

THE HONORED GUEST

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.”
Luke 19:6.

ARE YOU prepared, like Zaccheus, to give the Lord Jesus Christ a glad and grateful welcome? If we would obtain the full benefit of His devoted life, His atoning death and His triumphant Resurrection, we must receive Him into our hearts by simple faith and entertain Him with tender love. Outside the door of our heart, Jesus is a stranger—He is no Savior to us—but inside the heart which has been opened, by Divine Grace, to admit Him, His power is displayed, His worth is known and His goodness is felt! My dear Hearers, you have heard of His fame, you have witnessed the miracles He has worked upon others and now it remains that you receive Him, yourself, to ensure your own well-being. He stands at the door and knocks! You must open to Him. The promise is, “If any man will open unto Me, I will come in and sup with him.” “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” Not upon all who heard was the privilege conferred, for many, when they heard, did not believe. Alas, they provoked Him, and so they perished in their sins! But those who hail Jesus as a Friend, salute Him as an honored Guest, sit at His feet, hang on His lips and find how He lights every chamber of their soul with joy, satisfies every craving of their better nature and enriches them with all the endowments of adopted children!

In many respects Zaccheus supplies us with a noble example. He shows us how to receive the Savior. You will observe that he received Him speedily. “He made haste and came down.” It is not always easy to come down from a tree with great speed. He came down, however, as fast as he could. There was no hesitancy in his manner. I daresay his heart was down before his feet! In like manner they who would receive Christ must receive Him now. This is not a call or a counsel to be trifled with. The procrastination of Felix, which led him to say, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for You,” is a very dangerous spirit. Let those who talked as Felix talked beware lest they perish as Felix perished! “To-day, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Zaccheus made haste. They who receive Christ heartily must receive Christ immediately!

We notice, too, that *Zaccheus received the Lord obediently*. When the Master said, “Make haste,” he made haste. Hardly had He said, “Come down,” when down he came. If you, my Hearers, be likewise willing and obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land. Christ likes us to be obedient to Him, though He speaks to us less as a Lawgiver than as a Savior and a Friend. If we refuse to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, how can we reasonably expect to find rest unto our souls? The words of Jesus must be deeply respected and diligently observed by those who would have Him for their Rock, their Refuge and their Hiding Place. Let Him be your Counselor if you want to partake of His redemption! Render allegiance to Him as your King if you would enjoy all the Grace of His priestly mediation and intercession!

There was also a *thorough heartiness on the part of Zaccheus in receiving Christ*. He made a great feast for Him. He did not admit Him as one who intruded. It was not with cold civility, but with cordial hospitality that he greeted Him. I think I see the satisfaction that sparkled in his face! I think I hear the salutation that leaped from his tongue, “Come in—come in, my gracious Lord! Never did my house entertain so welcome a guest as You are!” Would you receive Christ, you must throw the doors of your heart wide open! Then your eyes, your lips—every muscle of your body will express your earnestness. Your whole spirit, soul and strength will be stirred to enthusiasm if you know His worth and feel the honor He confers on you. A man who finds a treasure hid in a field will congratulate himself on his good fortune. A woman, when she embraces her first-born child, will dote on him with exquisite fondness. Shall no strong emotions prove our sincerity when we receive the Lord of Life and Glory?

And mark you, too, this Chief of the Publicans *received Christ spiritually*. His convictions were in keeping with his conduct. When he distributed his goods to the poor, and made a bold confession of his faith before his fellow men, there

was proof positive that Christ had not only crossed the threshold of Zaccheus' house, but had also penetrated the chambers of his heart! Ah, Beloved, it is useless to receive Christ nominally, professionally, ceremonially, or with rites and ceremonies, to do Him empty homage! By a sincere reception of Him who was sent of God, your nature, your disposition and your habits will be transformed from what they were, and conformed to what He is—and the change will be conspicuous, for if you are in Christ, and Christ is in you, all will become new!

A prominent feature, however, so distinctly stated that it should not be carelessly overlooked was this, that he received Him joyfully. This was crowning evidence of the purity of his motives and the artlessness of his actions. In such mirth there could be no guile. Ask now, *Why do not all men thus receive Jesus Christ joyfully? How is it that some men receive Him with such exuberant joy? In what ways do those show their joy who have thus received the Master?*

I. WHY IS IT THAT ALL MEN DO NOT RECEIVE CHRIST JOYFULLY?

This is our first question. They need Him, all of them. There is no difference in this respect. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are all sold under sin. God has concluded the whole race of man in unbelief. He has shut them all up in condemnation! There is no escape from the universal doom except by the way of the Cross. Jesus Christ comes to save—comes with pardon in His hands, with messages of love, with tokens of favor—yet most men bar the doors of their hearts against Him! There is no cry heard in their souls, “Lift up your head, O you gates! And be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!” Instead thereof, there is a sullen cry, “Come prejudice! Come unbelief! Come hardness of heart! Come love of sin—bar the doors and barricade the gates lest, perhaps, the King of Glory should force an entrance!” Men treat the Savior as they would treat an invader who attacked their country! They seek to drive Him away! They would gladly be rid of Him. They cannot endure His Presence. No, they can scarcely endure, some of them, to hear about Him in the street! Why is this? The chief reason *lies in the depravity of man's nature*. You never know how bad man is till he comes in contact with the Cross!

Although the crimes of savage, uncivilized men may appear to you far more heinous than any that are committed in our favored country where just laws are, for the most part, enacted, and opportunities of education generally enjoyed, yet the propensity to do that which is evil in the teeth of a knowledge of that which is good, the subtlety of perverting the Truth of God in the clear light of Divine Revelation, the faithlessness of that foul ingratitude which can betray the most tender friendship, are never so painfully illustrated as in view of the Crucified! To despise the name of Jesus, to reject the love of God, to conspire against the Ambassador of Peace, to take the inhuman, devilish counsel—“This is the heir; let us kill Him!”—this was the last offense of the wicked husbandmen in the parable. Nor does the parable exaggerate the treachery. For this is the greatest offense of human nature, when it says, in effect, “This is the Incarnate God, let us reject Him. This is the Word made flesh, let us disgrace Him. This is the Father's beloved Son—let us betray Him!” Oh, Human Nature, how blind must be your heart, how seared your conscience not to see the beauties of Christ! How base must you be to despise the love and tenderness of such a Savior!

Were we to select secondary causes, however, which spring out of this deep-seated depravity and discriminate between the various classes of offenders, we would say that *many men reject Christ instead of receiving Him joyfully out of sheer ignorance*. For this ignorance there is not much valid excuse. There are thousands of persons, even in this highly-favored, greatly-enlightened country, who really do not know what the Gospel means! The knowledge of salvation is within their reach, but they have no desire to acquaint themselves with this best of all the sciences. We are all sinners, they say, but they do not know what they mean. In the jargon of general confession, they lose sight of their own personal transgressions. The plan of salvation by a Substitute, which is the gist of the whole matter, never dawned on their understanding. They do not know the great Truth of God that Jesus took our sins and suffered for us in our place that justice might be satisfied, that mercy might be magnified and that we sinners might be liberated and, therefore, it comes to pass that whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Being ignorant of this, they are still depending upon their own works, merits and professions—or they are relying upon their baptism, their confirmation, or their identification with some ecclesiastical system by means of some outward ceremony—instead of understanding that *salvation is by faith*, a thing of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter. This ignorance of the blessed Savior prevents many from receiving Him joyfully. So was it with the woman of Samaria—hence the Savior said to her, “If you had known the gift of God and who it is that speaks to you, you would have asked, and He would have given you living water.” Lest you perish through lack of knowledge, Brothers and Sisters, do entreat the Lord to guide you in the reading of Scripture, and in listening to the exposition of Scripture, that you may get a clear understanding of the way of the Lord. “That the soul should be without knowledge is not good,” for ignorance is the parent of many infatuations!

To refuse attention, to resist evidence, to rebut exhortation in the instance of full many, exhibits *a spirit of gross unbelief*. They will not believe in Jesus. They will not acknowledge Him to be the Son of God—they will scarcely believe that the Man ever lived who had a right to the homage which His few disciples offered Him! The Atonement they look upon as an old wives' tale and they account the Resurrection from the dead as an idle dream! I will say but little of their excuse. They are not open to conviction. They live in darkness because they have barred every window of their soul against the Light of God. The precious Doctrine of Christ bears on its face the genuine stamp. Its authenticity is engraved upon its very forefront. Their stolid disputations cannot diminish its value or its virtue. They wrong themselves when they denounce or disparage the Truth of God as it is in Christ.

Others are actuated by *a positive aversion to the Savior*. They have no sinister reflections to cast on the story of His life, the purity of His manners, the holiness of His Character, or the benevolence of His mission—but they do not desire to be saved from their sins—they rather enjoy reveling, unrebuked and undisturbed, in the gratification of their own sensual propensities! They do not want to be saved from drunkenness! They would rather go on with the drink. They do not want to be saved from the lusts of the flesh—they would sooner pamper its gross appetites! They do not want to be saved from pride or self-confidence—they would rather indulge their towering ambition! They do not want, in fact, to have a divorce proclaimed between them and their sins—they would sooner discard the high obligations of the Divine Law and act upon the expedience of the life that now is—than forego a pursuit or a pleasure in hope of eternal life! Hence they cannot bear the name of Jesus! They recoil from it, unable to conceal their enmity. Religion is not merely insipid—it is positively nauseous to them! The singing of a hymn in the house would put them out of temper. Did their wife or their child mention the Cross of Christ, or faith in His precious blood, they would either sneer and ridicule with unseemly jest, or else their temper would boil over with malice and wrath! The Lord pluck that black heart out of you, Man! The Lord give you a new heart and a right spirit! You will have to bend or else to break! If you will not turn, you will burn! If you do not repent of this hatred of Christ, now, you will feel remorse enough for it hereafter. In the day when He comes in the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and the dead, you will seek in vain to elude His eyes, or escape from His wrath!

You will find that the reason for not receiving Christ in many others is the fact that *they are worldly, and eaten up with too many cares*. A pitiful apology and very perilous! Such paltry excuses will bring poignant regrets. The hour of death can do little to rectify the years of life misspent. Not then can you seek God, if you have never sought Him before! Oh, you are taken up with the farm and the merchandise, with your daily labors and diversions, your losses and your gains heaping up, not knowing who shall inherit. These canker worms eat up your souls. Would that men were not such fools as to be always providing for this poor tenement of the body, while they neglect the precious jewel it encloses—their immortal soul—occupied with trivial personalities, while reckless of their real estate. They are crying, “Buy, buy,” in Vanity Fair, while the Lord of Life and Glory passes by! Yet they heed not. Talk of the main chance, but they miss the wise choice. They sell gold for dross—they lose their souls and get Hell!

Still more inexcusable, I think, are those who reject Christ because *they are taken up with the world's frivolities*. Some people live in a whirl of fashion where repentance would be accounted vulgar! Not in sportive gaieties, but in pen-sive solitudes do penitence and contrition find room for exercise. Ridiculous as it may sound, some people are far too genteel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! He is fit company, in their esteem, for publicans and sinners, but into their drawing rooms, were He to enter, He would soon be expelled! They want Him not in the upper circle of the *haut ton*—neither would He be kindly received in the lower circles, among the frequenters of music halls and dancing saloons. Ah, no—as of old, so now—“There is no room for Him in the inn.” The world is ready enough to welcome actor, singer, dancer, punster, anyone who can amuse them! But as for Christ, who stands with bleeding hands and cries, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest,” they despise Him! They miss the soul of beauty for gaudy charms and bubbles! They turn from the source of real joy to indulge in silly laughter! They push away the real and leap after the shadow! They forsake the overflowing fountain and fly to the broken cisterns that can hold no water!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a miserable spectacle! It is a dreary sight to see a sinner despising mercy, a drowning man rejecting the lifebelt, a sick man declining the physician, a man entering the gates of death refusing life and immortality! Oh, Sin, how you have fooled men! How you have made them hate themselves and act cruelly to their own souls! What suicides they commit! What a sacrifice of their noblest nature! They go down to Hell with a verdict of *felo de se*. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself! You have destroyed yourself! They reject Him shamefully whom they should have received joyfully! They carry out their own will and they perish in their willfulness! And now we ask in the next place—

II. WHY DO SOME MEN RECEIVE HIM JOYFULLY?

The answer is simply *because Divine Grace has made them to differ*. Grace has subdued their stubborn will, illuminated their darkened understanding, changed their depraved affections and made their whole mind to judge of things after a different fashion. Do not suppose that we who have received Christ were naturally any better disposed to Him than others. Oh, no! If, when the seed was sown, we were like the honest and good ground in which it took root, there had been a previous tillage upon our hearts to make them ready! We would not have been found willing had it not been the day of God's power! I think we all unite in saying—

*“Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste
And perished in our sin.”*

As for the reasons and inducements which prompted us to receive Christ joyfully, I may speak very plainly for myself. *I received Christ because I could not help it*. I was at my wits' ends. I think no man ever flees to Christ for refuge, or seeks shelter in the Port of Gospel Peace until he is quite certain that every other harbor is shut up. We make Christ our last resource! We try everything else. We make grand resolutions to do good works, or to attend gorgeous ceremonies. We try trivial formalities, or paltry superstitions—anything—the silliest conceit or the emptiest quackery! We go the round of folly before we discover the path of wisdom. At length I must go to Christ, or else woe is unto me if I win Him not! Helpless and hopeless, in sheer distress we cry out, “Give me Christ, or else I die.” Henceforth He is not merely our choice, but a positive necessity to us to have Him as our hourly, daily and eternal portion! Oh, the strait unto which I was brought when I received Christ! It was Christ or death! Salvation by Christ, or damnation without Him! I received Him because I could not help it. I had no alternative. How many of you are in the same dilemma? How many of you will fly to Him in similar destitution? Driven before the tempest, catching a glimpse of the lighthouse, you cry out—

*“Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to Your bosom fly.”*

Well may we receive Christ joyfully since He works such wonderful changes in us, and so beneficent! He cheers the grievous past. It was all black and threatening with the memory of our provocations. He sprinkles His blood upon it and now it becomes bright and beaming with mementos of the loving kindnesses and tender mercies of the Lord. He illuminates the present. There was nothing but gloom and black despair till He shone as the Light of Life in our dwelling! Then life and salvation dawn upon us like the dayspring from on high. He disperses the clouds that hung over the future. The outlook was dark and threatening till Jesus came, bright and glorious, and we discovered a hereafter. Beyond the black river of death we now discern the gleaming of the spirit land, and the place of meeting where we shall see His face! Thus, when Jesus comes into the heart, the three realms of the past, the present and the future all glow with the Light of God! When the sun rises, the hills, valleys and rivers, above and beneath, are all sown with orient pearl!

Right joyfully do we receive Christ because *He comes into our hearts with such gracious offices*. He came as a Priest to put away sin! Who could but be glad? He came as a King! Who would not receive such a Monarch with sound of trumpets and flaunting of banners? He came to us as a Shepherd! Shall not the flock of His pasture be glad of the sight of Him? He came as a dear and tender Friend—does not His sweet sympathy excite any joy? Think, too, of the yet more endearing relationship in which He came. He came as a Husband and our souls are married unto Him. Blessed Bridegroom! Adorable Savior, You have engrossed our heart and won our love! Does not the bride rejoice when the husband comes home? Is there not gladness in her heart when the nuptial day approaches? Oh, well, well might we welcome Christ when He comes, dressed in such robes and wearing such offices as these! When He came, He came with such wondrous blessings—pardon and peace, justification and acceptance, sanctification and honor, wisdom and righteousness—all these! And now He proclaims Himself to be our Protector! His paths drop fatness. He makes rich and adds no sorrow. Such as find Him find in Him such wealth of goodness—deep, mysterious, unknown—as far exceeds earthly pleasure, all worldly fortune! Surely on the lowest ground we might afford Him the loftiest welcome! Even churlish Laban received Eliezer with courtesy when he saw the presents he brought—the bracelets, the earrings and the jewels—and should not we receive Jesus when we mark those costly gifts in His hands—the purchase of His own blood which He freely gives to those who receive Him?

And shall we not receive Him joyfully *because He comes in such blessed spirit*? He upbraids not. He was all gentleness, meekness, Grace, when here below—though of Divine pedigree—the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. Should we not, then, receive Him with sound of the trumpet, with the psalter and harp, yes, and with un-

speakable joy of heart? Let me add that the better we know Him, the more joyfully we receive Him for His own sake. Oh, I could stand here and weep to think that I do not speak better of my Lord and Master! Truly I know more of His Grace and goodness than I should ever be able to tell! I trust you can say the same. It is one thing to know the sweetness of His savor, and quite another thing to have to tell that savor to others. There is no exaggeration in the language of the spouse when she says, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” Such as receive Him with their hearts, will find that the most rapturous expressions that saints have ever used do not exceed, but fall infinitely short of the delight, the heavenly joys, which He brings into the soul! If one might choose a Heaven upon earth, it would be to rest forever in quiet meditation upon the beauties of His Person, the perfection of His Character, the power of His blood, the prevalence of His plea, the Glory of His Resurrection, the majesty of His Second Advent! Everything about Christ is delightful. There is not a Truth of God He ever teaches but is fragrant with choice perfume. There is not a word He utters but smells of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces from which He came!

If you have not received Christ, my dear Hearers, you have missed the brightest feature of Divine Revelation. For a foreigner to visit England and never see the Metropolis of London. For a man to have lived in the world without ever seeing the sun. For one to have beheld tables spread with the most sumptuous provisions, but never to have tasted any of them—in any such case there would be little cause for congratulations! So you do not know what life is—you are dead to all its charms. You do not know what light is—you have only dwelt in the shade, or in the twilight at the best—if you have not beheld the Savior, entertained Him, and tasted that He is gracious! You have missed the cream. You have been staying outside in the farmyard feeding with the swine! You do not know what the fatted calf is, upon which the children feed at the Father’s table. You have been a dog, satisfied with the bones, not knowing the fatness and the marrow of true life. But the Christian, dear Friends, finds Christ to be so inconceivably precious, such a fountain of delight, such a river of mercy, that when he receives Him, he receives Him joyfully—and the longer he knows Him, the more joyful he is to think that he ever received Him at all! And now, such being the reasons why some receive Christ joyfully, let us ask—

III. HOW DO THEY SHOW IT? IN WHAT WAYS AND BY WHAT MEANS DO THEY EXPRESS THEIR JOY?

I have known some who have taken very strange ways of showing their joy. They have been inclined to stand up and shout in the very place where they found the Savior, while others could only sit still and water the floor with their tears, feeling as if for the next week or two they did not want to look anybody in the face, but just in solemn silence of the mind to revel in the company of their adorable Lord! We do not wonder that some people show a little strange enthusiasm when they first come to know Christ. It is no marvel. When a man has been in prison for months, he may well be a little demonstrative in his joy on obtaining his liberty—so when a soul has been under the burden of sin and bound with its galling chain, he may well leap, as Bunyan tells us his Pilgrim did when the burden was loosed off him and rolled away!

Yet there are other and better ways of expressing satisfaction and pleasure than these which have much of the flesh, much of the natural disposition about them. Though not to be condemned, still they are not to be commended. A better way of showing that you have received Christ joyfully is by *turning out His enemies*. When you receive Christ in at the front door, you must not keep the devil in the back parlor! Every traitor sin must be ejected when the Great King takes up His residence in your heart! The thorough cleansing of your house from every defilement is the smallest tribute we can expect you pay in deference to your royal Guest. The soul that receives Christ joyfully, sighs and groans because it cannot make, as it would, a clean sweep of its sin! I know you do not love Christ if you cling to your sins! If you love Christ heartily, you will put away your iniquities—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be;
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee.”*

And when you do receive Christ joyfully, *you will be eager to obey His instructions*. Like Zaccheus, you will ask, “Lord, what would You have me do?” Christ was going to Zaccheus’ house, and you know what people say when they have a guest they are anxious to please. They entreat him thus, “Now just do as you like. Consider yourself at home. Whatever you want, ask for, only tell us what we can do to make you happy, and we shall be glad to do it.” This is how every cheerful holy soul deals with Christ. He says, “Lord, tell us what You would have me do. Only let me know Your will—tell me by Your Word, by Your minister, by Your Holy Spirit! Work in my own heart, personally—teach me Your way, and oh, my God, my heart shall be glad to conform to Your wishes.” Have you all done this? Have you been obedient to all the Savior’s commands, or have you sought to observe them? If you have, this should be an evidence of your joyfully receiving Him!

Another proof of our joy in receiving Christ is *receiving His people*. This, in more ways than one, He has made the test of attachment to Himself. “Love one another.” “Feed My lambs.” “If you have done it unto one of the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” Just as Laban said when he took in Eliezer, “There is room for you, and room for the camels,” so let there be room in our hearts for Jesus. There will be room for some of these poor troubled ones, these burdened saints. They may not always be pleasant company, but we shall be willing to receive them, and to join with them because of their Master. Now, dear Friends, if you are a Christian, and have received Christ, unite yourselves with His people—make a profession of your faith, come out and join the people of God—and do not be ashamed with them to suffer the reproach of Christ.

And if you have received Christ joyfully, *you will love His Cross*. I mean not only the Cross which He had to carry, but the cross which you now have to carry for Him. You will count it a great privilege to suffer reproach for His sake. You will love the Cross. “No cross, no crown,” is an ancient motto, but it is just as true today as it was a thousand years ago! The faith that Moses illustrated, you will follow, counting the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. If you receive the Master in good part, you will say, “Come in, my Master! Come in, and bring Your Cross, too, and I will bear it cheerfully, for Your sake.”

Moreover, you will prove the grateful welcome you give Him *by wishing that other people may receive Him joyfully, too*. I cannot believe you know my Master if you do not wish to make Him known. Were you cured of some sad disease and met with a sufferer as bad as you once were, your tongue would be quick to tell him of the medicine that can cure him. And surely, if you have been saved by Christ from the damning power of sin, you will want to be telling it to the sons of men that there is balm in Gilead and that there is a Physician there! Perhaps you cannot preach. Possibly not half a dozen people might be edified were you to try. But you can talk to a neighbor. You can speak with your children. I was pleased, today, in reading the life of John Wesley’s mother, to notice how she set apart Monday to speak to one of her daughters, Tuesday to speak to another, Wednesday to speak, as she says, “to Jack,” meaning John Wesley, and Thursday to speak to Charles—so that they each had a day—and there was an hour each day given to speak to each child about the affairs of the soul. That is the way to win the children for God! Depend upon it, Reader, the blessing of God, the Holy Spirit, if we experimentally know the joy of religion, ourselves, will be the means of much good to others if we make it a point to “tell to sinners round what a dear Savior we have found.”

May the Lord, in His mercy, call you as He called Zaccheus! May many of you receive Him joyfully as Zaccheus did! Seek Him and He shall be found of you. Trust Him—He will not deceive you. Cast your soul upon Him—He will be as good as His Word. Mark His promise, “Him who comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out.” Faithful is He that gives you this grateful encouragement! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, and through countless ages you will look back upon this fleeting hour with unspeakable, perennial joy—with gratitude that eternity cannot be exhausted! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MARK 2:1-14.*

Verses 1, 2. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And immediately many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not even near the door: and He preached the Word unto them.* We expect to see the crowd round the door, but there was not room, even for the doorway hearers, when Jesus Christ was preaching! There is an attracting power about the Voice of Jesus. We may expect that if we will let Jesus speak in the ministry, and not speak too much our own thoughts and our own words, there will still be the same attraction about the Gospel. “He preached the Word unto them.”

3. *And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy.* A paralyzed person—that is the exact word—one who could not come himself, but had a very anxious desire to come. They came to Him, bringing a paralytic.

3. *Which was borne of four.* Your neighbors agreed to lift him

4. And *when they could not come near unto Him for the crowd*—They had tried the door many times, but could not possibly enter.

4. *They uncovered the roof above where He was.* They, perhaps, went up the stairway of the next house, and then from one flat roof to another, till they came to the top of the veranda which sheltered Christ while He preached to the people in the court. They uncovered this roof above where He was.

4. *And when they had broken it up*—For it does not seem to have been a very light structure, but to have required some labor. Yet they broke it up.

4. *They let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.* Where there is a will there is a way, and when there is no way, a resolute will can make one. Better to come to Christ through the ceiling than not to come at all. Better to be let down to Him by a rope than not to be in His Presence!

5. *When Jesus saw their faith*—For He has a very quick eye to faith—and though we do not read that they had said anything and, therefore, they had not *expressed* their faith—yet this bold and venturesome action in breaking up the roof and letting all the dust fall about the Savior’s head, not fearing that they would provoke Him, but trusting in His gentleness and patience, showed their confidence that they had only to get the man where Christ could see him, and good would come of it. “When he saw their faith.”

5, 6. *He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts*—They had come with a bad motive. They wanted to find fault and they took their seats that they might hear everything very carefully, take notes of it and put it down—and make as much mischief of it as they could! They had their ears open. They did not know, however, that He could read their hearts, or they might not have been so forward in coming into His Presence. They were “sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts.”

7. *Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God?* Which was quite true, but then He was God and, therefore, it was not blasphemy! Blasphemy it would have been had he not been Divine.

8, 9. *And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?* Do they not each require a Divine power? If I am Divine, I shall prove I am by healing this man. Then I have a right to say, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

10-12. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.* Admire and imitate the faith and the obedience of this paralytic! He did better than some, for there have been some who, out of very gratitude, have disobeyed Christ. I mean, when He said to one that he should not tell what Christ had done, he did tell it. But this man, though no doubt his gratitude would have prompted him to stay and throw himself at his Benefactor’s feet, or to stop at least and sing a hymn of thankfulness to God, yet he knows that to obey is the best form of gratitude—and as Christ had told him, “Go your way into your house,” he did just that! The best thing to do for Christ is to do what Christ bids you. There are many glittering forms of gratitude, but all is not gold that glitters. The most golden gratitude is that which scrupulously renders obedience to every command of Jesus Christ. Take this to heart, and do you likewise.

13. *And He went forth again by the seaside, and all the multitude came unto Him, and He taught them.* Better air than there was in the house, and more room, but He kept to the same Gospel. He taught them.

14. *And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* Swept up his shekels—gathered up his account books—stayed no longer. He rose from taking tolls to follow the Master! Oh, for just such a word tonight to some here present. “Follow Me.” And would to God there would be such a heart in them as there was in this man named Levi, alias Matthew, that they, too, might come and follow Jesus!

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**