

A PLAIN MAN'S SERMON
NO. 1879

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 17, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"It must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it."
Leviticus 22:21.*

THE Ceremonial Law, as ordained by the hand of Moses and Aaron, called the worshippers of God *to great carefulness before Him*. Before their minds that solemn Truth was always made visible, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God." Nothing might be done thoughtlessly. Due heed was the first requisite in a man who would draw near unto the Thrice-Holy God, whose perfections demand lowly and considerate reverence from all those who are round about Him. The spirit must be awake and on the stretch if it would please the great Father of Spirits. There were little points—I may truthfully call them *minute*—upon which everything would depend as to right worship and its acceptance with the Lord. No Israelite could come to the tabernacle door aright without thinking of what he had to do and thinking it over with an anxious fear lest he should, by omission or error, make his offering into a vain oblation. He must draw near unto the Lord with great carefulness, or else he might miss his aim, spend his money upon a sacrifice, cause labor to the priest and go home unaccepted. He might duly perform a large portion of a ceremony and yet no good might come to him through it because he had omitted a point of detail—for the Lord would be sought according to the due order—or He would not be found by the worshipper. Of every ceremony it might be said, "It must be perfect to be accepted." There was the rule and the rule must be followed with the most careful exactness. God must have the minds and thoughts of men, or He counts that they are no worshippers!

This is no easy lesson to learn, dear Friends for I am afraid that in our usual worship we are not always as thoughtful as we ought to be. Mark well our singing. Do we join in it with the heartiness, the solemnity and the correctness which are due to Him who hears our Psalms and hymns? I may not judge, but I have my suspicions. Look at the way we pray. Is it not to be feared that at times we rush into God's Presence and utter the first words that come to hand? Are not liturgies repeated with minds half asleep? Are not extempore prayers uttered in the most formal manner? I refer both to public and private prayer. Moreover, look at the style in which some will even preach. With facility of language they will deliver themselves of their own thoughts, without seeking the anointing from on high and the power of the Spirit of God! I do not say that any of you ever go into your Sunday school classes without thought. I do not say that any of you ever take your tract district and go from door to door without seeking a blessing. I will not say that any of you ever come to the Communion Table without examining yourselves and discerning the Lord's body. But if I do not say it, I may *think* it and possibly that thought may be true!

O, my Brothers and Sisters, let conscience sit in judgment and decide this matter! We need to think a great deal more about how we come before the Most High! And if we *thought* more and *prayed* more, we would become more certain of our inability to do anything as we ought to do it—and we would be driven to a more entire dependence upon the Spirit of God in every act of worship! This in itself would be a great blessing.

I do not know, however, that the Ceremonial Law did make men thoughtful since, for the most part, it failed of its designed effect through the hardness of men's hearts. Earnest heed was the design of it, but superstition and a spirit of bondage were the more usual results. Brethren, without a multitude of ceremonies which might become a yoke to us, let us, by other means, arrive at the same and even a better thoughtfulness of heart! Let love to God so influence us that, in the least and most ordinary matters, we shall behave ourselves as in the immediate Presence of the Lord and so shall strive with the utmost watchfulness of holy care to please the Lord our God.

The Ceremonial Law also engendered in men who *did* think, *a great respect for the holiness of God*. They could not help seeing that God required everything in His service to be of the very best.

The priest who stood for them before God must be, himself, in bodily presence, the perfection of manhood. When old age crept upon him, he must give place to one who showed no such sign of decay. His garments must be perfectly white and clean in his daily service. And when once a year there was a joy day, then for glory and beauty he shone in all the radiance that the purest gold and the most precious stones could put upon him!

The victims that were offered must all be without blemish. You are constantly meeting with that demand and it was carried out with rigid care. You meet with a stringent instance in the text, "It must be perfect to be accepted."

Under the law of Moses, the guilt of sin and the need of atonement were always most vividly brought before the mind of the worshipping Israelite. If you stepped within the Holy Place, everywhere you saw the marks of blood. Our very delicate-minded friends who raise the silly objection that they cannot bear the *sound* of the word, "blood"—what would they have done if they had gone into the Jewish tabernacle and had seen the floor, the curtain and every article stained like a shambles? How would they have endured to worship where the blood was poured in bowlfuls upon the floor and sprinkled on almost every holy thing? How would they have borne with the continual spattering of blood—all indicating that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin?

Truly, there can be no approach to a Thrice-Holy God without the remission of sin and that remission of sin must be obtained through the atoning blood! The Israelite, if he thought rightly, must have been deeply aware that he served a God who was terrible out of His holy places, a God who hated sin and would by no means spare the guilty, or pardon man without atonement! All the more would this be sealed home upon the mind of the Israelite by the knowledge that in every case the sacrifice must be unblemished. As he looked on the blood of the victim, he would remember the sacred rule, "It must be perfect to be accepted." He saw in the necessity for a perfect sacrifice, a declaration of the holiness of God. He must have felt that sin was not a trifle—not a thing to be committed, winked at and blotted out—but a thing for which there must be life given and blood shed before it could be removed. And that life and blood must be the life and blood of a perfect and unblemished offering!

Under the Jewish Ceremonial Law, one of the most prominent thoughts, next to a great respect for the holiness of God, would be a *deep regard for the Law of God*. Everywhere that the Israelite went, he was surrounded by the Law of God. He must not do this and he must do that—the Law was continually before him. Now, Brothers and Sisters, it is a blessed thing to declare the Gospel, but I do not believe that any man can preach the Gospel who does not preach the Law. The book of Leviticus and all the other typical books are valuable as Gospel-teaching to us because there is always in them most clearly the Law of God. The Law is the needle and you cannot draw the silken thread of the Gospel through a man's heart unless you first send the needle of the Law through the center, to make way for it. If men do not understand the Law of God, they will not feel that they are sinners! And if they are not consciously sinners, they will never value the Sin Offering. If the Ten Commandments are never read in their hearing, they will not know why they are guilty. And how shall they make confession? If they are not assured that the Law is holy, just, good and that God has never demanded of any man more than He has a right to demand, how shall they feel the filthiness of sin, or see the need of flying to Christ for cleansing? There is no healing a man till the Law of God has wounded him! No making him alive till the Law has slain him!

I do pray, dear Friends, that God, the Holy Spirit, may lay the Law of God, like an axe, at the root of all our self-righteousness, for nothing else will ever hew down that Upas tree. I pray that He may take the Law and use it as a mirror, that we may see ourselves in it and discover our spots, blots and all the foulness of our lives—for then we shall be driven to wash until we are clean in the sight of the Lord. The Law is our teacher to bring us to Christ and there is no coming to Christ unless the stern teacher shall lead us there with many a stripe and many a tear.

In this text we have Law and Gospel, too. There is the Law which tells us that the sacrifice must be perfect to be accepted. And behind it there is the blessed hint that there is such an unblemished Sacrifice which is accepted which we may, by faith, bring to God without fear of being rejected. Oh, for Grace to learn both Law and Gospel at this time!

This is the text for our present meditation, "It must be perfect to be accepted." I want to preach this Truth of God right home into every heart by the power of the Spirit of God! If I could be an orator, I would not be. The game of eloquence, with the souls of men for the counters and eternity for the table, is the most wicked sport in the world! I have

often wished that there were no such things as rhetoric and oratory left among ministers—and that we were all forced to speak in the pulpit as plainly as children do in their simplicity. Oh, that all would proclaim the Gospel with plain words! I long that all may understand what I have to say. I would be more simple if I knew how. The way of salvation is far too important a matter to be the theme of oratorical displays. The Cross is far too sacred to be made a pole on which to hoist the flags of our fine language! I want to tell you just things that will make for your peace—things which will save your souls. At least I would declare Truths which, if they do not save you, will leave you without excuse in that dread day when He, whose ambassador I am, shall come to judge both you and me!

I. First, then, THE RULE OF OUR TEXT, “IT MUST BE PERFECT TO BE ACCEPTED,” MAY BE USED TO SHUT OUT ALL THOSE FAULTY OFFERINGS ON WHICH SO MANY PLACE THEIR CONFIDENCE.

It most effectually judges and casts forth as vile, *all self-righteousness*, although this is the great deceit by which thousands are buoyed up with false hopes! Alas, this is the destroyer of myriads and, therefore, I must speak as with a voice of thunder and with words of lightning! Harken unto me, you that hope to be accepted of God by your own doings! Look to what will be demanded of you if you are to be accepted on your own merits! “It must be *perfect* to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.” If you can come up to this rule, you shall be saved by your own righteousness! But if you cannot reach this mark. If you come short in any degree whatever, you will not be accepted! It is not said, “It must be partially good to be accepted.” Or, “It must be hopefully good.”

No! “It must be perfect to be accepted.” It is not written, “It must have no great and grievous blemish,” but, “There shall be no defect in it.” See you not the height of the standard, the absolute completeness of the model set before you? Let the plummet hang straight and see whether you can build according to it, or, whether, after all, your building is but as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence, altogether out of the perpendicular as tested by this uncompromising text—“It must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.”

Why, look, Sirs, you that hope to be saved by your own doings, *your nature, at the very first, is tainted!* God's Word assures you that it is so! There is evil in your heart from the very beginning, so that you are not perfect and are not without defect! This sad fact spoils all at the very beginning. You are blemished and imperfect! Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one! If the fountain is tainted, shall the streams be pure? Do you think it possible that you, who are a fallen man in your very parentage—in whom there is a bias towards evil—can possibly render *perfect service* unto God? Your hands are foul! How can your work be clean? How can it possibly be that you should produce sweet fruit when you, as a tree, are of sour stock and of bitter nature? O my Friend, it cannot be that darkness should produce light, nor death bring forth life! How can your thoughts, words and ways be perfect? And yet all must be perfect to be accepted.

Look again for I feel sure that *there must have been a blemish somewhere, as matter of fact*. As yet you are not conscious of a blemish, or of a fault and, possibly there is some justification for this unconsciousness. Looking upon you, I feel inclined to love you, as Jesus loved that young man who could say of the Commandments, “All these have I kept from my youth up.” But I must beg you to answer this question—*Has there not been a blemish in your motives?* What have you been doing all these good things for? “Why, that I might be saved!” Precisely so! Therefore, *selfishness* has been the motive which has ruled your life. Every self-righteous man is a selfish man! I am sure he is. At the bottom, that is the motive of the best life that is ever lived which is not actuated by faith in Jesus Christ. The Law is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” But you have loved *yourself*, and lived for yourself—how, then, can you have kept the first precept of the Law? What has been done by you has been done either out of a servile fear of Hell, or else out of a proud and selfish hope that you would win Heaven by your own merits. These are not love, nor even akin to it! The absence of love is a flaw and a very serious one—it taints and spoils the whole of your life. “It must be perfect to be accepted” and, if the *motive* is imperfect, then the *life* is altogether imperfect.

Moreover, it is not only your nature and your motive which are imperfect. My dear Friend, you certainly must have erred somewhere or other, in some act of your life. If you can say that you have served God and man without fault throughout all your days, you can say much more than I would venture to do! The Scripture also is dead against you when it says, “there is none righteous; no, not one.” If you can say that in not *one* action of your life, select what you may, was there anything blameworthy, anything that fell short, anything that could be censured—you say very much more than the best of men have ever claimed for themselves! As for the poor faulty being who now addresses you, I dare

not claim that the best deed I have ever done, or the most fervent prayer I have ever prayed could have been accepted in and of itself before God. I know that I have no perfection in my best things, much less in my worst.

Tell me, my Friend, was there not something wrong in your spirit? Was there not a shortcoming in the humility with which you worshipped? Or in the zeal with which you served? Or in the faith with which you prayed? Was there not something of *omission*, even if nothing of commission? Could not the work have been better done? If so, it is clear that it was not *perfect*, for had it been perfect it could have been no better. Might you not have lived better than you have lived? Might you not have been more pure, more generous, more upright, more loving, more gentle, more firm, more heavenly-minded than you have been? Then this confession shows that, to some extent, you must have fallen short and, remember, "It must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it."

Ah, I am talking very smoothly now, for I am only touching the surface and dealing with guess-work. But I fear there are greater evils underneath, if all were known. I think if I could read all hearts, there is not one here, however self-righteous he may be, who would not have to confess *distinct acts of sin*. Still, I will keep to the smooth strain and believe that you are as good as you seem to be. Indeed, I have a high opinion of many of you! I know how some of you have lived. You were amiable girls and excellent young women and have grown up to be careful, loving wives and, therefore, you say, "I never did anybody any harm. Surely I may be accepted." Or, perhaps you are quiet young men, blessed with excellent parents and screened from temptation—and so you have never gone into open vice, but have gained a most respectable character. I wish that there were more like you! I am not condemning you—far from it—but I know that your tendency is to think that because of all this, you must, in yourselves, be accepted of God.

Give me your hand and let me say to you, with tears—"It is not so, my Sister! It is not so, my Brother! It must be *perfect* to be accepted; there must be no defect in it." This is a deathblow to your self-confidence, for there was a time, some day or other in your life, in which you did wrong. What? Have you no hasty temper? Have no quick words escaped from you which you would wish to recall? What? Have you never murmured against God, or complained of His Providence? Have you never been slothful when you ought to have been diligent? Have you never been careless when you ought to have been prayerful? Have you always spoken the truth? Has a lie never fallen from your lips? Can you say that your heart has never desired evil—never imagined impurity? Remember, the *thought* of evil is sin! Even a wanton *desire* is a blemish in the life and an unchaste *imagination* is a stain upon the character in the sight of God, though not in the sight of man! "It must be perfect to be accepted."

I verily used to think concerning myself that I was a quiet, good, hopeful lad, addicted much to reading, seldom in brawls and doing nobody any harm. Oh, it was the outside of the cup and the platter I had seen! And when I was led by Grace to look *inside*, I was astonished to see what filthiness was there! When I heard in my heart that sentence of the Law of God, "It must be perfect to be accepted," I gave up all hope of self-righteousness! And now I hate myself for having doted upon such a lie that I could be acceptable with God in myself!

Have you never gone to live in an old house which looked like new? You had fresh paint, varnish and paper in superabundance—and you thought yourself dwelling in one of the sweetest of places—until, one day, it happened that a board was taken up and you saw under the floor. What a gathering of every foul thing! You could not have lived in that house at peace for a minute had you known what had been covered up! Rottenness had been hidden, decay had been doctored, death had been decorated! That is just like our humanity. We put on fresh paper, varnish and paint—and we look very respectable. But from below an abomination of the sewer gas of sin comes steaming up, enough to kill everything that is like goodness within us—while all manner of creeping lusts and venomous passions swarm in the secret corners of our nature! When lusts are quiet, they are still there. The best man in this place, who is not a believer in Christ, would go mad if he were to see himself as God sees him! No eyes could bear the horrible sight of the Hell within the human breast! Yes, I mean you good people—you very nice, amiable, lovable sort of people! You will have to be born again and you will have to give up all trust in yourselves, as much as even the worst of men must do! As surely as the chief of sinners are unaccepted, so surely are you—for a righteousness must be perfect to be accepted, there must be no defect in it—and that is not the case with your righteousness. You know it is not.

"Well," says one, "this is very hard doctrine." I mean it to be so, for I love you too well to deceive you! When a door has to be shut to save a life, there is no use in half-shutting it! If a person may be killed by going through it, you had better board it up, or brick it up. I want to brick up the dangerous opening of self-confidence, for it leads to deception, dis-

appointment and despair! The way to Heaven by works is only possible to a man who is absolutely *perfect*—and none of you are in that condition. Do not pretend to it, or you will be arrant liars! I put no fine face upon it—you are *not* perfect, no, not one of you, for, “all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.”

Thus, then, our text shuts out all self-righteousness. *It also shuts out all priestly performances.* There is a notion among some people that the priest is to save them, *alias* the minister, for men easily, in these charitable days, make even Dissenting ministers into priests! I have heard people say, “Just as I employ a lawyer to attend to my temporal business and I do not bother my head any more about it, so I employ my priest or my clergyman to attend to my spiritual business and there is the end of it.” This is evil talk and ruinous to the man who indulges in it! I will speak of this priestcraft very plainly. Remember, “It must be perfect to be accepted,” therefore all that this gentleman does for you must be *perfect*. I do not know what it is that he does, I am sure. I never could make out what a priest of the Roman or Anglican order can be supposed to do in his highest function of the “mass.” I have seen him walk this way and I have seen him walk that way—and I have seen him turn his back—and it has been decorated with crosses and other embellishments! And I have seen him turn his face and I have seen him bow—and I have seen him drink wine and water—and I have seen him munch wafers. I have seen him perform many genuflections and prostrations, but what the performance *meant*, I have not been able to gather! To me it seemed a meaningless display.

I would not like to risk my *soul* on it, for, suppose that during that service he should think of something that he ought not to think upon? And suppose he should have no intention whatever of performing the “mass”—what, then, becomes of those who trust in him and it? Everything, you know, depends upon the *intention* of the priest. If a good intention is not there, according to the dictates of his own church, it is all good for nothing, so that your souls all hang upon the *intention* of a poor mortal in a certain dress! Perhaps he has not, after all, been rightly anointed and is not in the Apostolic succession? Perhaps there is no Apostolic succession! Perhaps the man, himself, is living in mortal sin! Ah, me, there are many dangers about your confidence! Are you going to hang your soul on that man's orders or disorders? Mine is too heavy to hang upon so slender a nail, driven into such rotten wood! If you have a soul big enough to think, you will feel, “No, no, there cannot be sufficient ground of dependence in the best pontiff that ever officiated at an altar. God requires of me, myself, that I bring to Him a *perfect* Sacrifice, and it is all a device of my folly that I should try and get a sponsor and lay this burden on him. It cannot be done. I have to stand before the judgement bar of God in my own person, to be tried for the sins that I have done in the body—and I must not deceive myself with the idea that another man's performance of ceremonies can clear me at the Judgement Seat of Christ. This man cannot bring a perfect sacrifice for me and—“it must be perfect to be accepted.” O Sirs, do not be deluded by priestcraft and sacramentarianism, whether the priest is of the school of Rome or of Oxford—you must believe in the Lord Jesus for yourselves, or you will be lost forever!

This text makes a clean sweep of all other kinds of human confidences. Some are deceived in this way—“Well,” they say, “I do not trust in my works, but I am a religious person and I attend the sacrament. And I go to my place of worship pretty regularly. I feel that I must certainly be right. I have faith in Jesus Christ and in myself.” In various ways men thus compose an image whose feet are part of iron and part of clay. With that kind of mingle-mangle, many are unconsciously contenting themselves. But hear this Word of God—“It must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.” If we trust Christ and nothing else, that will be perfect! But if you are trusting Christ up to 15 ounces in the pound and yourself for the last ounce of the 16, you will be a lost man, for that last ounce is an ounce of *imperfection* and, therefore, you *cannot* be accepted of God!

There are some others who say, “I have suffered a great deal and that will make amends.” There is a current idea among men that all will go well with poor people and hard-working people because they have had their bad times here on earth. When a man has had a long illness and suffered a great deal in the hospital, his friends say, “Poor soul, he has gone where he is better off!” They feel sure of it because he has suffered so much! Ah, me, but, “It must be perfect to be accepted”—and what is there perfect in a human life, even if it is checkered with suffering, poverty and need? Ah, no! Poverty does *not* work perfection! Sickness does *not* make perfection! My text stands like a cherub, waving a fiery sword before the gates of Paradise, shutting out all fancies and notions, of which I will not now speak particularly, by this dread sentence—“It must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.”

II. This brings me to note, with great delight of heart, that as this rule shuts out all other confidences, SO THIS RULE SHUTS US UP TO THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST. O Beloved, if I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could never fitly tell you of Him who offered Himself without spot unto God, for He *is* absolutely perfect—there is no defect in Him!

He is perfect in His *Nature* as God and Man. No stain defiled His birth, no pollution touched His body or His soul. The Prince of this world, himself, with keenest eyes, came and searched the Savior, but he found nothing in Him. “In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” There was not the *possibility* of sinning about the Savior—no tendency that way, no desire that way. Nothing that could be construed into evil ever came upon His Character. Our perfect Sacrifice is without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

As He was perfect in His Nature, so was He in His *motive*. What brought Him from above but love to God and man? You can find no trace of ambition in Christ Jesus. In Him there is no thought of self. No sinister or sordid motive ever lingered in His breast, or even crossed His mind. He was purity and holiness in the highest degree. Even His enemies have nothing to allege against the purity of the motive of Jesus of Nazareth!

As His Nature was perfect, so was His *spirit*. He was never sinfully angry, nor harsh, nor untrue, nor idle. The air of His soul was the atmosphere of Heaven rather than of earth. Look at His life of obedience and see how perfect that was. Which Commandment did He ever break? Which duty of relationship did He ever forget? He honored the Law of God and loved the souls of men. He gave the Character of God perfect reflection in His human life. You can see what God is as you see what Christ is. He is perfect, even as His Father who is in Heaven is perfect. There is no redundancy, or excess, or superfluity in His Character, even as there is no coming short in any point.

Look at the perfection of His *Sacrifice*. He gave His body to be tortured and His mind to be crushed and broken, even unto the agony of death. He gave Himself for us, a perfect Sacrifice. All that the Law could ask was in Him. Stretch the measure to its utmost length and still Christ goes beyond, rather than falls short of the measure of the requirements of justice. He has given to His Father double for all our sins! He has given Him suffering for sin committed and yet a perfect obedience to the Law. The Lord God is well pleased with Him. He rests in the Son of His love and, for His sake He smiles upon multitudes of sinners who are represented in Him. My heart rejoices as I think of Gethsemane, Calvary and of Him who by one offering has perfectly sanctified all who put their trust in Him! “It is finished,” He said, and finished it is forever! Our Lord has presented a perfect Sacrifice! “It must be perfect to be accepted”—and it *is* perfect. “There shall be no defect in it”—and there is *no* defect in it. Glory be to God Most High!

Now, I want you just to let me stop preaching, as it were, while every man among you brings this Sacrifice to God. By faith take it to be yours. You may. Christ belongs to every Believer. If you trust Him, He is yours! Poor guilty Soul as you are, whether you have been a Christian 50 years or 10 years, or whether you are just now converted, if you believe, you may now come with Christ in your hands and say to the Father, “O my Lord, You have provided for me what Your Law requires—a perfect Sacrifice! There is no defect in it. Behold, I bring it to You as mine!” God is satisfied. What joy! God is satisfied! The Father is well pleased! He has raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places in token of that satisfaction!

Let *us* be satisfied, too! That which contents God may well content me. My Soul, when your eyes are full of tears on account of your sin and your heart is disquieted on account of your infirmities and imperfections, look right away from yourself “to the full Atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid.” The offering of Jesus is perfect and accepted! The righteousness of your Lord Jesus is without blemish and you are, “accepted in the Beloved.”

That delightful passage in Exodus came flashing up to my mind just now, where the Israelite sprinkled the blood on the lintel and the two side posts. Then he shut the door. *He* was inside: he did not see the blood any more. The blood was outside upon the posts and he could not see it—but was he safe? Yes, because it is written, “When *I* see the blood, *I* will pass over you.” It is *God's sight* of the blood of His dear Son that is the everlasting safeguard of all who are in Christ! Though it is most precious and sweet to me to look at that blood once shed for many for the remission of sins—and I do look at it—yet if ever there should come a dark night to me in which I cannot see it, still, *God* will see it, and I am safe! I am save because it is written, not, “when *you* see it,” but, “when *I* see the blood *I* will pass over you.” It is the perfection of the *Sacrifice*, not your perfection of *sight*, which is your safeguard! It is the absence of all blemish from the Sacrifice—not the absence of blemish from your faith—that makes you “accepted in the Beloved.”

Well, now, as is too often the case, I have run on so much upon the first points that I have not time enough for much more! But I was going to finish up by saying that I address myself, for a minute or two, to Christians, only. Listen, you that follow after righteousness, you that know the Lord! You are saved. You have not, therefore, to bring any sacrifice by way of a sin offering, but you have to bring sacrifices of *thanksgiving*. It is your reasonable service that you offer your bodies a living sacrifice unto God. If you do this, you cannot bring an absolutely perfect sacrifice, but you must labor to let it be perfect in what is often the Biblical sense of perfection.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you must take care that what you bring is not blind, for the blind were not to be offered. You must serve God with a single eye to the Glory of God. If you attend a Prayer Meeting, or teach a class, or preach a sermon, you must not do it with a view to your own selves in any way, or it cannot be accepted! The sacrifice must see—it must be intelligent, reasonable service—having for its objective the Glory of God. It must in that sense be perfect to be accepted.

And as it must not be blind, so it must not be broken. Whenever we serve God, we must do it with the whole of our being, for if we try to serve God with a bit of our nature and leave the rest unconsecrated, we shall not be accepted. Certain professors prefer one class of Christian duties and they neglect others—this must not be. Christ gave “Himself” for you and you must give your whole self to Him. To be acceptable, the life must be entire—there must be complete consecration of every faculty. How is it with you? Have you brought to the Lord a divided sacrifice? If so, He claims the whole.

Next, they were not to bring a maimed sacrifice, that is, one without its limbs. Some people give grudgingly, that is to say they come up to the collection box with a limp. Many serve Christ with a broken arm. The holy work is done, but it is painfully and slowly done. Among the heathen, I believe, they never offered, in sacrifice to the gods, a calf that had to be carried. The reason was that they considered that the sacrifice ought to be *willing to be offered* and so it must be able to walk up to the altar. Notice in the Old Testament, though there were many creatures both birds and beasts, that were offered to God, they never offered any *fish* on the holy altar. The reason probably is that a fish could not come there alive. Its life would be spent before it came to the altar and, therefore, it could not render a life unto God. Take care that you bring your bodies a *living* sacrifice.

I notice that many men are all alive when they are in the shop. The way they talk, the way they call out to the men and the way they bustle everybody about are conclusive evidence that their life is abundant. But when they get into the Church of God, what a difference! There may be life, somewhere or other, but nobody knows where it is! You have to look for it with a microscope. You see no activity, no energy! Oh, that these people would remember, “It must be perfect to be accepted!” That is to say, there must be *energy* put into it, soul put into it, heart put into it or God will not accept it. We must not bring Him the mere chrysalis of a man, out of which the life has gone, but we must bring before Him our living, worshipping selves if we would be acceptable before Him.

It is then added, “or having a scab.” It does not look as though it would hurt the sacrifice much to have a scab, yet there must not be a scab, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Above all, avoid that big scab of pride. When we feel that we are doing a grand thing and are acting in a most satisfactory manner, we may know that we are not accepted! A sermon wept over is more acceptable with God than one gloried over. That which is given to God with a sigh because you cannot do more—and with the humble hope that he may accept it for Christ's sake, is infinitely superior to that which is bestowed with the proud consciousness that you deserve well of your fellow men, if not of your God.

The sacrifice was not to be scabbed, or to have the scurvy. That is to say, it was to be without any sort of outward fault. I have heard men say, “It is true I did not do that thing well, but my heart was right.” That may be, my dear Brother, but you must try and make the whole matter as good as it can be! What a deal of scabbed service our Lord gets! Men try to be benevolent to their fellow creatures with an irritable temper. Certain people try to serve God and write stinging letters to promote brotherly love—and dogmatic epistles in favor of large-mindedness! Too many render to the Lord hurried, thoughtless worship and many more give for offerings their smallest coins and such things as they will never miss! God has many a scurvy sheep brought before Him.

Did you never bring any, my Brother? Did I never bring any? Ah, me! Ah, me! But still, let us mend our ways and, since the Lord Jesus offered Himself without spot, let us try to serve Him with our utmost care. The best of the best should be given to the Best of the best! We sometimes sing—

“All that I am, and all I have,

Shall be forever Yours."

Oh, that we practiced it as well as sang it! Would God that the best of our lives, the best hours of the morning, the best skill of our hands, the best thoughts of our minds, the very cream of our being were given to our God! But, alas, Christ's cause is sent round to the back door to get the broken meat and, "Mind you do not leave too much meat on the bone," is the kind of instruction that is given to her who hands it out! Christ Jesus is sent to the dung heap for the odds and ends! Cheese parings and candle ends are given to the Missionary Society. Perhaps the statement is too liberal—it would be well if they were! Three-pennies and four-pennies are gracious gifts from struggling tradesmen and poor work people, but they are hardly decent when sent in by folk who spend hundreds of pounds upon their own pleasure! To God's altar we ought to bring the best bullock from the stall and the best sheep from the fold!

I leave you to yourselves to judge whether it is not so. If you are not over head and ears in debt to the mercy of God in Christ, then it is not so. But if you are debtors to Divine Mercy beyond all compute, you shall, each one, reckon up for himself—"How much owe you unto my Lord?" If it is a debt you can never calculate—then give the Lord, from this day forth—the fullness of your being! May God grant that you and your offerings may be accepted in Christ Jesus! Amen and amen.

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