

CAMP LAW AND CAMP LIFE

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
 ON A THURSDAY EVENING, BEFORE LEAVING HOME FOR HIS WINTER'S REST.

“For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you, therefore shall your camp be holy that He sees no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.”
Deuteronomy 23:14.

I WILL scarcely allude to the context, which you ought to notice at home, but I must say as much as this—*the Lord cared for the cleanliness of His people while they were in the wilderness*, literally so—and this text is connected with a sanitary regulation of the wisest possible kind. What I admire in it is that God the Glorious, the All-Holy, should stoop to legislate about such things. Such attention was very necessary for health and even for life, and the Lord, in condescending to it, conveys a severe rebuke to Christian people who have been careless in matters respecting health and cleanliness. Sainly souls should not be lodged in filthy bodies. God takes note of matters which persons who are falsely spiritual speak of as beneath their observation. If the Lord cares for such things, we must not neglect them. But oh, what condescension on His part that His Spirit should dictate to Moses concerning these grosser concerns! I bow before the majesty of a condescension to which nothing is too low.

Observe, also, how it shows us the all-reaching character of the Law of Moses. It overshadowed everything! It guided, arranged, restrained or suggested all the acts of the people under its tutorship. Wherever they were, in their most public or private acts, the people were always under the supervision of the Law. By reason of their sinfulness, this holy code of regulations became a yoke which they were not able to bear. Still, it was a very necessary and salutary Law, for which they should have been grateful at all times, since it was for their good in every respect and tended to bless them both spiritually and physically, socially and religiously.

Dear Friends, the great thing that I would bring out at this time is the *spiritual* lesson of the text—*how the Lord would have His people clean in all things*. The God of Holiness commands and loves purity—purity of all kinds. He says, “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” Cleanliness of body is sometimes neglected by persons professing godliness—I speak to their shame. It ought not to be possible for Grace and dirt to meet in the same person. I must confess I feel a great horror at Christian people who are so dirty that one cannot sit in the same pew with them without nausea. This is the trial of many visitors among poor people who profess religion, that certain of them are not clean in their houses and in their clothes.

Filth may be expected in persons of unclean hearts, but those who have been purified in spirit should do their utmost to be pure in flesh, clothes and dwelling. If cleanliness is next to godliness—and I am sure it is—it ought to be observed by those who profess godliness. Does not the same text which says, “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” also say, “and our bodies washed with pure water”? The Christ who redeemed us did not redeem us that we should be covered with filthiness! He has redeemed the body as well as the soul and He has made it to be the temple of the Holy Spirit—surely we must cleanse His temple and not suffer it to be defiled.

I like the idea of those sailors on board ship who knew that the ship was going down, and therefore put on their Sunday best that they might die as clean and neat as they could. I would not care to die in filth, or to live in it. A Christian should be clean in all things—in his person, in his house, in his garments and in his habits. For his own sake, but especially for the sake of others, he should carefully observe sanitary laws lest he be found guilty of the command which says, “You shall not kill.”

Now, if God speaks about this matter of cleanliness, I am sure I may do so and *ought* to do so. If anyone is offended let him take a basin of clean water and wash the offense away. If anyone thinks me personal, let him have a personal bath and so obliterate the mark. If cleanliness is a point which God does not omit, He would not have His servants silent about it. Still, I pass on from that to the greater lesson of the passage. You will notice that the Presence of God in the midst of His people was all-reaching and everywhere. No part of the camp was exempt from God's walking in it. Not merely in the Holy Place was God, or in the Holy of Holies between the cherubim, but He was everywhere in the streets of the canvas city and in the outskirts.

When troops of Israelites went out to war and consequently cast up temporary camps, they were to remember that God was still walking in the midst of them—and this was to be the great motive power of their lives—the Presence of God! The high privilege of being a people near unto Jehovah involved continual watching that nothing might offend His Sacred Majesty. O Sirs, every man, whether a Christian or not, ought to remember that God is everywhere—that there is no escaping from His Presence—that even the shades of night furnish no veil under which we may sin with impunity! But as for the *chosen*, who know the Lord, it is for them to have the most respect unto One so glorious, and yet so graciously near. We may ever pray that—

*“Our weaker passions may not dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.”*

He is daring, indeed, who would sin in the face of God. Sin to God's teeth? Approach the Throne of the Great King and be disloyal there? God forbid! The Lord forgive us our audacities! There is a special Presence, higher and other than the universal Presence of God and as this is the peculiar privilege of the saints, it should be to them a constant check, or a perpetual spur. The Presence of God is to us a check to evil and a spur to good. About this Presence and its effects, I am going to speak at this time, as the Spirit of the Lord may help me. Oh, for an anointing from the Presence of the Lord! There are three things which I shall speak of. The first is *an instructive comparison*, which I may draw from this text. The text speaks about the camp of Israel and that is a comparison which may very aptly set forth the nature of the Church of God, for the Church is *spiritually* a camp.

Secondly, here is *a special privilege*—“The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up yours enemies before you.” And then, thirdly, here is demand for *corresponding conduct*. “Therefore, because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, therefore shall your camp be holy, that He sees no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.” May this lesson be learned by us all this day!

I. First, then, AN INSTRUCTIVE COMPARISON. The Church of God is in many respects comparable to a camp. It is a camp *for separation*. Men who are encamped are separated from the traders, householders and others near whom they are tarrying. They are separated especially from the adversaries with whom they are at war. When you come near to a camp you are challenged by the sentry, for you must not come there without warrant. In wartime a picket is sure to be in your path whichever way you come near to the camp, for during a campaign warriors are a separated people and must keep themselves so.

Such ought the Church of God to be. We are crusaders and are separated from the mass for the service of the Cross which we bear on our hearts. We are in an enemy's country and we must keep ourselves to ourselves very much, or else we shall certainly fail of that holy military discipline which the Captain of our salvation would have us strictly enforce. An attempt is being made, here and there, to make the Church like the world and it has already been carried out by actual experiment. The most ridiculous and even discreditable things are, in such cases, done in the name of religion and under cover of Church purposes. O Friends, this custom comes from the lowest depth and is full of the cunning of Satan! It will be our destruction if the attempt should succeed!

The great object of a Christian should be to separate the Church more and more entirely from the world. Our Lord was not of this world, but was crucified outside the gate—“Let us go forth therefore unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” The reproach today, dreaded by feeble minds, is that of being narrow-minded, bigoted, strict, precise. Let us willingly take it up. It is *His* reproach—let us not attempt to escape it. Let it be our resolve that as far as ever we can, we will be nonconformists to the ways even of worldly Christians. Let us not be conformed to this world, but transformed in the spirit of our minds. Ours is the holy dissidence of spiritual dissent from evil, the sacred separation of Separatists from error.

Are we a camp, dear Friends? The question might lead us to judge others—I will put it in the singular. Am I a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb? If so, I must, as a soldier, live in my barracks, or abide in my lines. I must be separated and I must, as a follower of the Lamb, “go forth unto Him outside the camp,” being determined to live the separated life as He sets it before me. Every true Church, then, is a camp for separation.

Next, it is a camp, because *it is on the defensive*. As I have said before, we are marching through an enemy’s country. The children of Israel marched through the wilderness and the Amalekites frequently harassed them and slew the hindmost of them—as the Amalekites harass us and, alas, they slay the hindmost of *us*! It is not those that are at the front for their Captain, not those who follow close to the standard, nor those who go forth armed in His strength that fall by the enemy. Those who play about in the rear—who gather up the stones of the desert and hoard them up as a treasure—it is these upon whom the Amalekites pounce!

But their arrows are far flying and none of us is safe from the enemy, except as the Lord keeps us. Therefore we must go about armed at all times. I heard say of a certain clergyman, that he told his bishop, when he went to a ball, that he was “off duty”—but his bishop very properly replied, “When is a clergyman off duty?” I put the same question to a Christian, “When are you off duty?” Never! The policeman wears a badge on his arm to show that he is on duty—you wear nothing upon your arm—it is upon your whole self! Buried with the Lord in Baptism, the sacred watermark is on you from head to foot—the token that from now on you are dead to the world and are alive in newness of life! You cannot strip yourself of so comprehensive a distinction. It is impossible to erase it. It is an indelible token and if you are false to it, then you are traitors, indeed!

If you are living as you should, you are living unto Christ, always and ever, in every place and at all times. You are to serve God in your enjoyments, as well as in your employments—in your leisure as much as in your labor. You are to serve Him, not only in what is mistakenly called His House, but also in *your own house*. Yes, and you, yourself, are to always be the temple of the living God! Brothers and Sisters, we are soldiers at all times and must never doff our uniforms! We must keep rank and march in close order, for every day is a battle for the Church of God! There is no truce between the Church and error, between the saint and sin! If there is a truce, it is an unholy one and must be broken, for God Himself has proclaimed eternal war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent! Our condition is one of warfare and nothing else, until the last great victory shall crush the serpent’s head. The Church is a camp, for it is on the defensive.

It is a camp, too, especially, because *it is always assailing the powers of darkness*. It is carrying the war into the enemy’s territory. That, no doubt, is the special intention of the words of our text. Read the ninth verse, “When the host goes forth against your enemies, then keep you from every wicked thing.” Learn, then, that we are to *go forth* against the enemy. It is not for the Church of God to protect her own borders and think, “This is enough”—she must go forth to conquer fresh territory for her Lord! There used to be in our Churches too much of contentedness with isolation and inactivity. The hymn went up from a quiet, do-nothing assembly—

*“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,
A little spot enclosed by Grace
Out of the world’s wide wilderness.”*

We dare not feel content to let the wilderness remain what it is! We may not give up vast regions to the dragon and the owl. No, no, dear Friends, we are going to break up more ground and make the little spot into a far wider space. And if the garden is walled around, we hope to build a wall round many more acres of ground and so enlarge the garden of the Great King!

The Church of God is like fire and you cannot say to fire, “You must burn comfortably at the corner of that haystack and never think of going any farther.” “No,” says the fire, “I will burn it all down.” “But there are farm buildings yonder—do not touch those sheds and barns.” The fierce fire is insatiable. It never stops while there is anything to be consumed. Even so, a true Church has within herself an ambition for her Lord that His kingdom may be extended everywhere! And that ambition is as insatiable as that of Alexander, who a conquered world could scarcely content. If there were only one sinner left, it would be worth the while of all the saved millions to continue to pray day and night for that one sinner and to set all its tongues moving to tell to that one sinner the Gospel of Christ!

Alas, we are a very long way off from having a lone soul to watch over! A few are saved and untold millions are perishing! Feeble are the lamps which as yet are kindled—the vast proportion of the world is wrapped in tenfold night. We are as yet only a handful of corn on the top of the mountains and our desire should be to grow till “the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.” We have a world to conquer and we cannot afford to loiter! We have a kingdom to set up for the Lord of Hosts and we must not sleep, for the adversaries of the Lord are raging! We are an army, sworn to war against the Canaanites of error and sin—to cast down their walled cities, to break their idols—and to cut down their groves.

The Church of God is the great army of peace, purity, liberty, love—she wars against war, she wars against sin, she wars against oppression, she wars against falsehood, uncleanness, intemperance, unrighteousness—and her fight has only yet begun. Do you not feel, my Brethren, dwelling in this wicked city of London, that our appropriate description is a camp?

And next, dear Friends, the Church of God is a camp because *we are on the march*. A camp is pitched in one spot for temporary purposes, for the army is moving on tomorrow and then the camp will be in another place. The Israelites, especially, were not *dwelling* in the desert—they were only marching through it into the land that God had promised them. It is well for us to remember that we are, ourselves, in a movable camp, marching, marching onward, marching forward—ever marching and moving! This is not our rest. We are not at home. We are on foreign land. Alas, I am afraid that we do not realize this, but are like the children of Israel who took 40 years in the wilderness to perform a journey which, I suppose, might have been accomplished in 40 days or less.

It was not far, after all, from Egypt to Canaan. We should think nothing of it as a journey now. And even for that great mass of people, who necessarily traveled slowly, it needed not to have been a long passage—but they took 40 years over it because they marched this way and that way, in endless mazes, lost, wandering rather than journeying towards a definite spot! Do you not think that a great many Christian people are practicing the same method of motion without progress? Have you not seen some of them, like the King of France, march up a hill and down again? Is not that the way with most? Bravely they lift the lance and hold the shield. They rush forth to the fight. They ride round the enemy and take stock of him—and come home to tell what they have seen—and that is all they do!

Multitudes are forever playing at being Christians. Do you not note their childish seesaw, up and down, up and down? And their movement leaves them no higher than at the first. God save us from this! The camp must go onward. Thus says the Lord, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” We ought to be advancing in Divine Grace, in knowledge, in earnestness, in holiness, in usefulness—and if not, we scarcely resemble the figure of a camp.

Yet, once more, no doubt a camp, as formed *for temporary purposes*, was a token of the Church, for although the Church stands still and abides, yet in her individual members she is subject to the same law of decay, death and change as the rest of the world. Soon shall the camp cease and the soldiers become *citizens*, and the tents be exchanged for mansions. The Church is militant upon the earth for a season only. We are here today and gone tomorrow. O Brothers and Sisters, we are at present rather a camp than a city, for we pass away and our Brethren also, as the days fly by.

I remember this Church and congregation 36 years ago and my Brother, William Olney. *Alas, my Brother, W. Olney has himself since crossed the stream!* Behind me will recollect it, too, but neither he nor I can recall all the names of our Brother soldiers who were with us then. They are gone from us at our Captain’s call. I say not that they are lost, for they are not so—but they are lost to us for present aid. You cannot say that a thing is lost when you know where it is and we know where they are—but they are not here and we sadly miss them. Others have sprung up, but a whole generation has passed away. Part of our legion have forded the dividing stream—

*“And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.”*

To us, also, there remains a rest, but we recollect that here we have no continuing city, we seek one to come. We endeavor to make the camp as comfortable as the desert will permit, but it can never be a home.

When you are in the East, your tent-bed awaits you. You sleep well, you wake up, there is your breakfast. But very soon they roll up the tent, pull up the poles and put the whole thing on camels—and you are again homeless on the burning sand. You can never reckon upon anything like steadfastly abiding in one place when you are following camp life. Such is the life of the Believer—camp life is his lot—and it is well for him to be prepared to rough it. Here we are in

a tabernacle, that is, a tent which is to be taken down—but we are going to a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God! We have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and we are wending our way there—but, as yet, we are like Bedouin Arabs, or like our own soldiers on a campaign when they have no permanent barracks—but abide in tents.

We remember, very sadly, that when rough men get into camp—and soldiers, as a rule are rough enough—they think that they may do anything. In this respect the camp of God is to differ from all other camps, as much as white from black. To this day it is a sort of popular error that a soldier may indulge himself in uncleanness and be less blamable than other people. I have heard the remark, “The young man is in the army. What can you expect of him?” But God’s people are to be soldiers and theirs is to be camp life—and their camp is holy and so must each one of them be. Thus says the Lord, “When the host goes forth against your enemies, then keep you from every wicked thing.” “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you; therefore shall your camp be holy; that He sees no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.”

A camp of angels should not be more holy than a Church of saints among whom the Lord God has taken up His abode! Thus much upon the very instructive figure of the text.

II. Secondly, I come to notice A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. The text mentions a privilege specially promised to Israel, but I am sure, to a very high and real degree, enjoyed by ourselves. “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you.” By this walking is intended *a special Presence of love*. The Lord is present in His Church in a higher sense than in the world. The Lord walks in the midst of His Church as a man takes pleasure in the walks of his garden. The Church is the garden of the Lord, His Paradise. “His delights are with the sons of men.” He looks on this one, and on that—all plants of His own right-hand planting—He looks to see where the knife is needed, that He may prune the vine, or where refreshment is needed, that He may water the roots.

The Lord, with unutterable care, is in the midst of His Church. Remember how He says, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” If you want to find God on earth, you must look among His chosen! Where is a father most at home but with his children? God has said, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” While Israel was a dweller in tents the Ark of the Covenant was among them, the token of the Lord’s Presence—and in His warring Church the great Captain of the host is ever lovingly near! Hear how He gives the assurance, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

There are special lines of love to His own which make us, sometimes, ask, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?” But so it is our Lord Jesus walks up and down our ranks and sees our order or disorder, our courage or our cowardice—and this is the best reason why we should behave ourselves aright. He loves us and we must not grieve Him. See the force of this argument, “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp; therefore shall your camp be holy.” God is present in the camp of His people *with a special Presence of observation*. He sees all things, but His eyes are, in the first place, fixed on His Church. With burning glance He searches the very heart of professors. I tremble while I speak this word! It is often bowing me to the dust.

With regard to the ungodly, I may say of them, “The times of this ignorance God winks at,” but to His people He says, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all *your* iniquities.” There is a discipline in the House of God which is carried on, not by Church officers, nor by the Church itself, but by the Providence of God. Men die before their time and others are sick who might be well—sick, I mean, through ill behavior in the Church of God. Thus says the Apostle—“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” If you are not my child I have nothing to say about your behavior—I leave you to your own father. But if you are my boy, my child at home, I must speak to you, I must correct you for I bear a responsibility towards you. So it is with God. He will bear much from the ungodly which He will not endure from His own people.

Here is a text which I would like to wrap up in my heart—“The Lord your God is a jealous God.” That wondrous love of His must have jealousy linked with it. Our God loves us so much, so entirely—with all the Infinity of His Godhead—that if we do not love Him in return and yield the holy fruits of love—He is grieved and angry. “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” See, then, the argument—if it is so, that God is specially watchful over His Church, let your camp be holy. The Lord cries, “Be you holy; for I am holy.” “Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” It is not for Jehovah’s camp to be fouled. He would not have any putrid matter, anything offensive remain within the camp

literally—and spiritually He will have us keep all filthiness away from His Church. He will have us just, true, pure, sincere, holy—and if we are not so—His anger will burn like fire. Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us! What more can we say?

Again, dear Friends, the peculiar privilege of Israel is to have *a special Presence of salvation*. “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you.” God is with His people, to help them in their times of trouble, to rescue them out of danger, to answer their cries in their necessity, to save them in the hour of temptation. He is with us to deliver us in all things in which we require deliverance! Have we not found Him so? I could touch this string with no feeble or wavering hand. This very week I have found Him with me, to deliver me in many things—many things that seemed to lay me low—matters which concerned the Lord’s Church. Trouble was there, but the Lord was there, also. Oh, what a blessing it is! “The Lord is there.” Have you any troubles and difficulties, dear Friend, and are you a child of God? Do you belong to Christ? Well, the Lord is with His people to deliver them. Should not this be a grand argument why the camp should be holy, for if He hears our prayers, we are bound to obey His precepts. If He will give us our will, let His will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven. God help us to do so!

And, next, the Lord is with the camp of His people, not only to deliver them, but as *a special Presence for victory*. He routs their enemies and gives His saints success. All the hope that the Church has of doing any good in the world must come from the Lord’s being in the midst of her! If any error is to be trampled down as straw for the dunghill. If any sinner is to be snatched like a lamb from between the jaws of the lion. If any dark neighborhood is to be enlightened, it must be because God is with His people. “Without Me you can do nothing.” This word is most true! It is He and He alone, that can give up our enemies before us. Very well, then, let the camp be holy, lest we lose that Presence and He is gone.

Once more, it is *a special Presence in covenant*. “The Lord your God.” Listen to that word—“Jehovah your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you.” The living God is our God! Men have many gods, even in England—gods of their own making—but my God is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I believe in the Old Testament God who is the same as the God of the New Testament. I abhor the idea of a new Godhead! Jehovah is One and the same to me. But oh, if He is our God by special covenant. If He has taken us to be His people and we have taken Him to be our God, it is most delightful—but it involves us in a grave responsibility to be a holy people!

If we can say—

*“Tis done, the great transaction’s done.
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine,”*

then let us be holy and let our whole camp be holy! Otherwise our vows are a fiction and our professions are a lie! Do we wish to provoke the Lord and to vex His Spirit? The Lord save us from this evil! See, then, the special privilege! I have already told you what it involves.

III. So now I have only to dwell for a minute or two upon the last point a little more distinctly—CORRESPONDING CONDUCT. “Therefore shall your camp be holy that He see no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.” Observe, then, that *this rule, that the camp be holy, applies to the most common places wherein we are found*. “Therefore shall your camp be holy.” As I have already said, men generally think that they may take great license in a camp. But the Lord says, “Therefore shall your camp be holy.” When you are out for a holiday, be holy. When you say, “Now we have one or two friends coming to the house and we will indulge ourselves somewhat,” be holy and let the conversation and the entertainment be holy. Let not only the Church meeting be holy, but let the family gathering be holy, whether at Christmas, or on a bank holiday, or at another time.

Let the common meals be holy, no excess or murmuring being tolerated. Let the board and the bed be holy. Let the body and the mind be holy. Let the most common act you do be holiness to the Lord. Let the bells upon the horses ring out only this note, “Holiness unto the Lord.” “Holiness becomes Your house, O God,” but holiness becomes, also, all the houses of Your people. Holiness is the ordained livery of a servant of God and he that does not wear this garment has disgraced himself and his Master. He is wearing, in fact, the livery of the King’s enemies! Let him mind what he is doing.

If my memory does not deceive me, when Oliver Cromwell was first contending with the king, the soldiers who joined him were mostly gentlemen farmers and they wore their own buff coats—and as many on the other side were

dressed much the same, mistakes were made—and, in a rough-and-tumble fight, they did not know cavalier from roundhead. So Cromwell said, upon a certain occasion, that all his soldiers must be dressed in a certain color and not a man should be in his troop who did not come by such a day with such a coat on.

Well, you say, why should they wear a uniform? Some of them did not like it. But his orders were peremptory, that not a man should be with him if he did not wear the regulation dress, since by their common array they knew each other and could not be mistaken in a scuffle. Holiness is the white raiment of the Believer—be sure that you put it on, because otherwise we shall not know you—and the world will not know you and you will be mistaken for an enemy. I am afraid you will be treated as having gone over to the enemy if we catch you in the usurper's black instead of the king's white! The Holy Spirit arrays you in the white raiment of holiness that you may shine out bright and clear and distinct before the sons of men.

But now, notice this, too. While this holiness pertained to their most common things, it was also ordered that *every unclean thing was to be put from them*. “That He see no unclean thing in you.” This is an awful text—I will not preach about it, but I will just repeat it to you again—“That He see no unclean thing in you.” Ah, me! We often see unclean things in ourselves, do we not? Yes, and we often overlook much uncleanness and do not notice it because our eyes are dim. We have lost, perhaps, the *spiritual* nostril that would smell the unclean thing. Our senses have become perverted by the foul world in which we live. But then, think of this—the pure and holy God—the thrice holy God—He speaks of Himself in this sort, “That *He* see no unclean thing in you.”

Brothers, Sisters, what a house-cleaning this calls for! What hard sweeping this requires—that, “*He* see no unclean thing in you”! Remember, the pith of that text concerning the Paschal Lamb lies in God's sight of the sprinkled blood. Notice, “When *I* see the blood, I will pass over you.” So here the very force of the text lies—“that *He* see no unclean thing in you.” Oh, for Grace and watchfulness to keep clear of touching the unclean thing! Let us come continually to the washing place—even to the opened Fountain. Let us beseech the cleansing Spirit to operate as with fire and burn His purifying way through and through our souls that in the Church of God the Lord may not see any unclean thing in any one of us!

Note well *the fearful warning which is added*. If there is in the camp an unclean thing tolerated and delighted in and He sees it—if it becomes conspicuous and grievous to *Him*, then the worst consequences will follow—“Lest *He* turn away from you.” Oh, what would happen to us if the Lord were to turn away from us as a Church? Horror takes hold on me at the thought! The pastor will die in due time—that is a small matter—for the Lord can send another. But if the Lord were to pass away from us, what an overwhelming desolation! Ichabod would be written in large capital letters across this house if the Lord were gone! And yet my wonder often is that He has not gone when I remember the unclean things that I have to see and mourn over!

I see very little compared with what the Lord sees, but I see enough to make me tremble! The Lord sees much about us that grieves Him, even when we think there is nothing amiss. Let us pray that the Lord does not go from us! I invite you earnestly to pray that during my absence God may keep all the camp in holy working order—that He may see no unclean thing—and may not turn away from His people. O Lord, in Your love bear with us and abide with us evermore! I have done, but there is a little fragment that follows my text which I want some of you to get before I go. Read this. This follows the text. It is a curious thing that it should follow the text. I think that it is put here on purpose for me to have a word for the sinner before I have done.

“You shall not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto you: he shall dwell with you, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of your gates, where it pleases him best: you shall not oppress him.” I wonder whether any runaway has come into our place of worship tonight? Certainly there are some of Satan's slaves here! I would recommend you to run away from the devil and not give him a moment's notice. Flee from his service directly! There is no getting away from sin except by instantaneous flights. Run for it! Run at once! Steal away to Jesus! Do not stop to think twice! The prodigal said, “I will arise, and go to my father,” and he arose and went to his father.

Deliberating about it and giving notice never answers anybody's purpose in the matter of repentance unto life. Instantaneous flight is your wisdom! Run away in a twinkling! If you do run away and get among the Lord's people, we will never give you up to your old master. He may come here after you, but we know him, and are not to be deceived by

him in this matter. He has come here after many—but we have not given up any of his runaways and, by God’s Grace, we will never part with you, but defy the man-catcher to take you away! Jesus says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”—and so, you see, He will harbor you and not return you to your master.

There were slaves in Moses’ day, but if they ran away nobody ever sent them back to their master and therefore it was not much of slavery, after all. The devil has many slaves, but if they run away to Jesus they shall never be sent back! Come, then! Dare to be free from Satan’s power! Strike for liberty! Your tyrant lord has no right to you! I know you sold yourself, but you were not your own to sell—you were stolen goods! The devil can have no more property in you than you had in yourself and that was nothing, for you are not your own! Fly away, poor hunted Dove, to Jesus’ wounds and when once you get there, the hawk cannot reach you! Safe in the Rock of Ages you shall dwell as a dove in the clefts.

Though I have dealt faithfully with the uncleanness of professing Believers, I now invite the vilest and the foulest to come to Jesus for safety and liberty—

*“There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”*

Ransomed sinners may dwell among us, in whatever place they shall choose! Neither will we oppress them with hard questions or irksome duties, but we will bind them to be free as we are ourselves bound to liberty in the name of the Lord our God! God bless you, dear Friends, and during my absence may you be fed with the finest of the wheat! May the blessing of the Lord rest upon you! If we do not meet again in this wilderness below, may we meet, when camp life is over, in the City above, to go no more out forever! The blessing of the Lord rest on you evermore!

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—668, 745, 87.***

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS—Up to this date I have had no opportunity to enjoy rest, but have been at first suffering and now slowly recovering. This, however, is not lost time if I have but Grace to improve the trial. Let us always seek sanctification through affliction rather than escape from it. I have no question that there is great wisdom in the Lord’s laying aside His instruments. It is for His own Glory, for thereby He shows that He is not in need of them—and it is for their humbling—for hereby they learn how deep is their need of Him. The uninterrupted reception of blessing through one channel might breed in our foolish hearts an idolatrous confidence in the means and therefore there comes a break in the use of that means, that the Lord may be the more tenderly remembered.

We may be sure that if the Lord dries up a cistern, it is because He would have us fly to the Fountain of inexhaustible strength. I desire to rejoice that, in all these 36 years, with sicknesses so frequently upon me, I have never been compelled to drop either the weekly sermon or the monthly magazine. There has either been an interval of power, or I have been a little forward with the work, by His Grace, when the stroke has laid me aside. May I not say “Up to now the Lord has helped me”? Having received help of God, I continue unto this day, and I shall abide in my calling so long as there is work for me to do for my Lord.

I send my loving Christian salutations to all my hearers and readers, with earnest request for their prayers for myself, personally, and for a blessing upon the sermons and all the work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The times are out of course, the walls of human confederacies are crumbling, the fashion of this world is passing away—“but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

Mentone, December 6, 1890.

Yours in loving service for our Lord Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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