not steal. No, no; there is another way of doing it. Buy it, and do not pay for it. This is one of the snares with which Satan seduces men, till they are ruined. Ah, me, that men should be so moved from their integrity! Oh, child of God, be upright in everything! However well you may gloss a matter over, and however much others may excuse it, yet if a certain act would be wrong in the sight of God, you must not think of it. I have noticed another snare. Satan tries to get Christian people to ape the experience of others. A certain good man is often melancholy. “Ah,” says Satan, “that is how you ought to be: you ought to be bowed down with holy sorrow.” I remember right well when I was a youth hearing a preacher say that it was dangerous to be sure of our salvation; and He preached up the duty, and beauty, and sweetness of being everlastingly in doubt as to your condition. A few people would gather around such a preacher, and sit and have a little comfortable misery all to themselves, and think that they were worshipping God. Now, that is a snare to a Christian, because He has a right to be glad, and “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” May we be kept out of that snare! On the other hand, anxious people see Christians who are advanced in Grace and full of faith, while they themselves are much cast down; then the Evil One whispers, “You are not like those good men: you are no Christian.” Brother, you cannot have another man’s experience any more than you can wear another man’s face. Certain lovely ferns grow best in the shade, and never flourish in the sun; while many flowers cannot have too much sunlight. Do not wish to be like this man or that man, but pray God to make you like Jesus Christ, and to let your experience glorify His blessed name; otherwise the desire to copy others will be a snare to you. 888 Thus I might go on mentioning snares. They are some of them gross and carnal; but for the spiritual there are snares so neat and pretty that they are apt to be taken in them before they are aware. According to Pliny, the nets in which the Egyptians took little birds were frequently so fine that one person could carry a net large enough to encompass a whole wood. Surely, it must have been a small wood, and even then it is a remarkable statement for so reliable a writer to have made. We may here see an illustration of the delicacy of those temptations with which Satan surrounds the nobler order of minds. Strong as iron, yet filmy as gauze, are the snares for spiritual men. Why, Satan can encompass a whole church with one of those nets, and you scarcely know that it is there; and yet the minds within its meshes are quite unable to mount up and sing unto their Lord, as once they did, for they are within an invisible net. **III.** We cannot further dwell on the subject of the snare, but we must turn to consider THE CAPTURE. Birds are taken in nets, and souls are taken by temptations to sin, and by errors of doctrine, and by a thousand other methods. Dear Friends, it is a dreadful thing for the poor little bird when it is taken, especially when it is so anxious to escape that it heats itself; and hurts itself in its efforts to get free. How came it to be taken? It may have been taken through hunger. Half-starved, it dashed into peril for necessary food. Many true men are in such straits and difficulties that they are sadly liable to be brought into the net thereby. Dear brethren, pray God to deliver you from poverty and from great riches, for there are perilous snares about each of those positions. May you be neither exalted nor depressed, but preserved in the middle path of experience. If you are extremely needy, you may be tempted to do wrong to provide for your wife and family; I pray that you may never yield to the temptation, but trust in God, and He will deliver you without your putting forth your hand unto iniquity. Other birds are taken merely by their appetite. They are not excessively hungry, but they enjoy certain choice seeds, and the fowler knows it; and He scatters such around the trap. Ease of body, indulgence of taste, the joy of being admired, the sweets of power and position, all these and many more have been the fowler’s baits. Hundreds have all that heart ought to wish for, but they must needs be rich, and therefore fall into a thousand snares which they might have avoided. Men are snared by eating and by 889 drinking, by fine raiment and by vainglorious display. Snares lie thickly around the appetites of the body and the longings of the mind. Some persons are entrapped by fear. Birds have rushed into the net for fear of danger; many persons have become great offenders against God through lack of moral courage. They are afraid of the laughter of fools. They cannot bear the sarcasm of the so-called wise; and so they suppress truth, and join in sin to escape scorn. God give us a holy bravery with which to defy every man’s opinion when we know that we are obeying the Lord. Some little birds are lost by love of company. The fowler has a decoybird which sings sweetly or coquetts pleasantly, and the other birds must needs follow it. In the church of God we lose many members by ungodly marriages. The worldling pipes His pretty note, and the tender heart is taken by it. The fair enthusiast says, “I shall convert Him but it is very, very seldom that this happens; it is

usually the other way. This is a snare of Satan in which many are taken. Thus you see how souls are captured. Perhaps I am speaking to one here who has flown into the net. You do not know what to do, friend; for you are quite helpless to break your bonds. You went in very eagerly, and, oh, how eagerly you would get out again if you could! But you cannot escape. Your own helplessness is now apparent as it never was before. One thing, however, you can do: you can cry to One who is stronger than you. You can pray the Lord to pluck your feet out of the net; and He is able to do it, for all things are possible with Him. **IV.** Just a word or two upon THE ESCAPE. This is a very blessed text, although the sermon has been gloomy so far; for now we shall see the fowler disappointed, and the captive let loose. I wish that everybody here could repeat the utterance, and cry, Our soul is escaped. We were in the net, but our soul has escaped. The snare is broken; it has no power over us any longer; we are free from its grasp, we have escaped. Up, up, we soar, away from the fowler and His nets. Glory be to God, we have escaped. *“As when the fowler’s snare is broke, The bird escapes on cheerful wings My soul, set free from Satan’s yoke, With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings.”*⁸⁹⁰ This escape is due to God alone. As the bird could not get out of the snare, so the soul cannot escape from temptation; but God can bring it out, and He works the rescue. Hear this, you that are slaves to drunkenness: God can deliver you. You that have fallen into licentiousness hear it—God can deliver you. Whatever the sin that has birdlimed you, that gracious hand which once was nailed to the cross can set you free. Up, up, up, you that pine on the borders of despair! Jesus can deliver you. He that made the world out of nothing can make a joyful Christian even out of you. He can turn your mourning into dancing, and your despair into confidence. This escape is achieved by power. That word “broken” has force in it. “The snare is broken,”—the meshes torn with a strong hand, the steel trap dashed in pieces. It matters not what danger you are in, there is power enough in God to fetch you out of it. I thought once that God could never save me. I supposed that He would bless my brother and my sisters, but that He would leave me; yet He did save me, blessed be His name! And you, too, He is able to deliver. “Oh, but I am the odd man,” cries one. Then there are two of us; and if God has saved one odd man He can surely save another; and why should He not save you despite all your eccentricity? “But I do not think that He will save me.” What are your thoughts worth? He can save even you. Only trust Him, though you be in the net, and out of that net you shall be fetched, for He leaves no soul to perish that puts its trust in Him. Observe that the escape was complete: “the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” As long as a little bird has the tiniest bit of cotton tied to its leg, and that is fastened anywhere, the bird has not escaped. And as long as you have one evil habit—one wrong thing that you really love—you have not clean escaped. You must be altogether separated from your sins, No man can be married to Christ till He is divorced from sin. Our deliverance must be entire, or it is not true. Who can give us this but the Lord Jesus Christ by His blessed Spirit? Trust Him to set you free, and no net shall hold you. I would again put the question, “How many of us can say, We have escaped?” Let us sing unto the Lord, if we can; and let those who cannot say that they are free, continue to plead earnestly with God that He would deliver them. **V.** I would close with THE LESSON which this subject ought to teach us. A word or two only. ⁸⁹¹ It ought to teach us, first, to sing, for if a bird gets out of the net, does it not sing? How glad it seems to be when once it flies away! Oh, you that have been delivered from sin and Satan, sing unto the Lord! Praise and bless His name. Be as happy as possible. Be something more than full of happiness. How can that be? Why, be so full of it that it overflows and cheers others. Let us communicate our joy as far as ever we can, for we are escaped. We are escaped, and we will praise the blessed God who broke the snare. Next, let us trust, for if the Lord has saved us from the dreadful snare of sin and Satan, He will save us from everything else. It is sad to me that any should trust the Lord with their souls, and yet they cannot trust Him for their daily bread, or for help in their daily trials. This must not be. If the Lord has given our soul so great an escape, depend upon it He will take care of our bodies. He that gave us Jesus will give us food and raiment, and let us be therewith content. Lastly, let us watch. If we have fallen into the snare once, let us keep our eyes open not to go there again. May the Holy Spirit prevent any child of God from turning aside even for a moment from the straight way. “Let them not turn again to folly,” is one of God’s own cautions to His people. He has brought you up out of the horrible pit; do not play near the edge of it. He has set your feet on a rock; what have you to do with the miry clay? Get away from the slippery ground, and on the rock let your goings be established. I would say again to you netted ones—you that are really caught in the trap, and held fast: oh, that the Lord would come at once, and set you free! I think He will, yes, I am sure that He will if you cry to Him to do so. I have heard of a sailor who had been in prison, that after His release, He had money in His pocket, and going over London-bridge, He saw a man selling birds—thrushes, larks, and so on. “What do you want for that lot?” said Jack. I forget how much it

was, but Jack found the money; and as soon as the birds were His He opened the door, and let them all fly away. The man called out “Whatever did you buy those birds for, and then let them out?” “Oh,” said the sailor, “if you had been in prison as I have been you would be sure to set everything free you could get a hold of.” You and I ought to display the same kind of feeling towards all poor bondaged souls. I am sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is more tender-hearted than we are; and therefore He will certainly come and set free all prisoners who beg Him to 892 open their cage doors. He is the great Emancipator: show Him your bonds, and beg for liberty, and He will grant it you. 893 **THE WORD OF A KING. NO. 1697 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON. AT THE OPENING OF A NEW BAPTIST CHAPEL, TRINITYROAD, UPPER TOOTING. “Where the word of king is, there is power.”-Ecclesiastes 8:4.** KINGS in Solomon’s day had a vast amount of power, for their word was absolute. They did according to their own will, and none could check them; for, as Solomon said, “the king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh Him to anger sins against His own soul.” When such a monarch happened to be wise and good, it was a great blessing to the people; for “a king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with His eyes.” But if He was of a hard, tyrannical nature, His subjects were mere slaves, and groaned beneath a yoke of iron. We do not sufficiently give thanks for the blessings of a constitutional government, but if we were for a season put beneath the power of a grinding despotism we should set more store by those liberties for which we have to thank our Puritan ancestors. Mercies are seldom appreciated till they are taken away. May we not prove ungrateful under free institutions, for if so, we shall be more brutish than any men. There is, however, blessed be the Lord, one King whose power we do not wish in any degree to limit or circumscribe. God does as He wills amongst the armies of Heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of this lower world; none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest you? In this we greatly rejoice. The personal rule of one individual would be the best form of government if that individual were perfectly good, infinitely wise, and abundant in power; and the reason why an autocrat turns into a despot is, that there is no man who is perfectly good, unselfish, or wise. God has no fault or failing; and therefore it is a joy that He does according to His will. He never wills anything that is not strictly just: in the exercise of absolute sovereignty He is neither unjust nor unmerciful; it is not possible to Him to 894 err, and therefore it is a great subject for joy that “the Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty. The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yes, the Lord sitteth King for ever and ever; let Israel rejoice, and let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof.” Now, because God is the absolute Monarch, His word has power about it, and of that word of power I am going to speak at this time. May the Holy Spirit help us to think of the power of God’s Word for four purposes first, to excite our awe; secondly, to ensure our obedience, thirdly, to inspire our confidence; and fourthly, to direct our efforts. **I.** First, we would see the power of the word of the Lord in order TO EXCITE OUR AWE OF HIM. What are we poor creatures of a day? What is there in us as we appear in God’s sight? Do we not pass away as the flower of the field? As for our word, what is it? We sometimes talk exceedingly proudly, and we say “shall” and “will” as if we could do anything; when, after all, our word is but breath, a vapor, a mere sound in the air. Man proposes, but God disposes; man resolves, but God dissolves; that which man expecteth God rejecteth; for the word of the Lord stands for ever, but man passes away and is not. Think of the day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of days, and when God dwelt all alone; then He willed in His mind that there should be a world created. “He spoke, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast.” “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” What a word is that which created all things! And remember that this same word can destroy all things: for “the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” If He were but to speak, all things that are would melt away as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, and is lost for ever. “You turnest man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men”; and at that irresistible word man’s spirit returns to God who gave it, and His body moulders into dust. When the Lord created He used no hand of cherubim or seraphim: all that we read in the sublimely simple record of Genesis is, “God said, let there be,” and there was. His word accomplished all, and when He wills to destroy either one man or a million His word is able to work His will. What 895 a mighty word was that which in one night cut off the host of Sennacherib, and slew the first-born of Egypt! The word of the Lord commanded the water-floods, and they drowned a guilty world, and that same word rained fire from Heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah; even so in the last day, when the word shall go forth from

Him, He shall shake not only the earth, but also Heaven, and at His word of power both Heaven and earth shall flee away. Great God, we do adore you, for you are both Creator and Destroyer by Your Word! Think how God's Word both makes alive and kills. He promised Abraham that He should have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It seemed impossible that there should come from Him a son that should be the founder of a race—His body was dead, and Sarah was old—yet God in due time made them to laugh, for Isaac was born into the house. "The Lord setteth the solitary in families." He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." It is the Lord who makes alive, and equally is it the Lord who kills. It only needs God to will it and the pestilence lays men low in heaps, like the grass of the meadow when the mower's scythe has passed over it. The Lord has but to call for pestilence or war, and myriads of men are laid low. If He wills to chasten by famine, He calls for devouring insects, and they invade the land; and this Joel attributes to the word of Jehovah, when He says, "And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executeth His word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Oh, how we ought to worship you, you dread Supreme, upon whose word life and death are made to hang! I might in another division of this part of my subject remind you of the power which attends both His promises, and His threats. God has never promised without performing in due time to the last jot and tittle. Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He commanded, and shall it not come to pass? The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; He turns not from His covenant engagements, and swerves not from the performance of His word. Those that have resisted Him have found His threats to be true also: let Pharaoh confess how the plagues followed fast upon the word of the Lord till even His stout heart was melted within Him. Men have gone on for awhile resisting God, and in their pride they have laughed Him to scorn, but by-and-by He has spoken to them in His 896 wrath, and vexed them in His hot displeasure. Who can stand against this terrible God, whose word overthroweth the mighty, and casts the proud beneath His feet? There is power in God's Word to foretell, so that, when He tells what is to be in the future, we know that it shall come to pass. "Seek you out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate." Thus says the Lord, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." In the word of the Lord also there is power to predestinate as well as to foretell, so that what He decrees is fixed and certain. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The Lord has said it, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Let this be your joy to-day, that whatever is promised of the latter day, and of the Glory that is to be revealed, is sure to come to pass, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. It seems impossible that the heathen should ever be the Lord's, or that the uttermost parts of the earth should be Christ's possession; but it will be, for the King has said it, and "Where the word of a king is, there is power." We fear that the time will never arrive when peace shall reign through all the world, and when men shall hang the helmet in the hall, and study war no more; but the vision of faith shall yet become a fact, for "Where the word of a king is, there is power." He spoke of old of Edom and Moab, Philistia and Ammon, Nineveh and Babylon, Greece and Rome, and whatever He has spoken has been fulfilled. Not one word of the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel has failed of its accomplishment, and we may be sure that not one glorious vision of the seer of Patmos will remain a dream. Let us worship the great Ordainer, Benefactor, and Ruler, whose every word is the word of a king, in which there is power. ***"His very word of Grace is strong As that which built the skies The voice that rolls the stars along Speaks all the promises."*** II. Secondly, we would think of the power of God's Word in order TO ENSURE OUR OBEDIENCE TO IT. Whenever God gives a word of command it comes to us clothed with authority, and its power over our minds should be immediate and unquestioned. I hope that in laying the foundation of the spiritual building that is to be erected in connection with this place you will take care to do it according to the directions of the divine statute-book. 897 One is our Master, even Christ, and we have to do our Master's will, not our own. Some Christian people do not view the authority of God's Word as paramount; but consult human leaders or their predilections. This is to begin with the word of man, a weak and sandy foundation; I beseech you do not so. To Christians the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice. Our doctrine is of authority because it is God's Word, and for no other reason. Our ordinances are valid because instituted by God's Word: they are idle ceremonies if they be not so commanded. All the rites, rules, and regulations of man are of no value. The book of human decrees is not to be regarded in the church of Christ. You may put in the front of it, "printed by authority," but to the church of Christ it has no authority. You may adopt a creed as the standard of any particular church, but that gives it no authority to bind the conscience: it may be authorized by princes, bishops, and holy men, but wherein it differs from the

word of the Lord, or adds thereto, it is to the children of God as a puff of wind. The sole authority in the church is Christ Himself: He is the Head of His church, and His word is the only authority by which we are ruled; for “where the word of a king is, there is power,” but all are usurpers who act as lords in the church, where Jesus alone is Master and Lord. Christians should more diligently search the word to find out what the will of the Lord is on all matters affecting their everyday life. A loyal subject of the great King wants to know what the King would have Him do: when He knows it, it is not for Him to question or to cavil, but to obey. Brethren, let us obey in all things the King’s word, and give to His holy word the honor that it justly claims, for “where the word of a king is, there is power.” Every precept that He gives He intends us to keep; He does not ordain it that we may question it; He commands that we may obey. Let me refer you to what Solomon says in the second verse of this chapter, “I counsel you to keep the king’s commandment.” This is admirable counsel for every Christian: if the commandment were of men, even the wisest of men, we might break it, and perhaps do right in breaking it; but if it be the King who gives the command, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King in Zion, then the advice of the Preacher is wise and weighty—“I counsel you to keep the king’s commandment.” Perhaps some of you would ask me this afternoon, “What is the best course for me to pursue in certain difficult cases?” “I counsel you to keep the King’s commandment.” “But I am a young man just beginning life, and may get into trouble if I am rigidly scrupulous in doing that which is right.” “I counsel you to keep the 898 King’s commandment.” “But at this present time I may lose my situation if I keep all His statutes. Could I not wink rather hard, and forget one of the commandments for a little while?” “I counsel you to keep the King’s commandment.” If He be a King, then it is a solemn hazard to your soul if you come short of the least of His commandments. Remember that one treason makes a traitor; one leak sinks a ship; one fly spoils the whole box of ointment. He that bought us with His blood deserves to be obeyed in all things with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Such a King as we have ought never to hear us ask the reason why He commands, but we should be like the brave men of Balaclava, of whom the poet said—“Theirs not to reason why, *Theirs not to make reply, Theirs but to dare and die.*” Solomon goes on to say, “Be not hasty to go out of His sight.” There is such power in God’s Word that I would have you also obey this precept, and seek to remain in His presence. Some of His people seek to get away from their Lord instead of keeping close to Him. So little do they delight in communion with their God that they seem to say, “Whither shall I go from your spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence?” Did it never happen to you as it did to Jonah, when He must needs go to Tarshish, though the Lord told Him to go to Nineveh? He did not want such a large field of labor, such an anxious and unremunerative post of duty: He would rather go to a village-station, or to a sea-side place. For a time He believed that Providence helped Him, for He found a ship going to Tarshish. There are many devil’s providences which make sin easy and obedience difficult. The precept, not the Providence, is the rule of duty. The Providence which gave Judas the opportunity to sell His Master did not excuse that son of perdition. “So He paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” Alas, poor Jonah! to be thus eager to run counter to the word of a King! I remember how I felt when first in London: I could not endure the horrible wilderness of bricks by which I was surrounded. I sighed for the green fields and the fresh air, and longed to get back to my country charge. But this kind of selfindulgence will not do: “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” and wherever the King sends you, you must go, and go without questioning. If He should send you to preach at the gates of Hell, go and preach there. “Be not hasty to go out of His sight,” for if you get out of the sight of the King, if you no longer wait in His blessed presence, depend upon it, like Jonah, 899 you will fall into trial, tempest, sinking, and terror. There may be no whale to swallow you, and cast you up again; they are not so plentiful now as they were then; and you may not be delivered so easily as Jonah.” Keep in the Lord’s presence and favor, no matter where you may have to go in order to do so. Walk in communion with Christ in whatever path He may point out to you. Never mind how rough it is: do not imagine it is the wrong road because it is so rough; rather reckon it to be right because it is rough, for seldom do smoothness and rightness go together. Oh, to abide in Christ the Word, and to have His word abiding in us! Solomon then says, “Stand not in an evil thing.” There is such power in the Word of God that He can readily destroy you, or heavily chastise you, therefore be quick to amend, and “stand not in an evil thing.” Repent, obey, submit, confess, seek pardon at once. He who is a courtier in a king’s court, if He offends against His sovereign, or does anything disgraceful, apologises, and trusts that He will not so offend any more; and oh, you child of God, if at any time you shall offend against your gracious Sovereign, and He frown on you, humble yourself, for His stroke is heavy. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose

mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Have a tender mouth: let God guide you with His eye, let a word be enough for you, do not need a bit or bridle. I wish we all had great tenderness of conscience. We should tremble at God’s Word, and humble ourselves in the dust before Him, praying to be cleansed by His Grace. If a person wished to practice deeds of infamy He would not do it in the Queen’s audience-room, especially if her eye was fixed upon Him; and so sin should be impossible to a Believer who lives in the presence of the King, in whose word there is power. Will you offend Him to His face, and slight Him in His own courts? No; yield yourself to His mercy, and let your holy life prove that His word has power over your heart and conscience. **III.** And now, thirdly, TO INSPIRE OUR CONFIDENCE, let us think that “where the word of a king is, there is power.” If there is a heart here that is seeking mercy, if you can go before God with such a promise as this in your mouth, “Let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man His thoughts: and let Him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon,”-that word of His is not a mere sound, there is the power of truth in it. If you do what He there bids you do you shall find that He can and will abundantly pardon. Whatever sins you have committed, though they are too many to count, 900 and too awful to mention, if you will come and trust yourself with Jesus Christ, God’s Word is; that you shall be saved; and saved you shall be. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Come and plead these words now, you who feel your sinfulness, and you shall prove in your joyful experience that they are the power of God unto salvation. Even the very worst may come and plead the promises, and they shall obtain immediate pardon and full forgiveness, and their soul shall know it because of the sweet peace that comes from forgiven sin. Do you tell me that you cannot conquer your evil passions and corrupt desires? Here is a promise from the word of the Lord, “From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Now come and plead these precious promises, there is power in them, they are the words of a King, and if you plead them at the mercy-seat you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus: old things shall pass away; all things shall become new. When you get a promise from God treat it as undoubted truth, and rely upon it as you do upon the promise of your father or your friend. There are men around you. whose promises you never can believe; when they promise to pay you,. you dare not regard it as an asset in business, for you are too sadly aware that you have a little bundle of their I O U’s already, and you have had a view of their dishonored bills, and cheques endorsed with. “no effects.” But God’s Word is not like that of false and fickle mortals. No charge of falsehood or failure can be brought against the God of truth. He has never broken His word yet, and He never will. Then, dear souls, if you want forgiveness of sin and renewal of heart, get the promise to that effect, and believe it with all your soul; and as sure as it is the word of a King you shall be washed in the blood and in the water which flowed from the wounded side of the crucified Christ. And you Christian people, are there any of you who are struggling at this time with a remaining corruption which you cannot conquer? Now come and lay hold of the promise that you shall overcome, and plead it before the mercy-seat. If you do but get any promise of God suited to your case, make quick use of it, for there is power in it; it is the word of a King! Mr. Durham, the writer of ancient and precious comments upon Solomon’s Song and the Revelation, when dying, was somewhat distressed in mind, and said to a friend who was standing by His bedside, “Out of all the Scriptures there is not one text that yields me comfort, save only one; and 901 that is one that I have often held out to perishing sinners, little thinking I should have to cling to it myself-’Him that comes unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ Brother So and-So, do you think that this is strong enough to bear my weight now “Yes,” His friend replied, “and to bear the weight of ten thousand times ten thousand if they rest upon it.” What was said of that text is true of every other Word of God. The promise of the Lord will bear the weight of sin and justice, life and death, judgment and Hell. Lean your whole weight on the word, and you shall find it to be like Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever. For my own part, I have no shadow of a hope but in the word of the Lord: His Spirit has delivered me from all reliance upon duties, or feelings, or experiences. The Word of the Lord is the life of my soul. In the words of King Jesus there is power to save you, to renew you, to pardon you, to preserve you, to sanctify you, and to perfect you. If you have hold on the promises, they will hold you for time and eternity too. Then, also, are there any of you in great trouble? I cannot know all your cases, but if any one of you has a trial which you could not tell, or a trouble, which if you did tell it, nobody could help you out of go and spread it before the Lord. Remember His word,” Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth Him out of them all.” Go and tell Him that He has thus spoken, and that He has therein pledged Himself to deliver you out of all afflictions: and be sure of this,. He will be as good as His word. Do you expect soon to die? Are

you somewhat distressed because sickness is undermining your constitution? Be not afraid, for His Spirit teaches you to sing, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." Go and tell the Lord of His own word, and you will look forward to death without fear, singing *"Knowing as I am known, How shall I love that word, And oft repeat before the throne, 'For ever with the Lord!' 'That Resurrection word, That shout of victory, Once more, 'For ever with the Lord!' Amen-so let it be!"*⁹⁰² Brethren, one more point is gained concerning the fear of death when we remember that it is the voice of a King which will recall our bodies from the grave, and "where the word of a king is, there is power." Do we ask mournfully as we survey the grave-yard, "Can these dry bones live?" We are not slow to answer with assurance of faith. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, will also bring forth from their sepulchres all His sheep. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." We do not doubt this when we remember that with the trump of the archangel shall also be heard the voice of God, which voice shall speak the word omnipotent. *"Break from His throne, illustrious morn! Attend, O earth, His sovereign word! Restore the saint, a glorious form He must ascend to meet His Lord."*^{IV} Fourthly, I am coming to my last point, on which I shall crave a little time: and here I intend to address myself to all people of God who are associated in church-fellowship, and striving to do the Lord's service; and to you who will be so associated here. My text is to be used TO DIRECT YOUR EFFORTS. You need power; not the power of money, or mind, or influence, or numbers; but "power from on high." All other power may be desirable, but this power is indispensable. Spiritual work can only be done by spiritual power. I counsel you in order to get spiritual power in all that you do to keep the King's commandment, for "where the word of a king is, there is power." Lay not a stone of your spiritual church without His overseeing; do all things according as He has ordained; regard Him as the wise Master-builder, and be all of you under the command of His word. The day comes when much that has been built shall be destroyed, for the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is. It is very easy to heap up a church with wood, hay, and stubble, which the fire will soon destroy; and it is very hard work to build one up with gold, silver, and precious stones; for these are rare materials, and must be diligently sought for, laboriously prepared, and carefully guarded. The materials that will stand the fire of temptation, trial, death, and the like, are not to be brought together by any word but the word of the Lord; but these alone are worth having. I had sooner have half-a-dozen Christian people, truly spiritual and obedient to the word of the Lord in all things, than I would have half-a-dozen 903 thousands of nominal Christians who neither care about the word nor the King. If you want power, keep the King's commandment, keep close to it in all things, and make it the Law of your house and the slogan of your flag. Wherein you go beyond the word. you go beyond the power, and wherein you stop short of the word you also stop short of the power. In the King's word there is power, and you will have power as long as you keep to it: but real power is nowhere else to be found. Let us take care that we do not look elsewhere for power, for that will He leaving the fountains of living waters to hew out to ourselves broken cisterns which hold no water. I fear that some Christian people have been looking in many other directions for the power which can only be found in the word of the King. At one time we were told that power lay in an educated ministry; people said, "We must have a minister who knows Greek and Latin: you cannot save souls unless you are familiar with the heathen classics." This superstition has suffered many a blow from the manifest successes of those whose only language is the grand old Saxon. Then the cry was, "Well, really, we do not want these men of education; we need fluent speakers, men who can tell a great many anecdotes and stories. These are men of power." I hope we shall outgrow this delusion also. The Lord works by either of these classes of men, or by others who have not the qualifications of either of them, or by another sort of men, or fifty sorts of men, so long as they keep to the word of the King, in which there is power. There is power in the Gospel if it be preached by a man utterly without education: unlearned men have done great things by the power of the word. The polished doctor of divinity has been equally useful when He has kept to His Master's word. But if either of these has forgotten to make Christ's word first and last, the preaching has been alike powerless, whether uttered by the illiterate or the profound. Others have thought it necessary, in order to have power among the masses (that is the cant phrase), that there should be fine music. An organ is nowadays thought to be the power of God; and a choir is a fine substitute for the Holy Spirit. They have tried that kind of thing in America, where solos and quartets enable singing men and singing women to divide their services between the church and the theater. Some churches have paid more attention to the choir than to the preaching. I do not believe in it. If God had meant

people to He converted in that way, He would have sent them a command to attend the music-halls and operas, for there they will get far better music than we can hope to give them. If there 904 be charms in music to change the souls of men from sin to holiness, and if the preaching of the Gospel will not do it, let us have done with Peter and Paul, with Chalmers and with Chrysostom, and let us exalt Mozart and Handel into their places, and let the great singers of the day take the places of the pleaders for the Lord. Even this would not content the maniacs of this age, for with the music-room they crave the frippery of the theater. Combine with philosophy the sweet flowers of oratory and those of Covent Garden, adding thereto the man-millinery and gewgaws of Rome, and then you can exclaim, with the idolaters of old, "These be your gods, O Israel." Men are now looking for omnipotence in toys. But we do not believe it. We come back to this, "Where the word of a king is, there is power," and while we are prepared to admit that all and everything that has to do with us can be the vehicle of spiritual power if God so wills, we are more than ever convinced that God has spiritual power to give by His word alone. We must keep to the King's word if we desire to have this spiritual power for the Lord's work. Whatever you find in Scripture to be the command of the Mug, follow it, though it leads you into a course that is hard for the flesh to bear: I mean a path of singular spirituality, and nonconformity to the world. Remember that, after all, the truth may be with the half-dozen, and not with the million. Christ's power may be with the handful as it was at Pentecost, when the power came down upon the despised disciples, and not upon the chief priests and scribes, though they had the sway in religious matters. If we want to win souls for Christ we must use the Word of God to do it. Other forms of good work languish unless the Gospel is joined with them. Set about reforming, civilizing, and elevating the people, and you will lose your time unless you evangelize them. The total abstinence movement is good, and I would that all would aid it, but it effects little unless the Gospel furnishes the motive and the force. It will win its way in proportion as it is carried on in subordination to the Gospel, and is viewed as a means to reach a still higher end. The rod works no wonder till Moses grasps it; and moral teaching has small force till Jesus operates by it. Those who doubt the power of the Gospel, and leave it for other forms of hopeful good, leave strength for weakness, omnipotence for insufficiency. More and more I am persuaded that it is where the word of a King is that there is power, and all the rest is feebleness until that word has infused might into it. Everyone must buy His own experience, but mine goes to prove to me that the direct and downright preaching of the Gospel is the most profitable work which I 905 ever engage in: it brings more Glory to God and good to men than all lecturing and addressing upon moral subjects. I should always, if I were a farmer, like to sow that seed which would bring me in the best return for my labor. Preaching the Gospel is the most paying thing in the world; it is remunerative in the very highest sense. May your minister stick to the Gospel, the old-fashioned Gospel, and preach nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. If people will not hear that, do not let them hear anything at all it is better to be silent than to preach anything else. Paul said, and I will say the same, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Then again, if you want power, you must use this word in pleading. If your work here is to be a success, there must be much praying; everything in God's house is to be done with prayer. Give me a praying people, and I shall have a powerful people. The word of the King is that which gives power to our prayers. I have been requested to preach, in certain places, and I have replied that I could not go. In a little time I have received a letter to remind me that two years before I promised to go. This altered the case: I had no choice. I must go, whether I could or not, for my word was pledged to it. So if you can go to the Lord with His pledged word, and say, "Lord, you have said it: you must do it," He will be true to His word to you, for there is power in the word of a King. There is power in accepting that word, in getting it into you, or receiving it. You never keep the truth till you have received this word of a King into your spiritual being, and absorbed it into your spiritual nature. Oh, that you might every one of you eat the word, live on it, and make it your daily food! And then, there is power in the practising of it. Where there is life through the King's word, it will be a strong life. The sinner's life is a feeble life; but an obedient life, an earnest Christian life, is a life of strength. Even those who hate it and abhor it cannot help feeling that there is a strange influence about it which they cannot explain, and they must respect it. You will see its power in this place; I know you will see it, for you are resolved in God's strength that it shall He so. You will see its power to fill the place. There is nothing so attractive as the Gospel of Christ. If you were to give a man the Tabernacle at Newington, and say to Him, "There, you may lecture on geology, astronomy, or any thing you like, twice on the Sunday, and every night in the week as well, if you please, and see if you 906 can keep up a full congregation," He would fail. The people would not come for any length of time; and yet without any great oratory we preach the Gospel again and again, and the people come: they

cannot help it. They hear nothing new; it is always the same thing over again, and yet it is never monotonous; there is always a glorious freshness about the Gospel. That one silver bell of the Gospel has more melody in it than can be drawn from all the bells in all the steeples in the world. There is more sweetness in that one name Jesus than in all the harps of angels, let alone the music of men. When Jesus Christ's deity is denied in any chapel, it soon becomes a howling wilderness. If Christ, the son of God, is gone, all is gone. A certain minister preached Universalism, or the doctrine that everybody would be saved in the end, and after a time His chapel became empty. His neighbor, who preached that those who did not believe would be lost for ever, had His house full. One day the Universalist met His neighbor, and asked Him, "How is it that the people come to you when you preach that unbelievers will be sent to Hell, and they do not come to me though I tell them that in the end they will all be in Heaven?" The other replied, "They suspect that what I tell them is true, and that what you tell them is false." Where gentlemen of this order have been preaching, people have sense enough to come to the conclusion that if what they say is false it is not wise to hear them, and if what they say is true there is no need to hear them. Certain gentlemen are proving to the world that there is no need of themselves, for if men are not lost what need is there of a preacher to tell them how they can be saved? He that crieth peace and safety, if He be a watchman, might as well hold His tongue. If the watchman woke you up in the middle of the night crying out, "All's well! A fine starlight night!" you would be very much inclined to exclaim, "Why on earth do you go about disturbing people when there is nothing the matter? Go home and get to bed with you!" And thus these smooth-speaking gentlemen are finding out that they are not wanted, and people are ready to say of them, "Let them go home to bed, and there let them abide." But on the other hand, if you preach Jesus Christ, and even the terrible things of His word, there will be a fall house, for conscience bids men hear. When you preach the Gospel, souls will be saved. To secure that end you must stick to the Gospel, for that is the one means ordained by God for the conversion of sinners. The other day a Gospel minister 'spoke to a woman who had attended certain revival services, in which there was much shouting of "Come to Jesus," but nothing about Jesus. She said, "I heard 907 you preach this afternoon, and if what you preached is true, then I am a lost woman. I have been converted ten times already." Ah me! what is the use of such poor work as this? We must teach the King's word if our work is to be blessed to the salvation of souls. We must plow with the Law, and let the people know what sin means, and what repentance means; then we may hopefully sow them with the Gospel. Some time ago we were told that there was no need of repentance, and that repentance only meant a change of mind: but what tremendous change of mind true repentance does mean! Never speak lightly of repentance. Then, too, the preaching of the truth, and the whole truth, will bring a power of union among you, so that you who love the Lord will He heartily united. When Christian people quarrel, it is generally because they do not get sufficient spiritual food. Dogs fight when there are no bones, and church-members fall out when there is no spiritual food. We must give them plenty of Gospel; for the Gospel has the power of sweetening the temper, and making us put up with one another. Preach the King's word, for it will give you power in private prayer, power in the Sunday-school, power in the Prayer Meeting, power in everything that you do; because you will live upon the King's own word, and His word is meat to the soul. The Prophet said, "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." If you try this meat you will all find it is nourishing to you also. The Lord bless you, and grant that it may be so. Amen.

END OF VOLUME 28.