

CORDS AND CART ROPES NO. 1821

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1885,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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*“Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
and sin as it were with a cart rope.”*
Isaiah 5:18.

THE text begins with, “Woe,” and when we get a woe in this Book of blessings it is sent as a *warning*, that we may *escape* from woe. God’s woes are better than the devil’s welcomes! God always means man’s good and only sets ill before him that he may turn from the dangers of a mistaken way and so may escape the ill which lies at the end of it. Do not think I am unkind at this time because my message sounds harsh and has a note in it of sorrow rather than of joy. It may be most for your pleasure for ages to come, dear Friends, to be, for a while, displeased. It may make the bells ring in your ears forever if, tonight, instead of the dulcet sound of the harp, you hear the shrill clarion startling you to thoughtfulness. Perhaps, “Woe, woe, woe,” though it should sound with a dreadful din in your ears, may be the means of leading you to seek and find your Savior and then, throughout eternity, no woe shall ever come near to you. May the good Spirit of all Grace put power into my warning that you may profit by it.

This is a very singular text. It is not very easy to understand it at first sight. Here are some who are said to draw sin with cords of vanity which are slender enough and, yet, they also draw it as with a cart rope which is thick enough. They are harnessed to sin and the traces appear to be fragile, insignificant and soon broken. You can hardly touch them, for they are a mere sham, a fiction—vanity. What can be thinner and weaker than cobweb cords of vanity? Yet when you attempt to break or remove them, they turn out to be cart ropes or wagon traces, fitted to bear the pull of horse or bullock! Motives which have no logical force and would not bind a reasonable man for a moment, are, nevertheless, quite sufficient to hold the most of men in bondage. Such a slave is man to iniquity, that unworthy motives and indefensible reasons which appear no stronger than little cords, nevertheless hold him as with bonds of steel—and he is fastened to the loaded wagon of his iniquity as a horse is fastened by a cart rope.

That is our subject at this time and may God make it useful to many. Beyond all things I would have you saved, you who are tugging away in the harness of sin. God grant it! May the free Spirit set you free. I shall, first of all, *explain the singular description*—explain it by enlarging upon it and quoting instances from daily life. Secondly, I shall enlarge upon *the woe that is certainly connected with being bound to sin*. And then, thirdly, as God shall help me, *I will encourage you to get out of the traces*. I pray that you may have these cart ropes cut, that you may not be drawing iniquity and sin after you any longer. Oh that this might be salvation’s hour for many of you, in which, like Samson, you may break the cords and ropes with which you have been bound!

I. First, let us EXPLAIN THE SINGULAR DESCRIPTION. Here are persons harnessed to the wagon of sin—harnessed to it by many cords, all light as vanity and yet strong as cart ropes. Let me give you a picture. Here is a man, who, as a young man, heard the Gospel and grew up under the influence of it. He is an intelligent man, a Bible reader and somewhat of a theologian. He attended a Bible class, was an apt pupil and could explain much of Scripture, but *he took to lightness and frothiness*. He made an amusement of religion and a sport of serious things. He frequented sermons that he might talk of them and say that he had heard the preacher. After the sermon, when others were impressed, he was merry. He had discovered some mistake in the preacher—in his pronunciation, in the grammatical construction of a sentence, or in a misquotation from a poet—and this he mentioned with gusto, passing by all the good that was spoken. That was only his way—he did not mean any *hurt* by it—at least he would have said so had any one seriously reprovved him.

He came under the bond of this religious trifling, but it was a cord of vanity small as a packthread. Years ago he began to be bound to his sin by this kind of trifling and, at the present moment, I am not sure that he ever cares to go and hear the Gospel or to read the Word of God, for he has grown to despise that with which he sported. The wanton witling has degenerated into a malicious scoffer—his cord has become a cart rope! His life is all trifling now. You could not make him serious. He spends his time in one perpetual giggle. Every holy thing is now the subject of comedy. Like Belshazzar, he drinks his wine out of the sacred vessels of the Temple. Earnestness has a pleasantry of its own and a bold spirit yokes mirth and laughter to its cart and subdues all the faculties of the mind to God, not even excepting humor. But this man acknowledges no Lord within his heart—he laughs at the most solemn Truths of God and does not seem capable of anything higher or better. His life is a sneer. He would pull a feather out of an angel's wing and wear it in his cap.

On the solemn day of Pentecost he would have drawn a picture of the cloven tongues upon his thumb nail that he might show it as a curiosity. There is nothing sacred to him, now, nor will there be till he is in Hell—and then he will have done with his jibes and flouts. The habit of being contemptuous has grown to be a cart rope with him and it holds him most securely. I say, young men, break those wretched cords of vanity before they strengthen into cart ropes! While yet there is but a slender thread, snap it, before thread gathers to thread, and that to another, and that to another, till it has come to be a cable which even a giant could not pull asunder! There are many lamentable instances of triflers ripening into scoffers and it were a great pity that you should furnish further illustrations. Avoid trifling with religion as you would avoid common swearing or profanity, for in its essence it is irreverent and mischievous.

I have seen the same thing take another shape and then it appeared as *captious questioning*. We are not afraid to be examined upon anything in the Word of God, but we dread a quibbling spirit. I, for one, believe that the more the Word of God has been sifted, the more fully has it been confirmed. The result has been the better understanding of its teaching. The pure gold has shone the more brightly for being placed in the crucible. But there is a habit which begins thus—"I do not see *this*; and I do not understand *that*; and I do not approve of *this* and I question *that*." It makes life into a tangle of thorns and briars where ten thousand sharp points of doubt are forever tearing the mind. This doubting state reminds one of the old serpent's, "Yes, has God said?" If the statement made had been the *opposite*, the gentleman would have questioned it, for he is bound to doubt *everything*. He is one who could take either side and refute—but neither side and defend.

He could do like the eminent barrister who had made a mistake as to his side of the case and he got up and gave all the arguments most tellingly, till his client's lawyer whispered to him, "you have done for us—you have used all the arguments against your own client!" The barrister stopped and said, "My lord, I have thus told you all that can be urged against my client by those upon the other side—and I will now show you that there is nothing in the allegations." And with equal cleverness he went on to disprove what he had proved before! There are minds constructed in such a way that they can act in every way except that of plain up and down. Their machinery is eccentric—it would puzzle the ablest tongue to describe it. I like the old-fashioned consciences that go up and down, yes and no, right and wrong, true and false—the kind which are simple and need no great intellect to understand their methods. We are growing so cultured, now, that many have become like the old serpent, "more subtle than any beast of the field."

The new-fashioned consciences act upon the principle of compromise and policy which is no principle at all! To each enquiry they answer, "Yes and no. What is the time of day?" For it is yes or no according to the clock, or according to the climate, or, more generally, according to the breeches' pocket, for so much depends upon that. Practically, many are saying, "Upon which side of the bread is the butter? Tell us this and then we will tell you what we believe." People of that sort begin, at first, with an *enquiring* spirit, then go on to an *objecting* spirit, then to a *conceited* spirit and then to a perpetually *quibbling* spirit! In the case to which I refer, there is nothing earnest, for when a man is a sincere questioner and is willing to receive an answer, he is on the high road to truth. But when he merely questions and questions and questions—and never stops for an answer and is nothing but a heap of quibbling—he is not worth clearing away. The last thing he wants is an answer and the thing he dreads beyond everything is that he should be compelled to believe anything at all.

Such a man at last gets bound as with a cart rope—he becomes an atheist or worse, for all capacity for faith departs from him. He is as frivolous as Voltaire, whose forte seemed to lie in ridiculing everything. You cannot save him. How

can faith come to him? How can he believe, who must have everything explained? How can he believe in Christ, Himself, when he requires Him, first of all, to be put through a catechism and to be made to answer foolish questions? Oh, take heed of tying up your soul with cart ropes of skepticism—take heed of a Truth-denying spirit! God help you to break the bonds. Enquire, but believe! Ask, but accept the Truth of God! And be in earnest in your resolve that if you prove all things, you will also hold fast that which is good. To be always using the sieve but never to be using the mill is starving work—to be always searching after adulterations, but never to drink of the genuine milk is a foolish habit! Quibbling is a curse and carping is a crime. Escape from it while yet it is but as a cord of vanity, lest it come to be a cart rope which shall bind you fast.

I hear one say, “This does not touch me. I have not fallen either into trifling or into questioning.” No, but perhaps you may be a prisoner bound with other cords. Some have a *natural dislike to religious things* and cannot be brought to attend to them. Let me qualify the statement and explain myself. They are quite prepared to attend a place of worship, to hear sermons and occasionally to read the Scriptures—and even to give their money to help on some benevolent cause. But this is the point at which they draw the line—they do not want to think, to pray, to repent, to believe, or to make heart-work of the matter. Thinking, you know, is awkward work, and to them it is uncomfortable work because there is not much in their lives that would cheer them if they were to think of it. They had rather not see the nakedness of the land. There is an ugly thing which they do not want to have much to do with—it is called repentance—of this they require much, but they are averse to it. The more children dislike medicine the more they need it—and it is the same with repentance.

These people would rather shut their eyes and go on to destruction than stop and see their danger and turn back. To think about the past—why, they might have to mourn it and who is eager after sorrow? Then there is such a thing as a change of heart and they are rather shy of *that*, for they are almost heartless and do not like prying deep. If there were something to be done that could be managed in a day or two. If there were some pilgrimage to make, some penance to endure, some dress to be worn, they would not mind that—but thought, repentance, prayer and seeking God—they cannot endure such spiritual exactions! If there were some sacrifice to be made they would do that, but this being at peace with God, this seeking to be renewed in the spirit of their mind—well, they have no mind to it. The world is in their hearts and they have no wish to get it out. They have heard some people say that all conversation about God, the soul and eternity is dull Puritan talk, so they have picked up an expression as parrots often do and they say, “No, we do not want to be Puritans. We do not care to be extra precise and righteous over much.” What a misery it is that there should be persons who are bound with such cords of vanity as those! These are unreasonable feelings, insane aversions, unjustifiable prejudices—may the Lord save you from them and, instead thereof, give you a mind to know Him and a heart to seek after Him.

Why, as a boy, when I began to feel a sense of sin within me, I resolved that if there was such a thing as being born again, I would never rest until I knew it! My heart seemed set upon knowing what repentance *meant* and what faith *meant* and getting to be thoroughly saved! But now I find that large numbers of my hearers back out of all serious dealing with themselves and God! They act as if they did not wish to be made happy for eternity! They think harshly of the good way. You see it is such radical work—regeneration cuts so deep and it makes a man so *thoughtful*. Who knows what may have to be given up? Who knows what may have to be done? O, my Hearer, if you indulge in such demurs and delays and prejudices in the first days of your conviction, the time may come when those little packthreads will be so intertwined with each other that they will make a great cart rope and you will become an opposer of everything that is good, determined to abide forever harnessed to the great Juggernaut car of your iniquities, and so to perish! God save you from that!

I have known some men get harnessed to that car in another way and that is by *deference to companions*. The young man liked everything that was good, after a fashion, but he could not bear for anybody to say, on Monday morning, “So you were at a place of worship on Sunday?” He did not like to say outright, “Of course I was. Where were you?” But instead he said—Well, he did look in at the chapel, or he did go to St. Paul’s or the Abbey to hear the music. “Oh,” says one, “I hear you were at the Tabernacle the other day.” Yes, he went in from curiosity, just to see the place and the crowd. That is how he puts it, as if he were ashamed to worship his Maker and to be found observing the Sabbath Day. O, poor coward! That young man, at another time, was charged with having been seen in the Enquiry Room, or weeping

under a solemn sermon! He said it was rather affecting and he was a little carried away and over-persuaded, but he apologized to the devil and begged that he might hear no more of it.

He began giving way to his ungodly friends and soon he became their butt. One companion pulled his ear that way and another pulled his ear another way—and in this manner he developed very long ears, indeed. He did not go very far wrong at first, but having allowed sinful men to saddle him, they took care to ride him harder and harder as the days ran on. It was only a packthread sort of business that held him to sin by a kind of wicked courtesy. But after a while he became compliant to his equals and fawned his superiors, doing their bidding even though it cost him his soul! He was vastly more attentive to the will and smile of some downright vicious comrade—far more thoughtful of a fool's opinion—than he was of the good pleasure of God. It is a shocking thing, but there is no doubt that many people go to Hell for the love of being respectable! It is not to be doubted that multitudes pawn their souls and lose their God and Heaven merely for the sake of standing well in the estimation of a profligate! Young women have lost their souls for very vanity, sinning in the hope of scouring the love of a brainless, heartless youth! Young men have flung away all hope of salvation in order that they might be thought to be men of culture—they have denied faith in order to be esteemed “free-thinkers” by those whose opinions were not worth a pin's head!

I charge you, dear Friend, if you are beginning at all to be a slave of other people, break these wretched and degrading bonds! I scorn that mental slavery in which many glory! What matters it to me, today, what anybody thinks of me? In this respect I am the freest of men. Yet do I know times when, had I yielded to the packthread, I would soon have felt the cart rope. He who sins to please his friend is making for himself a slavery more cruel than the American slave ever knew! He that would be free forever must break the cords before yet they harden into chains!

Some men are getting into bondage in another way—they *are forming gradual habits of evil*. How many young men born and bred amid Christian associations do that! It is a little sip and such a little. “I do not take above half a glass.” Then why run such great risks for so small an indulgence? “The doctor”—O you doctors, what you have got to answer for!—“the doctor says I ought to take a little, and so I do.” By-and-by the little thread becomes a cart rope—the tale about the doctor ends in doing what no doctor would justify. Will he say, “The doctor says I ought,” when he comes rolling home at night, scarcely can find his way to bed and wakes up with a headache in the morning? He would have done better to ask God for Grace to escape while yet he held small pleasure in the fascinating firewater and was the master of his appetite. The cart rope is hard to break, as many have found, though I would encourage even these, by God's Grace, to struggle for liberty.

“Well,” says a young man, “that is not *my* sin.” I am glad it is not, but any other sin, if it is persevered in, will destroy you. I will not try to describe your sin. Describe it yourself and think it over. And will you please remember the deceitfulness of sin—the way in which it comes to men—as the frost in the still evening in the wintry months comes to the lake? The pool is placid and the frost only asks that it may thinly glaze the surface. The coating is so thin you could scarcely call it ice! But having once filmed the pool, the sheet of ice has commenced and soon it is an inch thick—and in a few hours a loaded wagon might pass over it without a crash, for the whole pool seems turned to marble. So men give way to one evil passion or another—this vice or that—and the habit proceeds from bad to worse till the cords of vanity are enlarged into cart traces and they cannot escape from the load to which they are harnessed.

I fear that not a few are under the delusive notion that they are safe as they are. *Carnal security* is made up of cords of vanity. How can a sinner be safe while his sins are unforgiven? How can he be at peace while he is a slave to evil and an enemy to God? Yet many fancy that they are as good as necessary and far better than their neighbors. Surely, such as they are, must surely be secure since they are so respectable, so well inclined and so much thought of! A man may accustom himself to danger till he does not even notice it. And a soul may grow used to its condition till it sees no peril in impenitence and unbelief. As the blacksmith's dog will lie down and sleep while the sparks fly about him, so will a Gospel-hardened sinner sleep on under warnings and pleadings. At first the hearer had to do violence to his conscience to escape from the force of the Truth of God but, at last, he is encased in steel and no arrow of the Word of God can wound him. O you that are at ease in Zion, I beseech you, listen to my admonition and fly from carnal security. O Lord, awaken them from their slumbering condition!

This is a word of warning. I have not the time, tonight, to go into all the details. I wish I had. Beware of the eggs of the cockatrice. Remember how drops wear stones and little strokes fell great oaks. Do not play with a cobra, even if it is

but a foot long. Keep from the edge of the precipice. Fly from the lion before he springs upon you. Do not forge for yourself a net of iron, nor become the builder of your own prison. May the Holy Spirit deliver you. May you touch the Cross and find in it the power which will loose you and let you go.

II. But, oh, how I wish that every person here who has not yet found liberty, but is harnessed to his sin, could escape tonight, for—and this is my second point—THERE IS A WOE ABOUT REMAINING HARNESSSED TO THE CART OF SIN—and that woe is expressed in our text.

It has already been hard work to tug at sin's load. If I am addressing any here that have fallen into great sin, I know that you have fallen into great sorrow. I am sure you have. Much of history is happily covered with a veil so that its secret griefs do not become open miseries, otherwise were the world too wretched for a tender heart to live in it! Could we lift the tops of the houses; could we exhibit the skeletons hidden in closets; could we take away the curtains from human breasts—what sorrows we should see! And the mass of those sorrows—not the whole of them, but the mass—would be found to come from *sin*. When the young man turns to paths of unchastity or of dishonesty, what grief he makes for himself! What woe, what misery! His bodily disease, his mental anguish we have no heart to describe!

Ah, yes, “The way of transgressors is hard.” They put on a smile; they even take to uproarious laughter, but a worm is gnawing at their hearts. Alas, poor slaves! They make a noise as they try to drown their feelings, but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, such is the mirth of the wicked—hasty, noisy, momentary gone—and nothing left but ashes! I would not have you proceed in the path of sin if there were nothing in it worse than what has already happened to you. Surely the time past may suffice for folly! You have reaped enough of the fire-sheaves without going on with the harvest. I would, as a brother, urge you to escape from your present bondage.

And remember, if you remain harnessed to this car of sin, *the weight increases*. You are like a horse that has to go on a journey and pick up parcels at every quarter of a mile. You are increasing the heavy luggage and baggage that you have to drag behind you. A man starting in life is somewhat like a horse with but a slender load in the cart, but as he goes on from youth to manhood, and from manhood to his riper years, he has been loaded up with more sin—and what a weight there is behind him, now! Grinning devils, as they bring the heavy packages and heap them up, one upon another, must wonder that men are such fools as to continue in the harness and drag on the dreadful load as if it were fine sport! Alas, that men should sin away their souls so lightly—as if self-destruction were some merry game that they were playing at—whereas it is a heaping up unto themselves of wrath against the day of wrath and the perdition of ungodly men!

Further, I want you to notice that as the load grows heavier, *so the road becomes worse*—the ruts are deeper, the hills are steeper and the sloughs are more full of mire. In the heyday of youth, man finds beaded bubbles about the brim of his cup of sin. The wine moves itself aright, it gives its color in the cup. But as he grows older and drinks deeper, he comes nearer to the dregs and those dregs are as gall and wormwood! An old man with his bones filled with the sin of his youth is a dreadful sight to look upon! He is a curse to others and a burden to himself. A man who has 50 years of sin behind him is like a traveler pursued by 50 howling wolves. Do you hear their deep bay as they pursue the wretch? Do you see their eyes glaring in the dark and flaming like coals of fire? Such a man is to be pitied, indeed! Where shall he flee, or how shall he face his pursuers? He who goes on carelessly when he knows that such a fate awaits him is a fool—he deserves small pity when the evil day comes. O you that are drawing the wagon of sin, I implore you stop before you reach the boggy ways of infirmity, the tremendous swamps of old age!

Remember, Friends, if any of you are still harnessed to your sins and have been so for years, the day will come when *the load will crush the horse*. It is a dreadful thing when the sins which were drawn at last drive the driver before them! In the town where I was brought up, there is a very steep hill. You could scarcely get out of the town without going down a hill, but one is specially precipitous. I remember once hearing a cry in the streets, for a huge wagon had rolled over the horses that were going down the hill with it! The load had crushed the creatures that were supposed to draw it! There comes a time with a man when it is not so much he that consumes the drink as the drink that consumes him! He is drowned in his cups, sucked down by that which he, himself, sucked in! A man was voracious, perhaps, in food, and at last his gluttony swallowed *him*—at one grim morsel he went down the throat of the old dragon of selfish greed! Or the man was lustful and at last his vice devoured him. It is an awful thing when it is not the man that follows the devil, but the devil that drives the man before him as though he were his laden ass. The man's worst self, that had been kept in the

rear and put under restraint, at last gets up and comes to the front—and the better self—if he ever had such, is dragged on an unwilling captive at the chariot wheels of its destroyer!

I am sure that there is nobody here who desires to be a sinner *eternally*—let him beware, then, for *each hour of sin brings its hardness and its difficulty of change*. Nobody here wants to get into such a condition that he cannot keep from sinning any longer—let him not be so unwise as to play with sin! When the moral brakes are taken off and the engine is on the down-grade and must run on at a perpetually quickening rate forever, then is the soul lost, indeed! I am sure there is not a man here who wants to commit himself to an eternity of hate of God, an eternity of lust, an eternity of wickedness and consequent wretchedness! Why, then, do you continue to harden your hearts? If you do not wish to rush down the decline, put on the brake tonight! God help you to do so or, to come back to the text, let the packthreads be broken and the cords of vanity be thrown aside, before yet the cart rope shall have fastened you forever to the Juggernaut car of your sin and your destruction.

III. Now I want to offer SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BREAKING LOOSE. It is time I did. I do not wish to preach a sad, unhappy sermon, tonight, but I do long to see everybody here saved from sin. My heart cries to God that as long as I am able to preach, I may not preach in vain. God knows I have never shunned to speak what I have thought and to speak very plainly and very home to you. I never come into this pulpit with the notion that I must not say a sharp thing, or somebody will be offended—or I must not deal with common sins for somebody will say that I am coarse. I care not the snap of a finger what you choose to say about me, if you will but forsake sin and be reconciled to God by the death of His Son! That is the one and only thing my heart craves and for that end I have given earnest warnings at this time. I may not much longer be spared to speak with you and, therefore, I am the more earnest to impress you while I may. Help me, O Spirit of God!

Now, listen. *There is hope for every harnessed slave of Satan*. There is hope for those who are most securely bound! “Oh,” you say, “I am afraid that I have got into the cart rope stage, for I seem bound to perish in my sin! I cannot break loose from it.” Listen. Jesus Christ has come into the world to rescue those who are bound with chains. That is to say, God, Himself, has taken upon Himself human nature with this design—that He may save men from their sins! That blessed, perfect Baby, such as never mother before had ever seen—that virgin’s Child—when they named Him, it was said, “you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” He has come to this world in our nature on purpose to save men from their sins! He can cut the traces which bind you to Satan’s chariot. He can take you out of the shafts. He can set you free, tonight!

you have been dragging on for years and you think there is no chance for you—but there is *more* than a chance—there is the *certainty* of salvation if you trust in Jesus! I remember reading a famous writer’s description of a wretched cab-horse which was old and worn out and yet kept on its regular round of toil. They never took him out of harness for fear they should never be able to get his poor old carcass into it again. He had been in the shafts for so many years that they feared if they took him out of them he would fall to pieces! And so they let him stay where he was accustomed to be. Some *men* are just like that. They have been in the shafts of sin so many years that they fancy that if they were once to alter, they would fall to pieces. But it is not so, old Friend! We are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation. The Lord will make a new creature of you! When He cuts the traces and brings you out from between those shafts which have so long held you, you will not know yourself! When old things have passed away you will be a wonder to many. Is it not said of Augustine that after his conversion he was met by a fallen woman who had known him in his sin and he passed her by? She said, “Austin, it is I.” And he turned and said, “But I am not Austin. I am not the man you once knew, for I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus.” That is what the Lord Jesus Christ can do for *you*! Do you not believe it? It is true, whether you believe it or not! Oh that you would look to Jesus and begin to live! It is time a change was made, is it not? Who can change you but the Lord Jesus?

Let me tell you another thing that ought to cheer you, and it is this. You are bound with the cords of sin and, in order that all this sin of yours might effectually be put away, the *Lord Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was, Himself, bound*. They took Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and bound His hands and led Him off to Pilate and Herod. They brought Him bound before the Roman governor. He was bound when they scourged Him. He was bound when they brought Him forth bearing His Cross. He was fastened hand and foot as they drove in the nails and thus fixed Him with rivets of iron to His Cross. There did He hang, fastened to the cruel tree, for sinners such as you are! If you come and trust Him to-

night, *you* shall find that for you He endured the wrath of God! For *you* He paid the penalty of death that He might set you free! He bore it that you should not bear it—He died for you that you might not die. His Substitution shall be your deliverance. Oh, come, all bound and guilty as you are, and look to His dear Cross and trust yourself with Him and you shall be set free!

God grant that it may be done at this very moment!

I will tell you another cheering fact to help you to overcome your sin and break the cart ropes that now bind you—*There is in the world a mysterious Being whom you know not, but whom some of us know, who is able to work your liberty.* There dwells upon this earth a mysterious Being whose office it is to renew the fallen and restore the wandering. We cannot see Him, or hear Him, yet He dwells in some of us, as Lord of our nature. His chosen residence is a broken heart and a contrite spirit. That most powerful Being is God, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who was given at Pentecost and who has never been recalled, but remains on earth to bless the people of God! He is still here and wherever there is a soul that would be free from sin, this free Spirit waits to help him. Wherever there is a spirit that loathes its own unholiness, this Holy Spirit waits to cleanse him! Wherever there is a groaning one asking to be made pure, this pure Spirit is ready to come and dwell in him and make him pure as God is pure!

O, my Hearer, He waits to bless you now! He is blessing you while I speak! I feel as if His Divine energy went forth with the Word of God and entered into your soul as you are listening! I trust I am not mistaken. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, believe, also, in the power of the Holy Spirit to make you a new creature and cleanse you—deliver you from every fetter and make you the Lord's free man!

I will tell you one thing more and I will have done. *Our experience should be a great encouragement to you.* I have tried to preach to you that are in the traces—poor worn out cab-horses to the devil, post-horses of Satan that seem never to have a holiday, dragging your cart of sin behind you through the slush of the foul city of Vanity. The mercy is that you are not horses, but *men* born for nobler purposes! You may be free, for some of us are free! Oh, what a load I had behind me once! My wagon of inbred sin was a huge one, indeed! Had it not been for the Grace of God, I would have perished in the impossible attempt to move it. I do not think that my load as to overt sin was at all like that which some of you are dragging, for I was but a child and had not yet plunged into the follies of the world. But then I had a dogged will, a high spirit, an intense activity and a daring mind—and all this would have driven me headlong to Hell if the Spirit of God had not worked in me to subdue me to the will of the Lord!

I felt within my spirit the boiling up of that secret cauldron of corruption which is in every human bosom—and I felt that I was ruined before God and that there was no hope for me. My burden of inward sin at 15 years of age was such that I knew not what to do! We have seen pictures of the Arabs dragging those great Nineveh bulls for Mr. Leyard, hundreds of them tugging away—and I have imagined how Pharaoh's subjects, the Egyptians, must have sweated and smarted when they had to drag some of the immense blocks of which his obelisks were composed—thousands of men dragging one block of masonry! And I seemed to have just such a load as that behind me and it would not stir! I prayed, but it would not move! I took to reading my Bible, but my load would not budge. It seemed stuck in the mire and no struggling would move the awful weight. The wheels were in deep ruts. My load would not be moved and I did not know what to do. I cried to God in my agony and I thought I must die if I did not get delivered from my monstrous cumber—but it would not stir.

I have no drag behind me now! Glory be to God, I am not bound with a cart rope to the old wagon! I have no hamper behind me and, as I look back for the old ruts where the cart stopped so long, I cannot even see their traces! The enormous weight is not there! It is clean gone! There came One who wore a crown of thorns—I knew Him by the marks on His hands and in His feet—and He said, "Trust Me, and I will set you free." I trusted Him and the enormous weight behind me was gone. It disappeared! As I was told, it sank into His sepulcher and it lies buried there, never to come out again! My cart rope snapped, my cords of vanity melted, I was out of harness! Then I said, "The snare is broken and my soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. I will tell the story of my deliverance as long as I live." I can say tonight—

*"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."*

Oh, my beloved Hearers, believe in Christ as I did! The Gospel comes to each sorrowing sinner and it says—Trust the Savior and there is joy for you. There is but a veil of gauze between you and peace—move the hand of faith and that veil will be torn to pieces! There is but a step between your misery and music and dancing and a life of perpetual delights—take that step out of *self* and into Christ—and all is changed forever! Ask Jesus to break your bonds—and with a touch of His pierced hand He will make you free as the swallow on the wing which no cage can hold! You shall see Him, and never see your sin again, forever! God bless you and break the cart ropes, and remove the cords of vanity, for Jesus' sake. Amen.—

*“Listen now! the Lord has done it!
For He loved us unto death.
It is finished! He has saved us!
Only trust to what He says.
He has done it! Come and bless Him,
Spend in praise your ransomed breath
Evermore and evermore!
Oh, believe the Lord has done it!
Why linger? Why doubt?
All the clouds of black transgression
He Himself has blotted out.
He has done it! Come and bless Him,
Swell the grand thanksgiving shout,
Evermore and evermore.”*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 5.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—235, 587, 553.**

TO MY HEARERS AND READERS:

DEAR FRIENDS—Owing to delays upon the road, I only reached this place on Saturday night, wearied and weak. But this morning I am refreshed and hope to rest in real earnest! I would not sit down to write these lines were it not for the importunate requests of many friends who are so kindly interested in me. It is a joy to live in the hearts of others and to be thought of by them. But what is to be said of the great privilege of being thought upon of the Lord? “This honor have all the saints.” Each one of them may say, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon *me*.” Hence He delights to hear from us because His delight is in us. What joy lies in the assurance that His thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace and not of evil! “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!” We are often wandering in thought, or we are cast down, doubtful and anxious, but He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts.” “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you.”

In this confidence let us possess our souls. Our lives, our cares, our trials, our concerns are all considered by a love which never grows cold, a wisdom which never mistakes and a power which never fails! Why, let us have delight in the Almighty and lift up our faces unto God, seeing He takes pleasure in His people and remembers them in their low estate with a mercy which endures forever.

Yours in the ever-remembering Father,

C. H. SPURGEON. Mentone, February 1, 1885.

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