

BARRIERS BROKEN DOWN

NO. 2214

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 26, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own
righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*
Romans 10:3.

You that have your Bibles open, kindly follow me from the first verse of the chapter. It begins, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.” If you really desire that men should be saved, pray for them! It is an empty wish, a mere formality, if you do not turn it into prayer. Every loving desire for any man or woman should, by the Believer, be taken before God in prayer. We cannot expect that God will save men unless His people pray for it. There must be travail before the birth and there must be travail in prayer with God before we can expect that many will be born, again, into the Church of God. Oh, for more prayer! Let us cry to God in secret, in the family and in all our assemblies, that God would save the sons of men!

But prayer, if it is sincere, is always attended with effort. Therefore the Apostle begins to teach as well as to pray. He prays that Israel might be saved and then he explains the difficulties in the way and tries to remove them. You pray, dear Friend, do you? But you never speak to the individual for *whom you pray*. Is your prayer sincere? I will not question it. But your prayer has hardly reached that pitch of passionate earnestness which will secure an answer, for if you were in downright earnest, you would go to the person for whom you pray and explain the way of salvation! You want your boy to be a scholar. Then you send him to school. You want your girl to learn a certain trade. You put her apprentice to it, do you not? In the things of common life, that which you desire you use *means* to obtain. Oh, that in all our Churches we might feel that while effort without prayer is presumption and prayer without effort is hypocrisy, the holy blending of prayer and labor will produce, for certain, a grand result!

If we labor for souls, we must not be content unless souls are really saved, for the Apostle says, “For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God.” Well, does not that satisfy you, Paul? They are zealous for God! They are red-hot! “No,” he says, “not unless it is in the right way. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” We feel very thankful when we see tears stream down the cheeks, but, you know, people cry at the theater and there is not much in it. Pray God it may not end in a shower of tears, but that the heart may bleed as well as the eyes weep! It may happen that we have induced our Hearers to give up some outward sins. So far, so good. But it is written, “You must be born again.” And if this vital change is not experienced, all outward reformation will land them short of Heaven! Beloved, the Apostle’s love for souls led him to pray and led him to labor—but it led him to be very concerned that none should stop short of real living faith in Christ—and justification by His blood and righteousness.

When we are in the throes of a revival and we think men are turning to Christ, let us be happy and let us not throw any cold water upon anybody—but let us see that it is really the work of Grace in the hearts of our Hearers. Let us take care that the plowshare goes down deep. Some soil needs even cross-plowing and scarifying. Let us do the work thoroughly, for it is only those that are really converted that will stand. We do not need a lot of people that will run in at one door of the Church and out at the other—we want saving work and our prayer should be—“Lord, quicken the people into Divine Life by Divine Truth, through the Divine Spirit!”

Now observe that the Apostle, being thus earnest about souls, endeavors to be especially clear about the doctrine of Justification by Faith. If we want men to be truly converted, we must set before them the plan of salvation very clearly and distinctly. I meet with hundreds of persons who have had some kind of work upon their hearts, but they tell me that they walk in a mist. They have not quite understood it. They feel that they are on the Rock, but they were not quite sure

what the Rock really is. It is a good thing that our zeal for God should be according to *knowledge*, that we know *what* we believe and *why* we believe it. That we *know* that we are saved, *how* we are saved and *why* we are saved, for if there is a mistake here, it may be fatal!

Martin Luther, who, as we all know, continually preached the doctrine of Justification by Faith, said, one day, that he felt half inclined to take the Bible and bang it about the people's heads, for they seemed as if they would not get a hold of the doctrine that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and by Him, alone! I suspect that knocking people's heads about with the Bible would not effect any very great result—but that was Martin Luther's way of putting it. Keep hammering away on that nail—"Believe, believe, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Well, now, that was the particular battleground of Luther's day, so that he said, "The doctrine of Justification by Faith is the article of a standing or a falling church." If a Church holds and preaches that, it is a Church of Christ, notwithstanding many blunders. But, whatever it may preach, if it does not preach *that*, it is to be questioned whether it is not a fallen church, a church that has lost its true position.

The fight today is the same as in Luther's day. The words have changed and men make other pretenses, but the fight all along the line is still this—Are we saved by our own merits, or by the merits of another? Are we righteous through what we *do*, or are we righteous through what Christ has done? Is sin put away by tears and repentances, or is sin washed away by the precious blood of Christ and by that alone? Beloved, I trust that our pulpit will never give an uncertain sound upon this matter!

In our discourse we shall endeavor to show you that while there are two righteousnesses, our own righteousness and the righteousness of God, there will always be, as there has always been, a conflict between the two. Men will choose their own righteousness and they will not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

You that are fellow workers for Christ will be especially interested in this text, for it sets forth three difficulties in the way of a man's salvation. The first is *ignorance*—"They, being ignorant of God's righteousness." The next is *self-will*—"And going about to establish their own righteousness." And the third is *flat rebellion*—"Have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

I. Well, now, our first difficulty is with IGNORANCE. "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," according to the Church of Rome. "Ignorance is the mother of error," according to the Word of God. We love the spread of knowledge, although there is a knowledge which it were better not to know, as there is a philosophy that is nothing but vain deceit and not true wisdom. What we want our fellow men to possess is *spiritual* knowledge. Especially do we desire that they may have, first and chiefly, knowledge with regard to God's righteousness, for the difficulty is that *men do not know what that righteousness is which God requires*.

Do you want to be saved by your own righteousness? Do you know what kind of righteousness it must be? To be accepted, it must be *perfect*. That is to say, if you have committed but *one* sin, you have stained your character in the sight of God and your hope of perfect righteousness is gone. God's Law requires obedience from the first moment that the creature understands that Law, as long as that creature lives. Mark what it requires of you—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind." Have you done that? "And your neighbor as yourself." Have you done *that*? Why, there is not one of us who has done it! If we had kept the Law of God completely, from the first command to the last, from the first day until now—even that would not save us, for, if there were to be one sinful word or deed during the *rest* of life, it would spoil the whole—and God could not accept our righteousness.

When a man commits one sin, he is guilty of disobedience to all the commands of God, for, "he that offends in one point is guilty of all." Here is a chain containing 20 links. If I break one of them, I have broken the chain. True, there are 19 perfect links, but if number 10 is snapped, down goes the cage over the mouth of the mine and the miners are killed! Suppose that I should be required to produce a perfect vase of alabaster, or clear crystal, as a present to the Queen? But my maid has chipped it just a little. What is to be done? I may possibly find somebody to use some patent cement and fasten the little pieces in their places, but when all is done, it is chipped—it is not perfect—and if it must be perfect before royalty can accept it, I must get another vase, for this one will not do.

Now, dear Friend, while I am talking to you about a chip, here, and a chip, there, in your life, I am sure you must be saying, "Do not talk so, Sir. Why, some of us have not only got chipped, but we are smashed right up! And as to broken

links, why, we have fairly melted the chain—there is not a link left. We have nothing, absolutely nothing, that we can bring before God.” I am glad to hear it! If you are lost, you are the very ones Christ came to save. And if you have no righteousness of your own, you have got to the halfway house of salvation! When you strip a man, you are partly on the way to clothing him. When a man is changing his old clothes for better, he must first get the old ones off. Oh, how glad I am to meet with a real sinner! There are many sham sinners about. I saw, one day, in Italy, a fellow sticking out his arm with an awful sore and he begged of me. As I suspected that he had manufactured that sore with a little sulfuric acid, or by some such process, I did not feel the least pity for him. We have lots of people who come confessing their sins—“Oh, yes, we are sinners! We are sinners!” They do not mean it—they are only sham sinners. A real sinner, one who feels his guilt, is a “sacred thing,” as Hart says, “the Holy Spirit has made him so.” He is an empty vessel that God is going to fill! He is a broken heart that God is going to make new! But our trouble is that the mass of people are not aware how perfect and how complete any righteousness must be before God can accept it.

The next difficulty is that *men do not know that God has provided a righteousness* for all Believers. For every soul born of Adam who will believe in Christ, there is a perfect righteousness! Not ours, but God’s. God came here in human form not bound to be obedient, but, “being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient”—obedient to His own Law and fulfilled every jot and tittle of it. He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” And His obedience is *ours* if we believe! God looks at us as if we had done what His Son has done! Christ died and rose again—and God regards *us* as having died in Him and reckons that we are risen with Him and now live in Him! Our righteousness is the righteousness of Another, even of the Son of God—a *perfect* righteousness, a Divine righteousness, an everlasting righteousness! In the Book of Daniel it is written that Messiah, the Prince, should “finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness.” He was “made sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Alas, how many there are who do not know that God justifies the ungodly—that sinners can be regarded as just through what Christ has done and suffered and, that, believing in the precious Christ whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation, the vilest are fair to look upon in God’s esteem and the far-off ones are made near by the blood of Christ! Oh, I wish that men knew it! I have sometimes thought that if they did but know it, if they did but really hear the Gospel, they must believe it. You that preach Christ in the streets, go on preaching Him! I saw a man preaching, the other day, with no creature but one dog to listen to him and I really thought that he might as well have gone home. But I met with a story yesterday which I know to be true and it showed me that I was making a mistake. There was a woman who, for years, had been in such dreadful despair that she would not even listen to the Gospel.

She came to be very ill and she said to one that called upon her, “You sent a man to preach under my window three months ago and I got a blessing.” “No,” the friend said, “I never sent anybody to preach under your window.” “Oh,” she said, “I think you did, for he came and preached and my maid said that there was nobody listening to him. I did not want to hear him, but as he made so much noise, my maid shut the window and I lay down in bed. But the man shouted so, that I was obliged to hear him, and I thank God I did, for I heard the Gospel and I found Christ! Did you not send him?” “No,” said the good man, “I did not.” “Well,” she said, “then God did! There was nobody in the street listening to him, but I heard the Gospel—and I got out of my despair and I found the Savior—and I am prepared to die.”

Fire away, Brothers! You do not know where your shot will strike, but, “there’s a billet for every bullet.” I believe that there is some soul whom God means to bless whenever we preach the Gospel, depending upon His Grace. But the mass of mankind are ignorant of the righteousness which God requires and ignorant of the righteousness which God has provided.

Many are ignorant as to how they are to receive this righteousness. If there is such a righteousness, they say, how are we to get it? The current notion is, “I must *pray* so much. I must *weep* so much. I must *feel* so much.” Ah, this is the common ignorance, whereas men should know that—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

“Why, *everybody* preaches this,” says someone. I know they do, but people do not understand it, although you keep on preaching it, for until God the Holy Spirit makes men to know the meaning of what you say, they will but nod their heads and pass on. Though I heard the Gospel from my childhood and was brought up upon the very knee of piety, I did not understand what I must do to be saved till I heard that text preached from—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the

ends of the earth.” I do not believe that my ignorance was the fault of the preacher. It was certainly not the fault of my father, or my mother—and not the fault of the Bible which I had read through, again and again—it was the fault of these dim eyes that I could not see! Go on! Go on, you preachers of the Word! Spread abroad the knowledge of this great fact, that, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.”

The worst of this terrible ignorance is that the mass of mankind *do not know HIM who is our Righteousness*. Who is the Righteousness of God? Who is the Blessed One? God’s only-begotten Son! God, the Word made flesh, born at Bethlehem, nurtured in the carpenter’s shop, toiling here below and wearing His life away for the souls of men—extending His arms upon the Cross. Giving His side to be pierced, His soul to be breathed out, His body to be laid in the tomb that men might be saved! O Jesus, in Your wounds is our salvation, but men do not know it! O Jesus, Your death is the death of sin, Your life is our life unto God—but men do not know it! Alas, alas, men still go on in their blindness and ignorance! Still is the Lord of Life despised and rejected of men and still His servants cry, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

You see our great difficulty is human ignorance—ignorance, dear Friends, even of the *facts* of the Truth of God. You do not know how near to this place, in the very midst and heart of London, there are tens of thousands who do not know the name of Christ! You think it incredible, but I know that it is so. There are multitudes that have never read a chapter in the Word of God since they went to Sunday school as children. And they never darken the threshold of God’s House. There are streets, in neighborhoods not far from here, where, if one man goes to a place of worship, he is marked by all his neighbors as a strange character. Let me turn aside for a moment and ask you how, in this city of London, are we to get the Gospel to the working men—to a great number of them? How does it get to some of them?

How? Oh, little Mary sings it on father’s knee on Sunday night. He has not been out to a place of worship, but his little girl has been to the Sunday school. Or his son Jack has been to the mission and comes home and tells his father what the preacher said. He will listen to his own children when he will listen to no one else! The way to increase the number of those who are not ignorant is for us so to see the things of Christ that others who have never seen them may have, from us, an intimation of what *we* have seen! Oh, it must be very painful to a blind man for another to say to him, “Now I am looking over a delightful landscape. Over there I can see a beautiful piece of water and beyond the hills I see the sea. There is a ship going along.” “Oh,” the man says, “I wish I had eyes that I could see, too!” The Holy Spirit makes us see, so that, as we tell the story, we may set others longing to also see.

I think I reminded you once before, that when the prodigal came back, his father said, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.” But, you will notice, he never fed him. The father does not say anything about that. He says, “Bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let *us* eat, and be merry.” Well, it is the servants and all the rest of the household that are to eat. There is nothing said about killing the fatted calf for the prodigal. No, no, you see he had lost his appetite, and others must begin to eat, first, and then, when they began to eat, he was sure to join in with them. There is no surer way of begetting an appetite than seeing other people eating. Let us enjoy the things of Christ so much that poor sinners’ mouths will water and they will begin to ask, “What is your Beloved more than any other beloved? What is this righteousness of which you speak? What is this wonderful thing?” We have need to tell others what we know, for ignorance, even of the simple facts of the Gospel, is extremely common.

Others are in great ignorance as to the *excellence* of the Gospel. They do not know the peace, the joy, the rest it brings—

*“His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love Him too.”*

But they think that it is all mere talk—a something all very well for parsons and for some few other people to get a hold of—but nothing for the working man, nothing for the man of business, nothing for your noble gentleman who has his heaven at Newmarket and his bliss at Epsom. Ah, dear Friends, I would to God they knew the Pearl of Great Price, the incomparable value of salvation by blood—for then would they reckon the highest glory of this present world as unworthy to be compared with the least delight of the Kingdom of God!

With many, this ignorance is *willful*. Nobody is so blind as the man that does not want to see! Nobody so deaf as the man that does not wish to hear! Many are like the hogs in harvest—very deaf when they are told to get out of the cornfield. And so, when sinners run riot in their sins, they are very deaf, indeed, when they are told to quit them and fly to

Christ for refuge! Some of you, perhaps, do not want to know too much. When you come to that part of the Bible that begins to touch your conscience, you say, “Shut that up.” You will go on somewhere else. You do not want to know! Willful ignorance will bring terrible damnation. If there is salvation and you do not want to know it, then you deserve to be cast away.

There are some who are ignorant *despairingly* and I pity them, poor souls! They sigh and cry, “Oh, I cannot be saved, I am so guilty. My heart is so hard!” The devil tells men, first, that they can be saved any day they like, so they may put it off. Then, immediately afterwards, he says, “Salvation is not for such as you. You never had enough sense of sin. You never will have enough faith. God will never save *you*.” Ah, my dear Friend, I wish I could make you understand that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out, for He, Himself, has said, “He that believes on Me has”—has *now*—“everlasting life.” He shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck him out of Christ’s hands. Some of us will give Christ great glory when we get to Heaven. I think that some people will meet us at the gate and say, “What? And have *you* got here?”

I should not wonder if it was some elder brother. That elder brother was a good fellow. He was a real child and he was always with his father and all his father had was his. Yet he was surprised to see the prodigal come home after wasting his father’s living. Ah, but it is those that cost the Lord so much in whom His infinite Grace will be displayed! They will glorify Him most. O you despairing ones, if you must faint, faint away on to the bosom of Christ! Swoon away into the arms of the almighty Savior and then it will be well to have swooned and you will find, in Him, your strength!

II. There is another thing that stands in our way that is worse than ignorance and that is SELF-WILL. Men, ignorant of God’s righteousness, are said to be “going about to establish their own righteousness.” In other words, to set up the *poor idol* of their own righteousness. Man sees God’s righteousness and, instead of accepting it, he says, “I think I could match that. I will set up my own righteousness!” There is a treasure of gold and the man says, “No, I will not have that. I think that I could make a sovereign at home out of a bit of brass.” Fool that he is! How shall he mimic God? If I were at Heaven’s wide-open gate and a voice should say, “Enter freely,” and I replied, “No, I think I prefer the Surrey Hills, or a place down by the seaside,” what a fool I would be! But, even then, not so great a fool as when forsaking the righteousness of God, I want to set up my own! A human thing at best—how shall that match the Divine righteousness? An imperfect thing at best—how shall I compare that with the perfect righteousness of Christ? A fading, floating thing, always apt to be damaged by the next moment’s temptation—how can I be so foolish? A ridiculous thing, an ignominious thing, a filthy thing.

Paul said that his righteousness, which was of the Law, was “blameless”—and yet he counted it dung—that he might win Christ! Dung, the most filthy thing! Here, scavenger, take it away! Have any of you any righteousness of your own? I do not believe that even the dustman would take it! He would say, “No, the carts are not for carting away man’s righteousness—we have no place bad enough to shoot it into.” Shoot it into the bottomless pit! No, even there they have not any righteousness, for they know their true condition. Human righteousness is a great lie—it is filthy rags. Away with it from off the face of the earth!

What do men try to do? In what *vain efforts* are they spending their time and strength? According to the text, they go about “to establish their own righteousness.” I think you will better understand it, if I read it, “They go about to *set up* their own righteousness.” You see it is a dead thing. “See here,” they say, “we will make it stand.” If I had a corpse here—I am glad that I have not—well, I set it up and it tumbles down. Nevertheless, I will put its legs out a little wider and see whether it will stand. Down it goes! Now I will prop it up. Surely, I can make this dead thing stand. But, no, it has a tendency to fall—down it goes! Have I not seen a sinner try to set up the corpse of his own righteousness and make it stand? At last he has been obliged to say what the fool said in the old classic, “It needs something inside.” And so it does, for until there is life within, it will not stand! Even so, our righteousness has no true vitality, no life within and it will not stand.

Or, to use another illustration, it is like a man trying to patch up an old house. You find such in country villages—a place which nobody has ever repaired for 50 years! I do not know if there is any landlord, but if there is, he would like to forget that he has such property! The main beam is nearly cracked through. The lath and plaster have gone, long ago, and the birds go in and out the best parlor, whenever they like—the whole thing is tumbling down. A man buys it and he says, “Now, you know, it is a pity to pull this house down. I think I will repair it.” So he puts in a beam there, just under

the roof, and he puts a strut here and another timber there and, by the time he has spent as much as would have built a new house, he has got a very handsome ruin left, but nothing more.

I think it was Charles the First who used to swear, “God mend me.” Somebody said it would be an easier job to make a new one of him and I believe it! When men say, “God mend me,” they had better say, “God make me new.” So, as to your righteousness, if you have a lot of it and it is very good. If you have been christened, or baptized, if you like, and confirmed and have always gone to your place of worship—and are so good that you wonder you can live in such a wicked world as this—if you have all that righteousness, the best thing to do with it is to get rid of it, for it will ruin your soul! But this is what men do—they try “to set up” their own righteousness.

And then the text says that they “go about” to do this—“Going about to establish their own righteousness.” That is to say, they set about it with great zeal. Some of you who know the Lord can remember how you thought you would do it. Why, at first, when you started as a young man, you were never going to do any wrong! You were going to have a perfect righteousness of your own. You had an ugly temper, however, and it broke out, indeed. “Well,” you said, “I shall never do it again.” You came down to breakfast and you were as bad-tempered as ever, so you said, “Never mind, I will set it up now. I will be a teetotaler. That will be a grand thing.” So it was, but, somehow or other, down tumbled your righteousness again!

Then you went to a place of worship. You said, “I will always be here.” You began to think that you would grow into a saint, but you did not. Down tumbled your righteousness! Always it went and you, all the while, tried zealously to set it up. “Going about” implies great earnestness. When a man says, “I am going about a thing,” he means that he is going to take his coat off—going to work in his shirtsleeves. He is going to toil at it for many hours. I remember how I set to work in my shirtsleeves to make a righteousness of my own! And I did very nicely, indeed, while it was dark. But when a little light from the Cross broke in, I began to see the filthiness of it. And you, my Friend, think yourself very beautiful when you cannot see yourself! But let the mirror be held before you, you would begin to see the spots of filth that defile the very best of your righteousness. Ah me, how foul the righteousness of men is—and yet they go about to set up their own righteousness.

To “go about” to establish a righteousness means, in the next place, that men have varied ways of doing it. Shall I tell you what I frequently meet with? I have talked with a person and said, “Can you trust in your own works?” “Oh, no, Sir, I can never do that.” “Well, can you come to Christ and take the righteousness of God?” “Well, Sir, no. I do not feel enough my own emptiness.” Look! This man is going to bring his own emptiness to help him! He actually thinks that if he has not any righteousness, his own emptiness is good for something and, if he can get to feel *that*, he will come and bring his feelings of emptiness to commend him to Christ! Did you ever hear of such a thing? You go to him and you say, “My dear Man, salvation is not on account of your *feelings*.” Each time you drive him out of his refuge of lies, he hastens back to the old ground again—something of himself.

Suppose there is a ship out at sea and the people on board feel that they are safe. One of them says, “I know that we shall not drift far out of our course.” “Why?” “Because we have such a big anchor on board.” You say, “Ah, he is a cockney. He must be a fool who believes in an anchor *on board*.” Why, it is no good to anybody! It is when you “let go” the anchor and lose sight of it—and the anchor gets an unseen grip down below, that it is good for something. But while the anchor is on board, it is only so much dead weight for the ship. You want to have your anchor on board, do you? You do not like it to “enter into that which is within the veil”—that is too mysterious. You want to *feel* something, to have something of your own. O pride! O self-will! God will have salvation to be all of Grace and man will have it of debt!

God gives the promise of His Grace and man puts his penny down to *pay* for it! Men’s pennies and God’s promises do not go together very well to buy Heaven. He says, like a king, “You may have it for nothing,” and we say, “Lord, we think we could make up a little something to buy it.” Well, then, you will never have it! His terms are free, rich, Sovereign Grace—a sinner with nothing—receiving everything from God! He may have it. He may have it *now*. None can say no to him. But he stands chaffering, trying to pay his penny, as if God kept a shop! Has God come down to stand in your market and cry to you, “Here, bring your gold and your silver to purchase My favor”? You know not who He is, for all things are His! If He were hungry, He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him. Will you have salvation freely? If so, take it freely. But if you will *buy* it, you and God can never agree.

Let me just close this point about human will, by saying that the efforts of men for their own salvation are *deadly efforts*. God will save them one way, but they want to be saved by another! God says, “Here is medicine. Take it; drink it.” Man says, “No, I will grow my own drugs in my own garden and I will compound my own medicine.” And he goes and takes his own dose. And can he ever get well in such a way as that? God says, “I will forgive.” Man says, “I will try and *deserve* to be forgiven,” as if that could be possible. I have heard that the Romanists say that venial sins are a kind of sins that *deserve* to be forgiven. What sort of sin must that be? Yet some men seem to think that somehow or other they can deserve to be forgiven! That would not be forgiveness at all! Come, come, you vilest of the vile, you lost and utterly undone! Come, come, you that have no righteousness, or the ghost of a shade of a shadow of a pretense of any! Come as you are! There is everything you need in Christ. Come and have Him and you shall not be refused! But reject His terms and salvation can *never* be yours.

III. Now, very briefly, I want to speak upon the third difficulty, which is a gross evil, namely, FLAT REBELLION.

Observe my text, dear Friend, if you forget everything else. I say, remember what the Lord says—“They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” This is a *strange word*. “Have not submitted themselves.” Do you not wonder that such a word is used? Here is a criminal who will not submit to be pardoned! Here is a sick man who will not submit to be made well! Here is a man with a broken leg who will not submit to have it healed! Here is a poor beggar in the street who will not submit to be made into a gentleman! Why, the word seems quite out of place, does it not? It shows you the monstrous absurdity of self-righteousness, that men will not submit themselves to that which is the greatest blessing that Heaven, itself, can bestow! It is a matter of *submission*.

While it is a strange word, it is a very *searching word*. Is it so, that, the reason why I am not saved is that I will not submit? Do I stick out? Have I an iron sinew in my neck? Am I such a self-willed fool that I will not submit before my Maker—will not yield, even, to have salvation for *nothing*? Am I so proud that I scorn to be a pauper before God? That is just it. That is the reason why many have not peace. If they were bankrupts, if they were cleaned right out, they would have perfect rest of soul, but still they stand out and, in their self-righteousness, fight against God!

It is a very *true word*. I am sure that there is many a sinner who has not anything to be proud of and yet he is as proud as Lucifer. Why, there are harlots that are proud of their own righteousness! There are drunks proud of their own righteousness! I do not know where they get it, but they are proud of it. I have heard say that a dustman can be as proud as my Lord Mayor. And so the vilest sinner can be proud of his own righteousness. “Why,” you say, “he has nothing to be proud of!” No more have you—I mean you good, moral persons—you who never do anything wrong, as you think. You have not any more righteousness than he has, if it comes really to be measured up and tested by the Word of God. Still, it is so—the worse the man, the harder he is to bow before the righteousness of God.

It is a very *suggestive word*. “They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” They will not acknowledge that God is King. They quarrel with His Sovereignty. How can the rebel be forgiven when he begins to question whether the king is king? When he begins to deny the rights of the magistrate to condemn him, how can he be pardoned? You must yield, my Friend! Submit to the fact that God is God, or else you will not submit to God’s righteousness! Man thinks that God is hard, austere, demanding too much—and while God puts before him everything for nothing—yet still he says that the price is too high! It is *his heart* that is too high, his *proud looks* that need bringing down. Oh, that God would bring them down! The man will not submit to the power of God. He will not yield himself up to God to work with him, and in him and for him. He wants to do all himself and then, if he got to Heaven, he would throw his cap up and want to share the glory! But it will not do. It is all of Grace from first to last—and the sinner must consent that it shall be so or else the gate of Heaven will never give him admittance!

Lastly, it is a very *cheering word*. “They have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” You ask, “And is that all that I have to do—to submit myself? Is that all?” There is a feather in the cap of your pride. Take it out! You have a weapon of rebellion by your side. Throw it down! Just submit yourself, with folded hands, with the rope around your neck. Say, “Lord, if my soul is sent to Hell, I deserve it. I submit and I plead for mercy. I plead the precious blood. I not only submit to take that plea, but I delight to take it. I am happy to believe that—

*‘You have promised to forgive
All who on Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie—
Give me Christ, or else I die.’”*

Beloved Friend, may the Holy Spirit lead you to submit! You have been kicking and struggling—now submit. You have been despairing and talking about its being presumptuous to believe. Submit! Give all that up. No more of your talk! Come to faith! When a man submits to God, that man has the victory. When God is King, you are safe. When you take Christ to be everything and you are nothing—then neither death nor Hell shall ever divide you from the heart of God! When you are not your own, you are Christ's, but so long as you are dependent upon self, you do not know the Lord and you *cannot* know Him.

May God bless this simple testimony to each and all, and to His name be praise! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 9.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—554, 556, 538.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

It is very difficult to know what report to give, week by week, concerning MR. SPURGEON'S illness. Before last week's sermon had reached country readers, he had apparently become much worse and the gravest apprehensions were entertained. Then came an improvement which made everyone full of thanksgiving—but this, again, was followed by a return of the terrible delirium which has been such a trying portion of the present illness. One thing we can say, MR. SPURGEON is in the Lord's hands and He will do with him what is right.

When friends read that there is an abatement of the most serious symptoms, let them not slacken their supplications, but, “continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” On the other hand, if all hope of recovery appears to be gone, let them still plead with the Lord, if it is His gracious will, to raise up His dear servant and strengthen him for future service.

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