

The Passion and Death
◦ ◦ of Our Lord

C. H. Spurgeon



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OUR LORD'S PASSION AND DEATH.



Our Lord's
Passion 
and Death.



SERMONS BY
C. H. SPURGEON.



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1904

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THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 10TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 6th, 1889.

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”—John xii. 31—33.

OUR Lord passed through his passion in a kind of rehearsal before it came. He saw those Greeks, who came to Philip, and whom Andrew and Philip brought to him, and his heart was flushed with joy. This was to be the result of his death, that the Gentiles would be gathered to him. That thought reminded him of his approaching decease. It was very near; only a few days would elapse, and then he would die upon the cross. In anticipation of Calvary, his soul was full of trouble; not that he feared death, but his death was to be a very peculiar one. He was to die the Just for the unjust; he was to bear our sins in his own body on the tree; and his pure and holy soul shrank from contact with sin. To stand in the sinner's place, to bear his Father's wrath, this bewildered him. He was very faint of heart, and he cried, “What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” Without any wicked weakness, he proved how truly human he was; without any sinful repining at his Father's will, he saw how terrible that will was, and he shuddered at what it included. This was a kind of rehearsal for Gethsemane; it was a sipping of that cup whereof he was to drink until his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, while his whole soul poured out the agonized petition, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

When our Lord Jesus was in this great distress of mind, in anticipation of the terrible sufferings he was about to endure, his Father spoke to him; and when you are in your direst distress, God will speak to you. If you are his child, when the weakness of your flesh seems ready to prevail over your spirit, you, too, shall have a reassuring voice out of the excellent glory even as your Master had. He seemed

to recover himself at once, and bracing himself up, he indulged his heart again with a vision of the glorious result of his death. Then he uttered the happy words on which we are to meditate to-night, in which he summed up the consequences of his death in these three points: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Let us, first, to-night, *consider the threefold result of Christ's death*; and when we have done that, let us *think about Christ's death as it is described in our text.*

I. First, let us CONSIDER THE THREEFOLD RESULT OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

There is, first, *the judgment of the world*: "Now is the judgment of this world." If you like, you may read it "crisis", for that is the Greek word used here: "Now is the crisis of this world." The world is sick, it grows worse; and the physician says that its malady has come to a climax, it is a case of kill or cure. There was a crisis in the world's disease, and that crisis was when Christ died; his death was the turning-point, the hinge of the world's history. There have been many hinges in history; every nation has a hinge in its history: the cross of Christ was the hinge of the world's history, it had reached the turning-point. I thank God that the death of Christ was the future death of sin. When he died, the arch-enemy received his death-stroke. That death was the bruising of Christ's heel; but in that death he bruised the old serpent's head. Now there is hope for the world; its crisis is passed. Now will the gods of the heathen fall; now will the dark ignorance of men yield to the Light of the world. After this crisis, there shall come a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; for Christ's first coming is a pledge of his second coming, wherein he will exterminate sin, and make the wilderness and the solitary place to blossom as the rose. Thus we may render our Saviour's words, "Now is the crisis of this world," the turning-point, the hinge on which all its history hangs. Still, I greatly prefer to keep to our old version, which is a translation, whereas mine is only a borrowing of the original word "crisis."

"Now is the judgment of this world." This means that, when Christ died, the world that lieth in the wicked one, the ungodly world, was judged in this sense; first, it was convicted of being guiltiest of the guilty. I daresay you have heard people use pretty phrases about the dignity of human nature, and so on. They are lying phrases; for human nature is as bad as it can be. If you want the proof of that assertion, behold how God himself came here among men, incarnate virtue robed in love! Did men love him? Did they fall down before him, and do him homage? The homage of the world was, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The world hates virtue; it cannot bear perfection; it might endure benevolence, but absolute purity and righteousness it cannot, away with. Its native instincts are wrong; it is not towards the light that men are going, their backs are to the sun, they are journeying into the thick darkness.

And, next, the world was convicted of the stupendous crime of murdering the Son of God. I will not call it regicide, but deicide;

and this is the crime of crimes. Truly was the world guilty of all that prophets ever charged it with, and much more. When wicked men slew the Prince of life, the Holy One and the Just, then was it proven that the world is at heart atheistic, that it hates God, and would put God himself to death if he were within its grasp. Thus did men put the Incarnate God to death when he submitted himself to their power. You need not talk about the virtues of the world; it slew the Christ, and that is enough to condemn it. We want no other proof of its guilt; you cannot bring evidence more complete and overwhelming than this, they slew the Lord of life and glory, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

Christ's death was the judgment of this world, next, by sentencing the world; for if Christ, who was perfectly innocent, must die when he stood in the sinner's place, what think you, O guilty men, will not you also die? If the Well-beloved of heaven, bearing nothing but imputed guilt, sins not his own, must nevertheless be smitten of God and afflicted, and a voice must be heard, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts;" if he must die on yonder cruel tree, if he must cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" then, be sure of this, there is wrath treasured up against the day of wrath, and no soul of man that doeth evil shall go unpunished. Is there not a God who is the Judge of all the earth, and who must do right? If it be right to smite the Innocent, who assumed the place of the guilty, it must surely be right that the truly guilty should die the death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." So there was not only the conviction, but also the sentence of the world, when Jesus died.

And more than that, there is the final ending of the trial when the world rejects Christ. As long as you are here, my hearers, and Christ is preached to you, there is hope for you; but in that day when you reject Christ finally, and will have none of him, when you cry, "Away with him, away with him! We will not be washed in his blood, we will not be clothed in his righteousness;" in that day you seal your doom, and there remains no hope for you. There is one window in heaven, and through it streams the light of life; but if that be closed, no other will ever be opened. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." If you have for the last time put Christ away, if you have altogether done with him, you have ended your probation, you have finished your trial, you have put out your last candle, you are for ever doomed. When Christ is so rejected as actually to be made away with as he was upon the cross, then is the judgment of this world.

I wish that I had time to pause here to press these points upon you who belong to the world. There are but two parties, the world and the Church of God. If you are not of the Church of God, you belong to the world; and the world is judged by the death of Christ. If you are not a Christian, you are a member of that great corporation called the world. Men sometimes speak of a Christian world and an un-Christian world, a religious world and an irreligious world, a sporting world, a laughing world, a thieving world, a trading world; but all that is really of the world is outside the bounds of the Church of God.

He that believeth in Christ has escaped from the world. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," said Christ concerning his disciples; but to the unbelieving Jews he said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."

Thus, you see that, as the first result of the death of Christ, the world is judged, the world is convicted, the world is sentenced for its rejection of Christ. A Christ-rejecting world is a doomed world; may none of you belong to that world!

The second result of Christ's death is *the casting out of Satan*: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." He who holds sway over it shall now lose his throne. The prince of this world is Satan, the arch-enemy of God and of man; but he is not always to reign as the prince of the power of the air, the chief of the rulers of the darkness of this world. He is to be cast out of his present dominions.

By the death of Christ, Satan's accusations against believers are answered. One of the practices in which he most delights is that of accusing the people of God; and, alas! he has plenty of cause for his charges; but whenever he accuses us, our one answer is, "Jesus died." He says, "These people have sinned;" and we reply, "True; but Jesus died for them;" and the cross of Christ stops the mouth of the accuser. Even a feeble saint, looking up to his crucified and risen Saviour, can boldly sing,—

"I may my fierce accuser face,
And tell him thou hast died."

Next, Christ's cross spoils Satan of his universal monarchy. He could once lord it over the whole world, and he does very much of that even now; but there is a people over whom he cannot sway his evil sceptre, there is a race which has broken loose from him. They are free, and they defy him to enslave them again. They care not for his threats, they are not to be won by his blandishments; and though he worries and tempts them, yet he cannot destroy them. He can boast no longer of universal dominion. There is a seed of the woman that has revolted from him, for Jesus, by his death, hath redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy, and they are free. I heard a story of an old black woman, who was waiting upon a lady visiting friends in the South, some time after the last great war in America. The lady said to the black servant, "You may very well wait upon a Northerner with great attention, for it is through us that you are free." "Free, missy, free?" exclaimed the negress; "I's a slave. I was born a slave." "Oh, but you are free! Do you not know that there has been an Act passed by which you are all free?" "Yes, I did hear someth'g about dat; and I said to old massa, 'I hear dat we is all free.' He says, 'Stuff and nonsense,' so I's bin stoppin' here workin' for him. Is it true, missy, that we is all free?" "Oh, yes!" she answered, "you are all free, every slave is free now." "Then," said the woman, "I don't bin serve old massa any longer; I bid him 'Good-bye.'" And so it is when Christ sets us free; we do not serve the old massa Satan any longer, we bid him "Good-bye."

When we are set free from the dominion of the devil, by the emancipating redemption of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Satan's

tyrannical power is crippled. He still has great influence, and he does his worst to injure the kingdom of Christ by persecution, by false doctrine, and by a thousand other methods; but Christ has broken his right arm, he cannot work as once he did; and more and more, as the fruit of the Redeemer's passion, will Satan's power be curtailed until, at last, he shall be utterly cast out, and the triumphant shout shall be heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Let us never imagine that the devil is going to conquer in the great battle between right and wrong. God's Word tells us plainly enough what his end is to be: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Now, if any of you suffer through Satan tempting you to despair, if he comes to some of you, and entices you to commit a sin which you hate, and against which you strive with all the might God gives you, if, by a mysterious force that you cannot comprehend, he seems to make you do otherwise than you would, take courage, and stand up against him, for when Jesus died, he said that, by his death, the prince of darkness was cast out, and so he is. Sin shall not have dominion over you, nor shall Satan either. Only be you bold in resisting him, claim your liberty as a child of God, and fight under the command of Christ, for the cross is the conquering banner for all who would overthrow the power of Satan.

"By all hell's host withstood;
We all hell's host o'erthrow;
And conquering them, through Jesu's blood
We still to conquer go."

The third result of Christ's death is *the central attraction of his cross*. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Christ on the cross has become the great magnet attracting men to himself. What did he mean by this saying? Did he not mean that his sphere of influence would be widened? "While I am here," said he, "I draw a few men to me; these fishermen have become my disciples, these Greeks have come to see me; but when I am lifted up upon the cross, I shall draw all men unto me, men of all sorts, men out of all nations, multitudes of men, not only of this one age, but of all ages, till the world shall end. I shall become the centre of a wider circle, a circle wide as the world. I shall draw all men unto me."

But why is it that Christ does draw men to himself? I answer that it is because, by dying on the cross, he gave a new and brighter display of his love. Men came to Christ because of his love while he walked the earth alive; little children especially did so; but after he had died that shameful death, how could they help coming to him? "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love." And to all the ages the masterpiece of love is the dying Christ praying for his enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Christ on the cross draws sinners to himself, Christ crucified attracts through the infinite love to men which is displayed in that death.

A part of the attraction lies in the wonderful blessings which come to us through Christ's death. We were drawn to him because we received pardon through his wounds, we came to him because we found eternal life through his death upon the tree. Jesus bore the sin of his people, he died in our stead; and by so doing he put away all our iniquities, blotted them out, cast them into the depths of the sea. Only as he was lifted up upon the cross could that be said to be the case; but when he was crucified, he finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Beloved, this is a great attraction to perishing sinners; it is a drawing of love to which they must yield. When Jesus thus attracts us, we run to him, because pardon and eternal life are to be found through his uplifting on the cross. I would that some here might be drawn to Christ at this moment by the mighty magnet of his death. Remember how the poet sings of the attraction of the cross,—

“ So great, so vast a sacrifice
 May well my hope revive :
 If God's own Son thus bleeds and dies
 The sinner sure may live.

“ Oh, that these cords of love divine
 Might draw me, Lord, to thee !
 Thou hast my heart, it shall be thine,
 Thine it shall ever be ! ”

The death of Christ attracted to him multitudes of the sons of men because it expanded the hearts of his people. While he was alive and with them, they never burned with such enthusiasm as after he had died. One of the first effects of his death was the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon them, infusing them with new life, a holy fervour, and a sacred enthusiasm, which made them go unto the utmost ends of the earth, publishing among the Gentiles full redemption through his precious blood. Christ, when he was lifted up, made his followers disseminate themselves throughout all populations of the globe till their line went forth to the ends of the earth; and, like the sun o'er every clime, so did the gospel of Jesus Christ enlighten every nation under heaven. “ I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Christ is the centre of mankind. He is the Shiloh, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. They shall come away from the abominations of Rome; they shall come away from the crescent of the false prophet; they shall come away from the idols of the dark places of the earth; they shall come away from infidelity and philosophy; and shall come crowding to his dear feet as they feel the marvellous magnetism of his atoning death.

These three things, then, resulted from the death of Christ, the wicked world was judged, the power of Satan was broken, and Christ was made the central attraction of sinners to himself; and that attracting power is working now. Oh, that these three wonders might be wrought in our midst to-night, according to our measure!

II. Now, in the second place, I want you, for a few minutes, quietly to THINK ABOUT THE DEATH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS DESCRIBED IN OUR TEXT.

How much the Holy Spirit desires that we should read the Scriptures intelligently! He had recorded these words of the Lord Jesus, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." If that had been all, we might have asked,—Does that lifting up from the earth mean Christ's death? Does it mean his ascension, his going up from the earth till the cloud received him? Or does it mean our preaching of Christ, when we lift him up before men, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? So, to avoid all question, the Holy Spirit added the thirty-third verse, "This he said, *signifying what death he should die.*" If there is anything that the Spirit wishes us to be specially clear about, it is all expressions that have to do with our Lord's death. Let us thank him for that comment inserted here, lest we should make any mistake upon so vital a subject.

Now looking at the words, I want you to notice that *Christ went to his death with a clear-view of what it was to be.* There is many a man who has rushed into the battle, and died without any idea of what a gunshot wound would be, or what the piercing of a lance would be; but our Lord, as it were, took stock of his death, and looked it calmly in the face. He does not speak of it as barely death, but he describes the manner of it: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth." In his own mind, he had gone through the nailing to the wood, and he had come to the uplifting of that wood into the air, and the fixing of its socket in the ground, and in spirit he felt himself already hanging there, lifted up from the earth. Just think of this wondrous fact, as Dr. Watts puts it,—

" This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

Knowing that his death was to be by crucifixion, he did not turn from it; he set his face like a flint to endure all that "the cross" meant. He fully knew what it meant; but you and I do not. There are depths in his sufferings that must be unknown to us, but he knew them all; yet, with love that was strong as death, he went through it all for your redemption, O believer! Then, love him in return, with a resolute, determined consecration of thy whole being, yield thyself up to him, not spasmodically, but of love aforethought, to be wholly his. Somebody said to me, the other day, that all religion nowadays either suffered from paralysis or convulsions. I do not want you to have either of those complaints, though I like the convulsions better than the paralysis. Let us not have convulsed religion, but let us have strongly fixed principles, knowing what we have to do, and why we do it, and then, like the Saviour, let us go forward, expecting difficulty, expecting loss, expecting ridicule, but willingly and wilfully facing it all for his dear sake, as he, on his part, endured even the cross for our sake.

Notice, next, that though our Saviour knew the bitterness of his death, *he read it's issues in another light.* "I, if I be lifted up,"—do you catch the thought? He does not merely mean lifted up on the cross, he means another kind of uplifting, he means being exalted. When

he was lifted up upon the cross, men thought it degradation; but he looked into his death as one looks into an opal, till he sees wondrous rainbows and flames of fire in the precious stone. So Jesus looked into his passion till he saw his glory. Down in the ruddy depths of that blood-cup, he saw that he was really being lifted up when men thought that he was being cast down. That crown of thorns was a more wondrous diadem than monarch ever wore. His cross was his throne. With his outspread hands, he ruled the nations; and with his feet fixed there, he trampled on the enemies of men. O glorious Christ, when I have had a vision of thy cross, I have seen it at first like a common gibbet, and thou wast hanging on it like a felon; but, as I have looked, I have seen it begin to rise, and tower aloft till it has reached the highest heaven, and by its mighty power lifted up myriads to the throne of God. I have seen its arms extend and expand until they have embraced all the earth. I have seen the foot of it go down deep as our helpless miseries are; and what a vision I have had of thy magnificence, O thou crucified One! As Jesus looked forward to his death, he saw more than we can even now see in it, and he perceived that it was his glory to be lifted up on the cross of Calvary.

Further, *he beheld in it the supply of our great need.* "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw." He saw that we were far away, and could not of ourselves come nigh; so he said, "If I am lifted up, I will draw them." He saw that we would not wish to come, that we should be so hard-hearted and stiff-necked that we would not come if we were called. "But," said he, "I from the cross will draw them. As a magnet draws the steel, I will attract them." Oh, think of the cross of Christ in that light! Some have thought that, if we preach the gospel, we shall always have a congregation. I am not sure of that; but if the gospel does not attract a congregation, I do not know what will. But Christ does not say, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to little Bethel, or to Salem." He says, "I will draw all men unto me," that is, to himself; and we only come to Christ because Christ comes to us. No man ever comes to Christ unless Christ draws him, and the only magnet that Christ ever uses is himself. I do believe that we slander Christ when we think that we are to draw the people by something else but the preaching of Christ crucified. We know that the greatest crowd in London has been held together these thirty years by nothing but the preaching of Christ crucified. Where is our music? Where is our oratory? Where is anything of attractive architecture, or beauty of ritual? "A bare service," they call it. Yes, but Christ makes up for all deficiencies. Preach Christ, and men will be drawn to him, for so the text says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." They are held back by Satan; but the cross will draw them. They are held back by despair; but the cross will attract them. They are held back by want of desire; but the cross will breed desire. They are held back by love of sin; but the cross will make them hate the sin that crucified the Saviour. "I will draw them. All sorts of men I will draw unto myself," says the crucified Christ. Thus he supplies our great need.

Observe, too, that *Jesus knew that he would live to exercise that attraction.* He says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth,"—what

then? "Shall I be dead? No; I will draw all men unto me." He lives. Going to death, he expects to live, he glories in his life, he tells of what he means to do after he is risen from the dead. O glorious Christ, to look beyond thy death, and find comfort in thy risen life! Cannot you, my brothers, my sisters, sometimes look beyond the grave, and find comfort in what you will do in heaven? Oh, will we not in heaven glorify our Lord? In the anticipation of what we will then do in honour of our precious Saviour, let us now take up arms against our present trouble, borrowing our weapons from the armoury of the future after our earthly life is over.

Jesus saw, too (and here I must finish), that *the day would come when he would be surrounded by a mighty company*. Can you not see him? He is lifted up upon the cross, and he begins to draw; and men come to him, a few at Jerusalem—nay, did I say "a few"? Three thousand in one day! The Crucified has pierced their hearts, the Crucified has begotten faith in them, the Crucified has drawn thousands to himself. He is preached in Damascus, he is preached at Antioch, he is preached at Corinth, he is preached at Rome, and everywhere he draws sinners to himself, and great companies come to him. By-and-by, he is preached in far-off Britain; some pioneer evangelist finds a place in these islands where he can preach to the uncivilized the gospel of Christ, and Jesus draws them to himself. He draws men till, all over Rome's vast empire, Christ crucified is drawing them, from Cæsar's palace and from Cæsar's prison; from the slave at the mill to the senator who rules the city, Christ is drawing them. The kings who wear their crowns by permission of the Roman power, some of them bow before King Jesus, he is drawing them. The people on the isles of the sea, and on every coast, he is drawing them. And to-day he is still drawing them. From the sunny islands of the southern sea, from the far north of Greenland, from Africa, from China, from everywhere, he draws them more and more; and here, in this our favoured island, he has drawn myriads to himself; but the day shall come when that drawing power will begin to operate yet more freely. They shall run to him; they shall fly to him with swift wings, as doves fly to their cots; they shall come to him as on a sudden, till the Church shall cry in astonishment, "Who hath begotten me these? These, where had they been?" As the drops of the morning dew are seen, glittering like diamonds on every hedge, and on every blade of grass, when once the sun is up, so shall Christ's converts be, like Abraham's promised seed, "so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable." Christ's people shall be willing in the day of his power; and the great attraction by which they will be drawn to him will be his death on the cross. Oh, that he would draw many to himself to-night! Let this be our prayer to him,—

" Dear Saviour, draw reluctant hearts,
To thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss thy love imparts,
And drink, and never die."

AMEN.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XII. 19—43.

Our Lord raised Lazarus from the dead; and this miracle made a great sensation among the people. They came to meet Jesus, waving palm branches before him, and all Jerusalem was on a stir.

Verses 19—22. *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

These were probably Gentiles, who were staying at Jerusalem; perhaps, proselytes who had come up to the feast. They were touched by the common feeling; they desired to see this wonderful Man who had raised to life one who had been dead four days. They proceeded courteously; they went to one of Christ's disciples who, coming from Galilee of the Gentiles, would be likely to sympathize with them, and they sought an introduction to Jesus. This Philip obtained for them with the help of Andrew.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

He knew that the hour was come when he must die. Looking through the dark glass of death, he saw what its result would be, and he called it glory. These few Greeks were the advance guard of the great Gentile army of the Lord; he regarded their coming in that sense.

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Telling them that the source of his glory would be his death. The reason why the people would hear of him, and come to him, was that he would be hanged on the cross. The grain of wheat, when put into the ground, if it remains as it is, will never increase; it must die if it is to bring forth fruit. What is death? The end of existence? None but thoughtless persons imagine that. Death is the resolution of any living substance into its primary elements. It is the division of the soul from the body; originally, it was the division of the soul from God. In a grain of wheat, death is the separation of the particles of which it is composed, that the life-germ may feed upon that which was provided for it. "If it die," in the true sense of the word, in being separated into its constituent elements, then "it bringeth forth much fruit." Christ's way to glory was through the grave; he must go down that he might mount to the throne.

25. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Live for this world, and you shall lose this world and the next, too; live for the world to come, and you shall in the highest sense gain both worlds.

26. *If any man serve me, let him follow me;*

That is the best kind of service; to do what Christ did, and to do what Christ bids you do: "If any man serve me, let him follow me."

26. *And where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

Follow Christ, then, to the cross; follow him to the grave; follow him in his humiliation; and then the Father will honour you even as he honoured his Son.

27. *Now is my soul troubled ;*

Or, puzzled. This hour of his glory was the hour of his passion, too.

27. *And what shall I say ?*

Such sorrow was in his heart that he asked, "What shall I say?" Great trouble brings astonishment, amazement, bewilderment with it; and the human soul of Christ felt as ours feels when in great agony.

27. *Father, save me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

Nature suggests the cry, "Father, save me from this hour." Grace comes behind the flesh, being a little slower to speak; but it corrects the errors of the flesh, and says, "For this cause came I unto this hour."

28. *Father, glorify thy name.*

What a prayer! Jesus swallows up his temptation to escape the cup by this all-absorbing petition, "Father, glorify thy name."

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered :*

They only heard the sound, and it was like thunder in their ears.

29. *Others said, An angel spake to him.*

They distinguished the sound of some one speaking; but they did not recognize the voice of God.

30. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

"To make you believe that God is with me, and that I am his Son."

31—34. *Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ?*

As if it could not be true that Christ, in his divine nature, abides for ever, and yet, as Man, could be lifted up to die. It was a sneering question, "Who is this Son of man?" Our Lord did not answer it, thus teaching us that some people are not worth answering. Instead of replying to their question, Jesus gave them a practical admonition.

35, 36. *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

When people determine to reject Christ, he leaves them; why should he tarry where he is rejected? He "departed, and did hide himself."

37—41. *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him : that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

Christ is in the Old Testament in many places where, as yet, even we have never seen him. I doubt not that he lies hidden away in many a Psalm, and many a prophetic utterance that has not yet been fully expounded, or even comprehended by our finite minds. Oh, for eyes to see him where he sits in his ancient state!

What a solemn fact this is, though, that God does allow men to be given over to blindness of eyes, and hardness of heart! I sometimes fear that it is so with this age. Men will not see; they will not believe; they are desperately set on scepticism, it has become a fashion with them. Like a torrent, it sweeps through the very churches that bear the name of Christ; my fear is God in his wrath may give up our land to this curse, and then where will our hope be?

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

I wonder whether in this throng there are any of this kind, who do believe in Christ, and yet never come out and confess him because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. If so, I venture to say that they are found among what are called the more respectable people, the men of light and leading, the chief rulers. Among the common people there is very little of this evil. They will generally confess what they believe, and bravely come forward to declare that they belong to Christ. It is the chief rulers, the gentlemen of the Sanhedrim, who, if they believe in Christ in their hearts, do not confess him, lest they should be put out of society, for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—302, 313.

LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1894.

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, July 5th, 1888.

“When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”—John xiii. 1.

This is a kind of preface to the story of the foot-washing, and a very wonderful preface it is, when coupled with the third and fourth verses, upon which I commented. “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.” This is the frame of the picture that is here presented to us. To what shall I compare it? It is like unto a gate of the golden city; each gate is one several pearl, and surely this verse is a jewel of inestimable price. The foot-washing picture is set within this precious frame.

This memorable and symbolical act took place at the end of our Lord's sojourn here below. The Passion was the end of his life, and we may consider that the Passion was about to begin. That same night he would go to Gethsemane, and in less than four-and-twenty hours, the dear hands that washed the disciples' feet would be nailed to the accursed wood, and he who spoke so tenderly to his little band of followers would be in his death agonies.

It is an important thing to know how a man feels when he comes to the real crisis of his life. He has cultivated a great variety of feelings during his career; but what has been his ruling passion? You will see it now. It has passed into a proverb that, “The ruling passion is strong in death;” and there is great truth in the saying. In the light of the man's departure, we shall see what power really ruled him. It was precisely so with our Divine Master. He had almost reached the end of his earthly life; he had come to a season of awful agony; he was about to endure the great and terrible death of the cross, by which he was to purchase eternal redemption for all his

people. What will be uppermost in his mind now? What will he think of his disciples now that he has so many other things to think of, now that the thought of his approaching death comes over him, now that the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane are so near? What will Jesus think of his disciples at such a time as this, and under such circumstances as these? Our text is the answer to that question: "When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." His love was burning as brightly at the Paschal supper as ever it burned before. Ay, and it seemed as if, in that wondrous prayer that is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and in the wonderful discourse which accompanied it, the love of Jesus had never flamed out so clearly before! Then were the great beacon fires lit, and the fierce winds that blew around the Saviour fanned them to their full force of flame. Now can you say of Jesus, "Behold how he loved his disciples!" for even at the end of his life he still loved those whom he had loved aforetime.

With that thought in your minds, will you follow me while I take the text to pieces, and dwell upon almost every word of it?

I. First, then, concerning our blessed Master, let us consider WITH WHOM HE ASSOCIATED, and of whom this verse now speaks. They are called, "his own." It is a brief description, but it is wonderfully full: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

"HIS OWN." There was a circle—sometimes a wide circle—round the Saviour, made up of publicans and sinners, and he had a measure of love to all of them, a benevolent desire to bless them; but there was an inner circle, containing the twelve apostles and some godly women, who had joined themselves unto him. These were "his own." To them he often expounded the hidden meaning of a parable which he left unexplained to the crowd. To them he often brought many a dainty dish which was specially reserved for their table, and not intended for the multitude. Bread and fish would do for the crowd; but Jesus had choicer fare for "his own." They were a special people; many knew them, many despised them, but Jesus loved them, and this was the main thing which made them "his own."

You know how they came to be "his own." *He chose them or ever the earth was.* A man may surely choose his own wife, and Christ chose his own spouse, he chose his own Church; and while the Scripture stands, that doctrine can never be eradicated from it. Before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their rounds, Christ had made his choice; and, having made it, he stood to it. He chose them for his love; and he loved them for his choice.

Having loved them, and chosen them, *he espoused them unto himself.* "They shall be mine," said he; "I will be married to them, I will be bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh." Consequently, in the fulness of time, he came here, made one with our humanity, that he might be seen to be a true Husband to "his own"—"his own" by choice, "his own" by espousal.

They were "his own" also, for *his Father gave them to him.* The Father committed them into his hands. "Thine they were," said

Jesus, "and thou gavest them me." The Father loved the Son, and committed all things into his hand; but he made a special committal of his own chosen people. He gave them to him, and entered with him into surety engagements on their behalf, that as they were his sheep, committed to his charge, he would deliver them up, and not one of them should be torn by the wolf, or die of the frost or the heat, but that all should pass again under the rod of him that telleth them. That great Shepherd of the sheep will take care of the whole flock that was entrusted to his care; he will not lose one of his sheep or lambs. At the last, Jesus will say, "Here am I, Father, and the children that thou hast given me; of all that thou gavest me I have lost none." Thus, they are "his own" by his own choice, "his own" by espousal, and "his own" by his Father's gift.

But these whom he called "his own" were soon to be his *by a wondrous purchase*. He looked upon their redemption as being already accomplished, for in his prayer he said to his Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Beloved friends, have you ever thought how dearly we are Christ's by his redemption of us? "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Have you ever realized the price that was paid for you? I sometimes think that, if I could have been there, I would have said, "O thou great and glorious Lord, I beseech thee not to pay such a price for me; it is too great a sacrifice that thou shouldst be made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in thee!" But he would do it. He loved us better than he loved himself. He would do it; and he has paid the purchase price for us, and we are his; and we will not run back from the glad confession. Well may he call us "his own" when it cost him so much to redeem us.

But we have become "his own" *by his conquest of us*. He had called his disciples by his grace; he had drawn each one of them by cords of love, and they had run after him: and it is just so with you and me. You remember when he drew you; do you not? Can you ever forget when, at last, you yielded to the power of those bands of love, those cords of a man? Often since then have you sung,—

"Oh, happy day, that fix'd my choice
On thee, my Saviour, and my God;
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad!

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charm'd to confess the voice divine."

Beloved, you are "his own" now because *you have yielded yourselves to him*. You delight to think that you are his. There is no greater joy to you than to feel that you belong to Christ. The fact that you are truly Christ's is the fountain of innumerable pleasures and blessings to your heart. Jesus calls us "his own"—his own sheep, his own disciples, his own friends, his own brethren, the members of his body. What a title for us to wear, "His own"! I have heard of some who

have felt it an honour to be called, "The Devil's Own." I trust that you have escaped from such a title as that; and now you are Christ's own. How many regiments have felt pleasure in being called the King's Own, the Queen's Own, the Prince's Own! Oh, but we are His own! He owns us; he calls us "his own." Thus he distinguishes us from the rest of mankind, and sets us apart unto himself. "My name shall be named on them," says he. They are "his own." Surely, this is the highest honour that can be put upon us even in the last great day. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Now I trust we can say that we desire to serve Christ in our vocation. I feel happy to be amongst the favoured few whose vocation it is to serve Christ, those who are permitted to spend all their time, and all their strength, in that dear service. We are "his own"; but so are you "his own" if you believe in him, you also are Christ's own, up in a garret; Christ's own, at the washtub; Christ's own, in the fields at the plough; Christ's own, making the hay. I am not wandering from my subject when I say this, for Christ has "his own" among all these classes. "His own" were fishermen, "his own" cast the net into the Sea of Galilee, "his own" drew it to shore, "his own" were the poor of this world. His own, his very own, his choicest and his best friends and followers, were just such. They were unlearned and ignorant men, yet they were "his own." So the apostle saith, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." Oh, the wondrous sovereignty of divine love! I trust that there are some here to-night whom Christ calls "his own" although they do not yet know that it is so. Bought with his blood, and they are not aware of it? Chosen before the foundation of the world, and yet they have not discovered it? May the Lord reveal to you his everlasting love, and help you to make your calling and election sure from this time forth!

I have said as much as time will permit me to say about our Lord's dear associates, the disciples, whom he calls "his own."

II. Now, in the second place, you have a full description of *how Jesus had felt towards them* up to that moment: "Having loved his own."

How much can be done with one stroke of a pen! I have sometimes marvelled to see how much a great artist can do by a single touch; his work has seemed unfinished, but he has come with a brush, and just thrown in a few strokes, and the canvas that was dead has seemed to live before you. Now, John is a great master of the art of word-painting, and he gives you the whole history of Christ's dealings with his disciples in these few words, "Having loved his own."

For, remember, *that is how he began with them*. They were poor and inconsiderable; but he loved them, and he showed his love to them by calling them to be his disciples. That love wrought upon their hearts, and made them obedient to his call. He began by loving

them. David says, "Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit." I do not know a more beautiful description of conversion and salvation. The love of God loves us up out of the pit, and loves us to Christ. Thus Christ loved his people from the beginning, and proved his love by drawing them to himself, and the cords he used to draw them were the bands of his love.

Having begun by loving them, *he went on teaching them*; but all his teaching was love, for they were such dull scholars, quick to forget, yet slow to remember, that he had to keep on loving them, or he would have been tired of trying to train them. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" There is a mass of love in that question. So was it when he was dealing with Thomas; in his tenderness he submitted without question to the doubting disciple's test. He said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." All his teaching was uttered with lips of love, and all his instruction consisted of lessons of love.

The Lord kept on loving his disciples, although *their natures were wonderfully imperfect*, all of them. There was not one among them who had what one would call an all-round nature, unless it was John, and even he was hasty in temper, and would have called down fire from heaven upon certain Samaritans. Yet the Master kept on loving them. He had made up his mind to love them, and he never ceased to love them as long as he was with them, and he has gone on loving them ever since. At the time when he was about to depart out of the world unto the Father, they still needed to have their feet washed, and he loved them enough to render even that lowly service for them. All the infirmities, the imperfections, the carnality, the dulness, and the slowness of their nature, which he saw much more clearly than they saw it, did not make him cease to love them: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Strangest of all, when he opened his eyes, and looked into the future, and saw that *they would soon be cowardly and faithless*, he loved them all the same. He said, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," and so it came to pass, for "they all forsook him, and fled." He told Peter that he would deny him thrice; and so it was, yet it was true all the while, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." That sums it all up. There was never a touch of hate, there was never any anger, there was never any weariness, there was never any lukewarmness in Jesus towards his disciples; but it was always just this, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." That is the love of Christ to his chosen, and that is the love of Christ to me. I do not think that those gentlemen who have written a "Life of Christ" could write this part of it. This is a portion of the life of Christ that wants not so much to be written as to be known in the heart, and in the soul.

How have you found Christ, my brother? If you have known him, what has been his conduct towards you? You answer, "Love." As for me, I never knew, I never heard of such a lover as he is; I never

dreamed that he could be such as he has been to me. Oh, how I must have vexed and grieved his gracious heart, and caused him pain; but never, never, never once have I had anything from him but love! "Having loved his own." That expression sums up the whole of Christ's conduct towards his chosen people. It is like a miniature painting; it has every feature of his character. There it is, all of it. You may apply a microscope, and look as long as you like, but you will find that it is all there. "Having loved his own."

So then, you have seen your Lord associated with his disciples up to this point, and you have learned that he has manifested nothing else towards them but love.

III. But now, thirdly, WHAT A CHANGE WAS COMING OVER HIM! "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father."

Dear friends, it was a wonderful change that was coming over him, for, in the first place, though it is so tenderly described here, yet *he knew that he had to die*. You do not wish me, I am sure, to tell you of all the surroundings of the cross, of all the bitterness and woe that culminated in that cup of mingled wormwood and gall. Your heart can never fail to remember the wounds he endured when suffering for you. Well, now, if you and I had to bear all that Christ had to suffer, it would engross our thoughts, we should not be able to think of anything else but that; but it did not engross our Lord's thoughts. He still thought of "his own." He loved "his own" unto the end. He went on with that same calm, solid, resolute love which he had shown towards them aforetime. He set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem; but there was no flint in his heart, it had all gone into his face. He had undertaken the work of his people's redemption, and he must go through with it. Death itself could not change his love. You know the love of which Solomon sings at the end of the Canticles: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it;" and he says, "Love is strong as death." Truly, in our Lord's case, love was stronger than that death of deaths which he dignified to die that he might make us live. Now is his great "hour" of trial; but he is true to "his own" even in this dread hour. He is about to die; but he still loves "his own."

Dear brethren, that is not all. Jesus was about to depart out of this world, *to go away from his disciples*. After a while, he would see them no more with his bodily eyes; neither would they hear his voice leading them and teaching them. It may be true that "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," but, alas, we have met with many instances in which mortal men have quite forgotten those whom they professed to love when once the sea has rolled between them. Many hearts are dependent upon eyesight. It is a pity that it should be so; but it was not so with Christ. All the distance between earth and heaven was soon to intervene between our Lord and his disciples; but yet he loved them, and he loves them still. No distance makes any difference between Jesus and "his own": "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Yet, remember, that the Saviour was about to undergo a very wonderful change in another respect, *he was going unto the Father*.

Have any of us the slightest idea of what he is now with the Father? I will not attempt to describe the supernal splendours of his throne, the glories which his redeemed delight to lay at his feet, the songs which angels and cherubim and seraphim continually present before him; but this verse we love, and we can truly sing,—

“ Now though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor lets his saints forget.”

I cannot describe these wonderful changes of our Lord, from life to death, from death to resurrection, from resurrection to ascension, from ascension to the glories of his Father's throne. Would all these changes make any alteration in him? No, none of them. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

I shall try to speak of that presently, that will be my last point; but before we come to that theme, we must see what would be the condition of “his own.” I have shown you what would be Christ's condition, and the change that would take place in him.

IV. Now, fourthly, WHAT WOULD BE THEIR CONDITION?

Why, they would remain where they were: “His own which were in the world.” To me, there seems to be a great abyss of meaning in that expression, “in the world.” Some of you know more about what this means than others of us do. The Church of God in London is nothing but a camp in the midst of heathendom. The sooner we believe that terrible truth the better, because it is really so; and the Church of God in the world is nothing but a travelling tent in the midst of a world that lieth in the wicked one. We are “in the world.” Now, some of you know what it is to be “in the world.” When you get home to-night, there will be little but oaths and cursing. Some of God's dear people, whom he loves with all his heart, are still in the world, seeing that which vexes them as much as Lot was vexed by the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. “In the world!” Now, those whom Christ was about to leave in the world would be left in the midst of all the abounding wickedness, and idolatry, and blasphemy, in about as ungodly an age as men could live in; yet he left them “in the world.”

Being in the world, you see, they began to be *persecuted*. They were stoned; they were shut up in prison; they were dragged into the amphitheatre to be torn of lions; but “he loved them unto the end.” You know how that blessed eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans concludes. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In addition to being persecuted, they were liable to be severely

tempted. All kinds of bribes were put in their way, and all sorts of pleasures and lusts were presented to them; they were men of like passions with ourselves, so these temptations were very real to them. They were "in the world," and Jesus was gone to heaven. They were "in the world" also in *affliction*. Ah, dear friends, we find that we, too, are, in this sense, "in the world." However closely we live to God, we have pains of body, and we have to grieve as we see our dear relatives suffering. We have losses and crosses because we are "in the world." God's curse still rests upon the earth: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." You may do what you like with it, but you cannot make it stop bringing forth thorns and thistles. They will continue to spring up as surely as the dust will return to the dust from whence it was taken.

In the world, of course, they were in *great labour*, for they were left in the world to seek to convert it, or, at least, to call out the redeemed of Christ from among men by preaching the gospel to every creature. And, being "in the world," they were surrounded by *much weakness*, weakness of body and weakness of mind, always needing to call to their Lord for help. He was up there upon the throne, and they were down in the dungeon. He was up there, clothed with all power, and they were down here in all weakness.

V. NOW, HOW WILL JESUS BEHAVE TOWARDS THEM? That is our last question. We began with it, and we will finish with it. Well, here is the answer. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end;" and we may rest sure that he always will love them, and that he will never change from the tenderness of his heart towards them. "He loved them unto the end." What does that sentence mean?

I think it means, first, that *he loved them right on*. The Hebrew, "His mercy endureth for ever," might be rendered, "His mercy endureth to the end." That is, to the end which has no end, for there never will be an end to his mercy; and his love is continual, everlasting love, it will never come to an end. Christ himself, in his Passion, may be said to have come to an end, and he loved his disciples until his death; but it means that he loves them without any end, for ever and ever. Having loved them while he was in the world with them, he loves them right straight on, and always will love them when time shall be no more.

I am sure, dear friends, you believe in the everlasting love of God towards his people. If any of you do not, you are robbing yourselves of one of the greatest comforts that are to be found in the Scriptures. If the Lord can change, where are we? Everything has gone when his everlasting love is gone. I delight to believe that the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but his kindness shall not depart from us, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed; it standeth fast for ever and ever.

But the sentence may be rendered, "*He loved them to perfection.*" "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to perfection." He could not love them any better; that was impossible. He could not love them more wisely; that would be out of the question. He could not love them more intensely; that is not supposable.

Whatever the perfection of love may be, that Jesus Christ bestows upon his people. There is no such love in all the world as the love of Christ to his people; and if you were to gather up all the loves that ever were, of men and women, of mothers and children, of friends and friends, and heap up all these loves, the love of Jesus is of superior quality to them all, for none of those loves are absolutely perfect, but Jesus Christ loves to perfection.

Those of you who have the Revised Version will find in the margin the following words, "*to the uttermost.*" "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the uttermost," to that which is uttermost, farthest, and most distant; or, if I turn the word in another way, "He loved them utterly," unutterably, in such a way that you cannot tell, or conceive, or describe, or imagine, how much he loved his people. He loved his people to the utmost stretch of love. So is it, there is no love like his, and, as I said just now, all the loves in the world, compressed into one, would not equal it. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the uttermost."

Now, it does seem to me that this truth ought to tempt some poor soul to wish to enjoy Christ's love. "Oh!" says one, "if I did but get that love, I should never lose it. He would love me to the uttermost. Oh, if I could but creep in among his people!" The way to discover Christ's love to thee is that thou shouldst begin by trusting him; and surely he will help thee to do this. He is so true, so good, so able to save unto the uttermost, that if thou wilt come and trust him, trust him wholly, trust him now, trust him just as thou art, then he will save thee to the uttermost, and show his love to thee to the uttermost. I have been preaching what I trust will comfort God's people; but I wish that some poor soul would come to Christ through it. I believe that is the right way to preach the gospel. Have you not noticed, in the story of the Prodigal Son, that the father said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet," and so on, but he did not go on to say, "Feed him," do you notice what he said? It was, "Let us eat, and be merry." "Well, but I thought he was thinking about his son." Yes, and he says, "Let us eat." So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us eat, and then sinners will begin to feel their mouths watering, and they also will want to eat, and to have a share of the feast. This is the only way to make them eat; you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink; but you are very likely to do so if you set another horse a-drinking. So, if you and I enjoy the sweetness of the love of Christ, there may be some in the gallery, and some downstairs who will say, "We wish that we knew it, too," and they will be wanting it; that is the way to make them eat. I pray the Lord, by his Spirit, to lead them to put their trust in this loving Saviour, and each one to say,—

"Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

He will let you fly to his bosom; therefore,—

"Come, and welcome; sinner, come."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XIII. 1—19.

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ had a clear foresight of all he had to endure. Future things are happily hidden from our eyes. We do not even know the moment when we shall die, nor how it will be. It is well that it is so; but our Lord was able to anticipate his sufferings, by knowing all about them: "Jesus knew that his hour was come." It was all appointed; and nothing happens to any of us by accident, chance is banished from the believer's creed. There is an appointed "hour" for each one of us, and it will come in due season.

"Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of the world unto the Father." What a beautiful way of describing death! Christ's death was certainly a more trying one than ours will be, so that this description may apply to ours as well as to his.

2. *And supper being ended,*

I suppose that was the Paschal supper.

2. *The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;*

What a horrible purpose for Satan to put into the heart of Judas even in the presence of Jesus! I hope that the devil will not put any such purpose into your hearts or into mine while we are in this house of prayer; but no place is sacred from his intrusion, he will come in anywhere. Even where Christ himself is at the head of the table, Judas may be sitting at that same table, and Satan may then and there put into his heart the horrible purpose of betraying his Master.

3, 4. *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.*

Notice those words, "Jesus knowing, . . . he took a towel, and girded himself." If he had not known how great he was, there would not have been such condescension in his action; but he knew who he was, and what the Father had entrusted to him: "The Father had given all things into his hands." You might suppose that he would rise up, in a very dignified manner, and put on a purple robe and a golden girdle; but, instead of that, he rose from the supper table, laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. He knew that he had come forth from God, and that he was going back to God, and he performed this action on the way home to his Father. O dear brothers and sisters, if Christ thus stooped, how humble ought we to be! No office should be counted too lowly, no work for his servants should seem to be too humiliating, since Jesus "took a towel, and girded himself."

5. *After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

You see that Jesus does his work well. He omits none of the details of it. He puts himself in the place of a slave, and he performs a slave's duty very thoroughly. I am afraid that, sometimes, we do our work for him in a slovenly way; but Jesus was not satisfied with simply washing his disciples' feet, he must do the wiping, too. I do bless him that he did so, for this is a picture of what he has done for us. He has washed our feet; and he often repeats the gracious act. The feet that Jesus washes he will wipe; he has not begun his task without intending to finish it. I know

that he will complete in my soul the work which he has undertaken, for he fulfilled on the feet of his disciples the office he had undertaken: "He began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

6. *Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*

I do not wonder that he said that; would not you have been equally astonished had you been there? Peter had some faint idea who Christ was; he had confessed him in such a way that Jesus had said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Knowing so much about Christ, Peter did marvel at his action; he felt so astonished that he asked "Dost thou wash my feet?"

7. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

I have heard this saying of our Lord applied to affliction; and it is very true that what Jesus does we do not at present understand, but we shall know by-and-by. I do not think, however, that this sentence is very applicable that way, for there was no affliction in having the feet washed. The fact is, brethren, though it is a very humbling thing to say, we do not understand that which Jesus does, even his simplest actions are a mystery to us, we have never gone into the very depths of them so as to comprehend them. "What I do,—even though I only wash thy feet, plain and simple operation as that is,—thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Our knowing times, dear friends, are to come. We need not be so very anxious to know at present; this is the time of love. I would forego the filling of my head for a while if I could have my heart full; but, alas, we are generally so busy trying to attain merely head knowledge! My most intense longing is for a growing heart, a heart that truly loves the Saviour. That is the way for the head to learn, for knowledge that comes by the way of the heart, and so enters the head, is the best of knowledge. Jesus said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

8. *Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.*

That is just like Peter; if John had not told us who it was that said this, we should have known that it was Peter. He was always in such a hurry, and he spoke so quickly, that he made many mistakes; yet he was always so honest and so true that his Master forgave his faults, and helped him to correct them.

8. *Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

If Christ does not cleanse us, we do not belong to him. If he does not, day by day, exercise a purifying influence over us, we are not his.

9. *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

How that pendulum swings to and fro! It went this way just now: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Now it goes right away to the other extreme: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Go more gently, Peter, be more quiet. Why do you go so far in one direction, and then rush off so far in another way? Thy Master knows better than thou knowest what is right for thee.

10. *Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

Dear friends, when we believe in Christ, we are washed in the fountain filled with blood, and we are clean; but this world is such a sinful place that we cannot walk through it for even a day without some of its mire and

dust clinging to us. Besides, God's lilies are so pure that they are hardly fit to bloom in such a defiling atmosphere. Oh, how we need that the dew should wash the lily when the night comes on! How greatly we need to have the foot-washing administered to us every day! We need not repeat the first great washing, the bath by which our sins were cleansed; when that was done, it was done once for all. Our sin was pardoned as before a Judge; but we want it to be taken away as before our Father, for we are now under his loving discipline.

Christ further said to his disciples, "Ye are clean, but not all." Does he say that to us at this time? "Ye are clean, but not all." Where sits the man, in this house of prayer, who is not clean, the sinner who has not yet been washed by Jesus Christ? Where sits the woman who is not clean? The Lord have mercy upon you, dear friends! You know that, in the olden days, they put a red cross on the door of the house where the plague was. We cannot put a cross upon you; but I pray you to consider yourselves as marked men and marked women in the sight of God, and I pray the Lord to take that mark away by causing you to be washed, that you may be clean every whit. How quickly he can wash the foulest sinners! He that believeth in Jesus is washed in the precious blood, and he is clean. God cleanse us all for his great name's sake!

11—15. *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

Christ's actions are the pattern for us to imitate! Oh, that we followed them more closely!

16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*

Sometimes, we think that we are a deal too great to wash anybody's feet; we should like to see a person propose it to us, such big people as we are! If we talk like that, there is great need that we should be taken down. That would be the true way to rise in the likeness of Jesus. Oh, that we were lowlier in humility! We should be higher in grace if we were.

17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Peter wanted to know them; Jesus would have us do them.

18. *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen:*

Christ has a chosen people, though some will not believe it. Yet it is so, for he says, "I know whom I have chosen."

18, 19. *But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

"That I am." So, you see, even the great trouble of the early Church, the betrayal by Judas, was used by Christ for the strengthening of his disciples' faith. He foretold that it would be as it came to pass. So, dear friends, in these latter days, many forsake the gospel, but Jesus told us that it would be so. He taught his servants to write that there would be a falling away, and that in these last days there would be scoffers; and as we read the prophecies, and compare them with the fulfilment, even the doleful fact itself confirms our faith in our Lord.

God bless to us this brief reading of his own Word! Amen.

“AFTER TWO DAYS IS THE PASSOVER.”

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 20TH, 1897,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, November 1st, 1885.

“Ye know that after two days is . . . the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”—Matthew xxvi. 2.

ONE likes to know how a great commander feels before a battle. What is his state of mind, and how does he look forward to to-morrow's struggle? While yet the balances are trembling, how does he act? How does he bear himself? One likes to know the condition of heart of one's fellow in the prospect of a great trial. There is a serious operation to be performed; how is the sufferer supported in the prospect of the surgeon's knife and of the danger that will attend it? Or, perhaps, death itself is rapidly approaching; in what condition of heart is our departing friend? How does he anticipate the great change? I take it that it is sometimes much harder to look upon a battle than to fight one,—more difficult to foresee an ill than it is to bear it; and, peradventure, the foresight even of death is much more trying than death itself ever proves to be to a Christian man. Can we be confident before the battle begins? Can we be calm before the clouds burst in the time of storm? Can we rest in God before the iron gate is opened, and we pass through it into the unknown world? These are questions well worth asking.

I thought that it would be very profitable to us if we tried to look at our Master in this condition,—the great Captain of our salvation before the battle,—the great Sacrifice led to the altar where his blood is about to be shed. How does he behave himself? May there not be something specially instructive in this last word of his, when he seems, as it were, to take off the robes of the teacher and prophet, and to put on his priestly garments? May there not be something for us to learn from the state of his mind and spirit, and from his language, just before his Passion? It is a small window, but a great deal of

light may come through it. The Master said to his disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

I. The first thing I would say upon these words to you, beloved in Christ Jesus, is, ADMIRE YOUR SAVIOUR. Hear him speak, and regard him in holy contemplation, on purpose that admiration of him may be greatly excited.

Admire *his calmness*. There is no token of any disturbance of mind, there are no evidences of dismay, there is not even a quiver of fear, nor the least degree of anxiety about him. He speaks not boastfully; else we should suspect that he was not brave. He speaks very solemnly, for it was a terrible ordeal that lay before him, look at it as he might; but still, with what true peace of mind, in what tones of quiet serenity, does he say to his little band of followers, "Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

This calmness is very wonderful, because there was so much that was bitter and cruel about his approaching death: "The Son of man is betrayed." The Saviour felt that betrayal most keenly; it was a very bitter part of the deadly potion which he had to drink. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," was a venomous drop that went right into his soul. David, in his great sorrow, had to say, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company." And it was a very, very, very bitter thing to Christ to be betrayed by Judas; yet he talks of it calmly, and speaks of it when it was not absolutely necessary, one would think, to mention that incidental circumstance. He might have said, "In two days I shall be crucified;" but he did say, "In two days the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

Do not forget, also, the extraordinary bitterness that is concentrated in that word "crucified." Somehow, we have got to be used to the cross, and the glory which surrounds our Lord has taken away from our minds much of the shame which is and should ever be associated with the gibbet. The cross was the hangman's gibbet of those days, it implied all the shame that the gallows could imply with us to-day, and more, for a freeman may be hanged, but crucifixion was a death reserved for slaves. Nor was it merely the shame of crucifixion, but it was the great pain of it. It was an exquisitely cruel death, in which the body was tormented for a considerable length of time to the very highest degree, and the nails passing through the flesh just where the nerves are most plentiful, and tearing and rending through those parts of the body by the weight which had to be sustained on hands and feet, caused torture of a kind which I will not attempt to describe. Beside that, remember, veiled beneath the words "to be crucified" lay our Saviour's inward and spiritual crucifixion, for his Father's forsaking of him was the essence, the extreme gall, of the bitterness that he endured. He meant that he had to die upon the

accursed tree, deserted even by his Father; yet he talked of it, truly with all solemnity, but yet without the slightest trace of trembling. “Ye know,” said he to his disciples, “that in two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”

Admire, then, the calm, brave heart of your Divine Lord, conscious—far more conscious than you and I can be,—of what was meant by being betrayed and being crucified, cognisant of every pang that should ever come upon him,—the bloody sweat, the scourge, the thorn-crown, the fevered thirst, the tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth, and all the dust of death that would surround and choke him; yet he speaks of it as though it were no more an unusual event than the passover itself: “Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”

I want you to admire, next, your Saviour's *strong resolve*, his resolute purpose to go through all this suffering that he might effect our redemption. If he had willed it, he might have paused, he might have gone back, he might have given up the enterprise. You know how the flesh, in sight of all that pain and grief, cried, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;” but here we see, before the Passion came, that strong and firm and brave resolve which, when the Passion did come, would not, could not, and did not flinch or hesitate, much less turn back. He could sweat great drops of blood, but he could not give up the work he came to do. He could bow his head to death, but he could not, and would not, cease to love his people whom he loved so much as to end his life for their sakes upon the accursed tree. Here are no regrets, and no faltering. Our Lord speaks as you and I would speak of something about which our mind is quite made up, concerning which there is no room for argument or debate: “Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” If he had said, “After two years,” I could understand something of his purpose concerning an event that was so distant; but within two days to be betrayed, within forty-eight hours to be betrayed for crucifixion, and yet to talk of it so, O my Lord, truly thy love for us is strong as death, thy jealousy o'ercomes even the grave itself!

Admire him, then, dear friends; let your inmost heart adore and love him. But I want you to notice also *how absorbed he was in his approaching betrayal and death*; that truth comes out in the words of our text: “Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” Ah, dear Lord, thou didst speak the truth! They did know it, and yet thou didst speak to them with loving partiality, for they did not really know it. They did not as yet understand that their Master must die, and that he would rise again from the dead. He had often repeated to them the assurance that it would be so; but, somehow, they had not truly believed it, realized it, grasped it. Ah, but he had! He had; and, you know, it is the way of men who have realized a great truth to talk to others as if it was as real to them as to themselves. You remember how the spouse asks the watchmen of the city, “Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?” She does not tell them any name, but she talks of her Beloved as if there were no other “him” in all the world; and the Lord here so well

knew, and was so wholly absorbed in the great work before him, that he said to these forgetful, these ignorant disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." Why, they had only a little while before walked with him through the streets of Jerusalem! The people had strewn the road with their garments and with branches of palm trees; scarcely had the sound of their hosannas died away out of the disciples' ears, yet Jesus says to them, "Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified; you have not forgotten that, have you?" Ah, but they had! They were still dreaming of an earthly sovereignty, and he was dreaming of nothing, but sternly, solemnly setting his face like a flint to go to prison and to death for their redemption, and for yours, and for mine, sacredly resolved to go through with it, and even "straitened" till his baptism of blood should be accomplished, and he should be immersed in unknown deeps of grief and suffering. Having all his thought taken up with that subject, our Lord therefore talked to his disciples as if they were taken up with it, too. This is the language of One who is altogether absorbed with this gigantic enterprise which he has made to be the very summit of his ambition, though he knows that it will involve him in shame and death. Admire him, brothers and sisters, that he should be so taken up with the passion of winning souls as to forget everything else, and have this only upon his mind, and upon his lips: "After two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

I cannot help adding one other thing in which I admire the Saviour; and that is, *how wise he was to tell his disciples this!* You see, all he cared for was their good. He was not mentioning his suffering that he might ask for their sympathy. There is no trace of his crying, like Job, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." No, our Lord told his disciples this for their sakes; first, that they might not be surprised when it came to pass, as though some strange thing had happened unto them,—that, when he was betrayed and crucified, it might not be quite so dire a blighting of all their hopes since he had prepared them for it beforehand. And, moreover, it was intended to strengthen them when they should come into the trial, so that they should say, "It is all just as he told us it would be; how true he is! He told us about this sorrow beforehand; and, therefore, if he spake the truth then, we will believe that all the rest that he said is also true. And did he not say that he would rise again from the dead? Then, depend upon it, he will do so. He died when he said he would die, and he will rise again when he said he would rise again." This saying of our Lord was well and wisely uttered, that the crucifixion should not come upon them as a thing unknown to him; but that, when they were in the midst of the trial, they should remember that he told them all about it, and so they would be comforted.

I ask you, then, dear friends, to think with reverent affection of this calm speech of your Divine Master, this resolved and determined utterance, this all-absorbing thought of his concerning the purchase of his people by his blood, and this generous wisdom of his in making it all known beforehand to those who were round about him, and who

truly loved him. I do not like to turn from that thought until you have in your own heart felt this intense admiration of your Lord.

II. But, secondly, I want to take your thoughts a little way—not from the text,—but from that particular line of meditation, and now to ask you to CONSIDER YOUR SACRIFICE.

The Master says, “Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” I cannot help reading it like this,—“Ye know that after two days is THE Passover. All the other passovers have been passovers only in name, passovers in type, passovers in emblem, passovers foreshadowing *the* Passover; but after two days is the real Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” At any rate, I want you to notice how true it is that our Lord Jesus Christ is our Passover: “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” What the paschal lamb was to Israel in Egypt, that the Lord Jesus Christ is to us. Let us think of that for a few minutes. Put the passover and the cross together, for indeed they are one.

And, first, *here is a lamb*. Was there another man who ever lived who was so worthy to be called a lamb, as was Jesus Christ? I have never heard or read of any character that so fully realizes what must be meant by “the Lamb of God.” Other men have been like lambs, but there is a touch of the tiger about us all at times. There was none about him; he was the Lamb of all lambs,—the Lamb of God,—the most lamb-like of all men who ever lived or died, for there was no trace of anything about him that was contrary to tenderness, and love, and gentleness. There were other qualities, of course, but none that were contrary to these; there were some that were as necessary to a complete character as even gentleness was, and he failed in nothing; but, still, if you only view him from that one side of his gentleness, there was none so worthy to be called a Lamb as he.

The lamb of the passover, however, *had to be perfect*; it must be without spot or blemish. And where can you find the like of Jesus for spotlessness and perfection in every respect? There is nothing in him redundant, there is nothing in him deficient; the character of the Christ is absolutely perfect, insomuch that his very enemies, who have denied his Deity, have been charmed with his humanity; and those who have even tried to undermine his teaching, have, nevertheless, reverently bowed before his example. He is the Lamb of God “without blemish and without spot.”

The paschal lamb also *had to be slain*. You know how Christ was slain; there is no need to dwell upon the sufferings and death of our Well-beloved. The lamb *had to be roast with fire*. That was the method by which it was prepared; and, truly, Christ our Passover was roast with fire. Through what fiery sufferings, through what consuming griefs, did he pass! There was nought about him that was sodden at all with water; but every bit of him was roast with the fire of human hatred, and also with the divine and righteous ire of the thrice-holy God.

You remember, too, that in the paschal lamb *not a bone was to be broken*. Our Lord stood in imminent jeopardy of having his bones broken, for with iron bars the Roman soldiers went to break the legs

of the three crucified persons, that they might die the more quickly; but John tells us, "When they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, they shall look on him whom they pierced." In all this is Christ our true Paschal Lamb.

But you know, dear friends, that the chief point about the paschal lamb lay in *the sprinkling of the blood*. The blood of the lamb was caught in a basin; and then, the father of the family took a bunch of hyssop, dipped it in the blood, and struck the lintel and the two side posts of the house, outside the door; then, when the destroying angel flew through the land of Egypt to smite the firstborn of men and of cattle, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that was on the throne to the firstborn of one that was in the dungeon, he passed by every house that was sprinkled with the blood; and these are the Lord's memorable words concerning that ordinance, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." God's sight of the blood was the reason for his passing over his people, and not smiting them. And you know, beloved, that the reason why God does not smite you on account of sin is that he sees the sprinkled blood of Jesus under which you are sheltering. That blood is sprinkled upon you; and as God sees it, he knows that expiation has been made, the substitutionary sacrifice has been slain, and he passes you by. Thus is Christ, the true Passover, accepted in your stead, and you are saved through him.

Remember, too, that the paschal lamb *furnished food for a supper*. It was both a security and a feast for the people. The whole family stood round the table that night, and ate of the roasted lamb. With bitter herbs did they eat it, as if to remind them of the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt; with their loins girt, and with their walking staves in their hands, as men who were about to quit their homes, and go on a long journey never to return,—thus they stood and ate the paschal lamb. They all ate it, and they ate it all; for not a relic of it must be left until the morning. If there was too much for one family, then others must come in to share it; and if any was left, it must be destroyed by fire. Is not this, dear friends, just what Christ is to us,—our spiritual meat, the food of our souls? We receive a whole Christ, and feed upon a whole Christ,—often with bitter herbs of repentance and humiliation; but still we feed on him, and we all eat of the same spiritual meat, even as we are all sprinkled with the one precious blood, if indeed we be the true Israel of God.

O beloved, let us bless our Lord for the true Passover! It was a night to be remembered when Israel came out of Egypt; but it is a night to be remembered even more when you and I, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, are once for all passed over by the angel of avenging justice, and we live when others die;—a night to be remembered when our eager lips begin to feed on him whose flesh is meat indeed, and we eat and live for ever. Is not that the teaching of this text? Did not the Saviour mean this when he said, "Ye know that after

two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified”? These two things are bracketed together; as in mathematics, there is a sort of mark of “equals” put between them to signify that the one is equal to the other,—the feast of *the* Passover, and the fact that the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

III. Now I turn to a third point, and I think I shall have your earnest attention upon that, because there is something in it which very deeply interests all of us who belong to Christ. I have already asked you to admire your Saviour, and to consider your sacrifice; now, dear friends, **ADORE YOUR LORD.**

I ask you to adore your Lord, first, for *his foresight*. “After two days . . . the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” We cannot prophesy concerning the future. The man who can tell me what will happen in two days must be something more than man. As to many events, it is as difficult to foresee two minutes as to foresee two centuries, unless there be some causes operating which must produce certain effects. In our Lord’s case, the influences seemed all to point away from betrayal and crucifixion. He was extremely popular; to all appearance he was beloved by the mass of the people; and even the scribes and Pharisees, who sought his death, were thoroughly afraid of him; yet, with that clear foresight of the eye which shines in no head but that which is Divine, Jesus says, “After two days the Son of man is betrayed.” He sees it all as if it had already happened; he does not say, “*shall be*,” but he so fully sees it, he is such a true Seer, that he says, “The Son of man *is* betrayed to be crucified.”

Now, beloved, if he thus foresaw his own betrayal and death, let us adore him, for *he can foresee our trials and death*. He knows all that is going to happen to us; he knows what will happen to me within two days. I bless him that I do not; I would far rather that the eyes which see into the future should be in his head than in mine, they are safer there. But, brother, if within two days, or two months, or two years, you are to pass through some bitter agony, some scourging and buffeting, which looks very improbable now, you may not see that it may be so, but there is One who sees it. The sheep’s best eyes are in the shepherd’s head, the sheep will do well enough if he can see what is just before him, especially if he can see his shepherd; that is all he wants to see. But the shepherd can see into the cold winter, the shepherd can see into the wild wood where lurks the wolf, the shepherd can see everything. And I want you, dear friends, to adore your Lord because, if in his humiliation he foresaw his betrayal and death, from the vantage ground of his glory he can now see your griefs and your woes that are yet in reserve; and it ought to be enough for you that he knows all about you. He knows what your difficulty will be, and he will pray for you that your faith fail not. Adore your Lord, then, for his foresight.

I want you next to adore him for *his wonderful providence*. There was a providence which surrounded the Christ of God at that time; it was according to the divine purpose and will that he should die at the passover, and at that particular passover, and that he should die by being betrayed, and by being crucified. Without entering into the question of the responsibility and free will of men, I am sure

that the providence of their Lord and Master wrought this all out. I wonder that they did not take up stones to stone him; but they could not, for he must be crucified. I wonder that they did not hire an assassin, for there were plenty in those days who would have stabbed him for a shilling. But no; he must be crucified. I marvel that they had not slain him long ago, for they did take up stones again and again to stone him; but his hour was not then come. There was a providence working all the while, and shaping his end as it shapes ours. He was immortal till his work was done. But when the two days of which he spake should be over, he must die. With cruel and wicked hands, and of their own voluntary and evil will, they crucified and slew the Christ; yet it was all according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." I never yet pretended to explain how free agency and absolute predestination can both be true; but I am sure that they are both true, both written in Scripture, and both facts. To reconcile them, is no business of mine or yours; but to admire how they are reconciled in fact, is a business of yours and mine, and therefore let us do so now.

I want you, next, to admire your Lord by recognizing his *extraordinary correctness as a Prophet*. Let me read on beyond our text: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, into the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day,"—mark that,—“Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.” Now, note this. It must be on the feast day, and it shall be on the feast day; yet they said, “Not on the feast day.” But what does it matter what they say? Do you not observe how they were checkmated all round, how their purpose was like the whistling wind, and the eternal purpose stood firm in every particular? They said, “We will take him by subtilty, and kill him;” but they did not, they took him by force. They said, “We will kill him;” but they did not, for he died by the hands of the Romans. They meant to slay him privately, but they could not, for he must be hung up before high noon in the midst of the people. And, above all, they said, “Not on the feast day. Not on the feast day.” I think I hear old Caiaphas there, with all his wisdom and all his cunning, saying, “Not on the feast day,” and Annas and all the priests join in the chorus, “Not on the feast day. Postpone it a little till the million have departed, the vulgar throng who, perhaps, would make a riot in his favour.” There they stood with their broad-bordered garments and their phylacteries, and they were of opinion that what Caiaphas had proposed, and Annas had seconded, should be carried unanimously: “Not on the feast day.” But Christ had said, “After two days is the feast day, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” We do not know how it all came to be hurried on against their deliberate will; but Judas ran to them in hot haste, and said, “What will ye give me?” and they were so eager for Christ's death that they overleaped themselves. “We will give you thirty pieces of silver,” said they; and they weighed them out to him, little

thinking how quick he would be about his accursed business. Soon he comes back, and says, "He is in the garden; you can easily take him there while he is in prayer with a few of his disciples; I will conduct you thither;" and ere long the deed of darkness is done. These crafty, cruel men had said, "Not on the feast day;" but it *was* on the feast day, as Jesus had foretold that it would be.

Now, beloved, when our Lord tells us anything, let us always believe it. Whatever may appear to be against his statements, let us make nothing of it all. A man in Jerusalem at that time might have said, "The Christ cannot be put to death unless these scribes and elders of the people agree to it; and you can see that they have resolved not to have it on the feast day. He will not be crucified on the passover, the whole type will break down, and it will be shown that he is not what he professed to be." Ah, but they may say, "Not on the feast day," till they are hoarse; but he has said, "After two days is the feast day, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified;" and so it came to pass.

Our Lord has said that he will come again; yet men ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Brothers, be you sure that he will come. He has always kept his word, and he will come, as he said. Ah, but they say that he will not come to punish the ungodly who have defied him; but he will! The Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; he shall separate them the one from the other as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, and he will say to those on his left hand, "Depart, ye cursed," as surely as he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed." Every jot and tittle that has ever fallen from the lips of Christ is sure to come to pass, for you know that he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Rest you upon the eternal purpose of God, and the faithful promise of Christ, which shall never fail; for not one of Christ's words shall fall to the ground unfulfilled. Let us adore him, then, as our true Prophet. "Very God of very God," "the faithful and true Witness," "the Prince of the kings of the earth," we do adore thee this very hour!

IV. Now, fourthly, and lastly, dear friends, I want you to IMITATE YOUR EX-EMPLAR.

I will not detain you more than a minute or two upon this point; but I want you, as far as your Lord is imitable, to imitate him in the spirit of this verse. I have told you that there was no boasting in him, but that there was a deep calm and a firm resolve even in the immediate prospect of a cruel and shameful death; and I think that you should imitate your Lord in this respect. Suppose that, in two days, there shall come a "post" from the New Jerusalem to tell you that the silver cord is about to be loosed, and the golden bowl to be broken, and that your spirit must return to God who gave it. In such a case, it behoves you, dear follower of Christ, to receive that message with as much calmness as Christ delivered his own death-warrant, though it had to be spoken in such language as this: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." It will not run like that with you; but it may be that in two days consumption will end in hemorrhage, or that old age

will bring down the frail tent of your mortality, or that the disease which is now upon you will drag you to the grave. Well, if it be so in two days,—ah, if it were so in two hours, or two minutes!—it is for the child of God to say, “Thy will be done,” just as the Master did. Happy was that woman who said, “Every morning, before I come down-stairs, I dip my foot in the river of death, and I shall not be afraid to plunge into it for the last time.” They who die daily, as we all should, are always ready to die. I like Bengel’s notion concerning death. He says, “I do not think that a Christian should make any fuss about dying. When I am in company, and somebody comes to the door, and says, ‘Mr. Bengel is wanted,’ I let the company go on with their talk, and I just slip out, and I am gone. Perhaps, after a little while, they say, ‘Mr. Bengel is gone.’ Yes, that is all; and that is how I would like to die, for God to knock at my door, and for me to be gone, without making any ado about it.”

“Strangers into life we come,
And dying is but going home.”

I do not think that there ought to be any jerk on the metals when we arrive at the heavenly terminus; we just run straight on into the shed where the engine stops,—nay, into the glory, where we shall rest for ever and ever. I think I have heard of a captain, who was so skilled that, when he had arranged all the steering gear, he had not to alter a point for thousands of miles; and when he came to the harbour, he had so guided the vessel that he sailed straight in. If you get the Lord Jesus Christ on board the vessel of your life, you will find that he is such a skilful Steersman that you will never have to alter your course. He will so set your ship’s head that, between here and heaven, there will be nothing to do but to go right on; and then, on a sudden, you will hear a voice saying, “Furl sail! Let go the anchor!” You will hear a little rattle of the chain, and the vessel will be still for ever in that port which is truly called, the Fair Havens.

That is how it should be, and I am going to finish by saying that I believe that is how it will be. If I say to you that it ought to be so, you will perhaps say to me, “Ah, sir, but I am often subject to bondage through fear of death!” Yes, but you will not be when you come to die. O poor Little-faith, you want to have strength now to die with! But God knows that you are not going to die for some time yet; so what would you do with dying grace if he were to give it to you now? Where would you pack it up, and lay it by? It will be quite time to get dying grace when you come to die. Have I not seen some fidgety old folk who have been really a trouble to other people through their getting so worried and anxious? But all of a sudden there has come upon them such a beautiful quiet. It has been said, “Oh, grandma is so different! Something is going to happen, we feel sure.” One day, she had not anything to trouble her. Everybody could see that she was seriously unwell; but the dear old eyes sparkled with unusual brightness, and there was an almost unearthly smile upon her face, and she said at night, “I don’t feel quite as well as usual; I think, to-morrow morning, I shall lie a little later.” And she did;

so they went up to her. She said that she had had a blessed night; she did not know whether she had slept, but she had seen in the night such a wondrous sight, though she could not describe what it was like. They all gathered round the bed, for they perceived that something very mysterious had happened to her; and she blessed them all, and said, "Good-bye; meet me in heaven;" and she was gone. And they have said to me afterwards, "Our dear old grandma used always to be afraid of dying; but it did not come to much when she really came to die, did it?" I have often seen it so; it is no strange story that I am telling you now. A Christian man has been so unwise as to be always fearing that he would play the fool when he came to die; and yet, when it has come to the time of night, the dear child of God, who had long been in the dark, has received his candle; his Lord has given him his bed-room candle, and he has gone upstairs, and by its light he has passed away into the land where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, but the Lord God giveth them light. I believe that many of us will die just like that; I believe that you will, my dear sister. I believe that you will, my dear brother. As your days, your strength shall be; and as your last day is, so shall your strength be. And I should not wonder if, one of these days, you or I will be heard saying, "Now, dear friends, the doctor has told me that I cannot live long. I asked him how long, and he said, 'Perhaps, a week,' and I was a little disappointed that I had to wait so long." I should not wonder if those around us should hear us say, "Well, it is only two days according to their reckoning, and perhaps it will not be two days. I think that I shall go next Sunday morning, just when the bells are ringing the people into the house of prayer on earth. Just then, I shall hear heaven's bells ringing, and I shall say, 'Good-bye,' and be where I have often longed to be, where my treasure is, where my Best-beloved is." So may it be with you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE IV. 16—30; AND JOHN VIII. 37—59. (R.V.)

We will read, from the Revised Version, two passages which record attempts made to kill our Lord before his time had come. You will see, from the sermon, why we read them.

Luke iv. Verses 16—21. *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.*

Alas, not in their hearts! They had heard Christ read the prophecy that related to himself, but they had not accepted its message.

22—27. *And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.*

Thus the Saviour taught God's absolute right to deal out his mercies as he pleases. To that great doctrine of divine sovereignty, Christ's hearers would not submit, even as many in the present day will not yield.

28. *And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue,—*

They admired Christ's style of speech, but when he came to that man-humbling and God-glorifying doctrine, they were filled with wrath,—

28—30. *As they heard these things; and they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.*

John viii. 37—59. *I know that ye are Abraham's seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you. I speak the things which I have seen with my Father: and ye also do the things which ye heard from your father. They answered and said unto him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the works of your father. They said unto him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God. The Jews answered and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye dishonour me. But I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death. The Jews said unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: it is my Father that glorifieth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God; and ye have not known him: but I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know him, and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.*

THE BLOOD SHED FOR MANY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3RD, 1887, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—Matthew xxvi. 28.

THE Lord Jesus Christ was then alive, sitting at the table, and yet, pointing to the cup filled with red wine, he said, “This is my blood, which is shed for many.” This proves that he could not have intended that the wine was literally his blood. Surely it is no longer necessary to refute the gross and carnal dogma of transubstantiation, which is obviously absurd. There sat the living Lord at the supper, with his blood in his veins, and therefore the wine could not literally be his blood. Value the symbol, but to confound it with the thing symbolized would draw into the idolatrous worship of a piece of bread.

Our Lord spoke of his blood as shed when as yet the nails had not pierced his hands and feet, and the spear had not broached his side. Is not this to be accounted for by the fact that our Lord was so taken up with the thought of our redemption by his death that he speaks of that as done which he was so resolved to do? Enjoying loving intercourse with his chosen disciples, he spake freely; his heart did not study accuracy so much as feeling; and so, in speech as in feeling, he antedated his great work of atonement, and spoke of it as done. To set forth the future intent of the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper he must of necessity treat his death as an accomplished fact; and his complete absorption in his work made it easy and natural for him to do so. He ignores moods and tenses; “his work is before him.”

By the use of such language, our Lord also shows us the abiding presence of the great sacrifice as a power and an influence. He is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” and therefore he speaks of his blood as shed. In a few hours it would be literally poured forth; but long ages before, the Lord God had regarded it as done. In full confidence in the great Surety that he would never draw back from the perfect fulfilment of his engagements, the Father saved multitudes in virtue of the future sin-offering. He communed with myriads of saints on the strength of the purification which would in the fulness of time be presented by the great High Priest. Could not the Father

trust his Son? He did so, and by this act set us a great example of faith. God himself is in very deed the Father of the faithful, seeing that he himself reposed the utmost confidence in Jesus, and because of what he would yet do in the pouring out of his soul unto death, he "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." What, my soul! canst thou not trust the sacrifice now that it has been presented? If the foresight of it was enough for God, is not the consummation of it enough for thee? "Behold the Lamb of God," who even before he died was described as taking away the sin of the world. If this was so before he went to Calvary, how surely is it so now that he has said in verity and truth, "It is finished"!

Dear friends, I am going to preach to you again upon the corner-stone of the gospel. How many times will this make, I wonder? The doctrine of Christ crucified is always with me. As the Roman sentinel in Pompeii stood to his post even when the city was destroyed, so do I stand to the truth of the atonement though the church is being buried beneath the boiling mud-showers of modern heresy. Everything else can wait, but this one truth must be proclaimed with a voice of thunder. Others may preach as they will, but as for this pulpit, it shall always resound with the substitution of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some may continually preach Christ as an example, and others may perpetually discourse upon his coming to glory: we also preach both of these, but mainly we preach Christ *crucified*, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

You have before you a cup, filled with wine, which Jesus has just blessed, and presented to his disciples. As you look into its rosy depths, hear him speak of the cup as his blood; for thus he would teach us a solemn lesson.

I. Note, first, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST. The vital importance of the great truth of the death of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice, is set before us in this cup, which is the memorial of his blood shed for many.

Blood represents suffering; but it goes further, and suggests suffering unto death. "The blood is the life thereof," and when blood is too copiously shed death is suggested. Remember that in the sacred supper you have the bread as a separate emblem of the body, and then the wine as a separate symbol of the blood: thus you have a clear picture of death, since the blood is separated from the flesh. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." Both acts are essential.

Upon the death of Christ you are invited to fix your attention, and upon that only. In the suffering of our Lord unto death we see the boundless stretch of his love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Jesus could not be more loving to us than to yield himself unto death, even the death of the cross. O my Lord, in thy bloody sweat, and in the piercing of thy hands, and feet, and side, I see the highest proof of thy love! Here I see that Jesus "loved me, and gave himself for me." Beloved, I beg you to consider often and lovingly the sufferings of your Redeemer, unto

the pouring out of his heart's blood. Go with him to Gethsemane, and thence to the house of Caiaphas and Annas, and then to Pilate's hall, and Herod's place of mockery! Behold your Lord beneath the cruel scourges, and in the hands of the executioners upon the hill of shame. Forget not one of the sorrows which were mingled in the bitter cup of his crucifixion—its pain, its mockery, its shame. It was a death reserved for slaves and felons. To make its deep abysses absolutely bottomless, he was forsaken even of his God. Let the darkness of "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," bear down upon your spirit till, as you sink in awe, you also rise in love. He loved you better than he loved himself! The cup means love, even to the shedding of his blood for you.

It means something more. We have called our Lord, in our hymn, "Giver of life for life," and that is what this cup means. He gave up his life that we might live. He stood in our place and stead in the day of Jehovah's wrath, receiving into his bosom the fiery sword which was unsheathed for our destruction. The pouring out of his blood has made our peace with God. Jehovah made the soul of his only-begotten an offering for sin, that the guilty might be cleared. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." That is what the wine in the cup means: it means the death of Jesus in our stead. It means the blood poured out from the heart of the incarnate God, that we might have fellowship with God, the sin which divided us being expiated by his death.

Our blessed Saviour would have us hold his death in great reverence: it is to be *our chief memory*. Both the emblems of the Lord's Supper set forth the Saviour's death. This peculiarly Christian ordinance teaches nothing if it does not teach this. Christ's death for men is the great doctrine of the church. We profess ourselves partakers of the merit of his death when we come to this table; our Lord's death is then remembered, shown, declared, testified, and trusted in. Evidently the Lord Jesus means us to treat the fact of his death as a truth to be made pre-eminently prominent: he would not have instituted an ordinance specially to remind us of the shedding of his blood, if he had not regarded it as the forefront of his whole earthly career.

The other ordinance of our holy faith also sets forth our Lord's death. Are we not "Buried with him by baptism into death?" Is not baptism an emblem of his being immersed beneath the waves of sorrow and death? Baptism shows us that participation in Christ's suffering by which we begin to live; the Lord's Supper shows us that participation in Christ's suffering by which that life is sustained. Both institutions point to his death.

Besides, beloved, we know from Holy Scripture that this doctrine of the death of Christ is the very core of Christianity. Leave out the cross, and you have killed the religion of Jesus. Atonement by the blood of Jesus is not an arm of Christian truth; it is the heart of it. Even as the Lord said of the animal, "The blood is the life thereof," so is it true of the gospel, the sacrificial death of Jesus is the vital point of our profession. I know nothing of Christianity without the blood of Christ. No teaching is healthy which throws the cross into the background. The other day, when I was enquiring about the welfare of a certain congregation, my informant told me that there had been

few additions to the church, although the minister was a man of ability and industry. Furthermore, he let me see the reason for failure, for he added, "I have attended there for several years, and during all that time I do not remember hearing a sermon upon the sacrifice of Christ. The atonement is not denied, but it is left out." If this be so, what is to become of our churches? If the light of the atonement is put under a bushel, the darkness will be dense. In omitting the cross you have cut the tendon Achilles of the church: it cannot move, nor even stand, when this is gone. Holy work falls to the ground: it faints and dies when the blood of Jesus is taken away. The cross must be put in the front more than ever by the faithful, because so many are unfaithful. Let us endeavour to make amends for the dishonour done to our divine Master by those who deny or dishonour his vicarious sacrifice: let us abide steadfast in this faith while others waver, and preach Christ crucified if all else forbear. Grace, mercy, and peace be to all who exalt Christ crucified!

This remembrance of the death of Christ must be a *constant remembrance*. The Lord's Supper was meant to be a frequent feast of fellowship. It is a grievous mistake of the church when the communion is held but once in the year, or once in a quarter of a year; and I cannot remember any Scripture which justifies once in the month. I should not feel satisfied without breaking bread on every Lord's-day. It has come to me even oftener than once a week; for it has been my delight to break bread with many a little company of Christian friends. Whenever this Supper is celebrated, we declare that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." We cannot think of that death too often. Never was man blamed in heaven for preaching Christ too much; nay, not even on earth to the sons of God was the cross ever too much spoken of. Outsiders may say, "This man harps only upon one string." Do you wonder? The carnal mind is enmity against God, and it specially shows its hatred by railing at the cross. Saintly ones find here, in the perpetual monotony of the cross, a greater variety than in all other doctrines put together. Preach you Christ, and Christ, and Christ, and Christ, and nothing else but Christ, and opened ears shall find in your ministry a wondrous harmony of linked sweetnesses, a charming perfectness of all manner of delicious voices. All good things lie within the compass of the cross; its outstretched arms overshadow the whole world of thought; from the east even unto the west it sheds a hallowed influence; meanwhile, its foot is planted deep in the eternal mysteries, and its top pierces all earth-born clouds, and rises to the throne of the Most High. Christ is lifted up upon the cross, that he may draw all men unto him; and if we desire to draw them, this must be our magnet.

Beloved, the precious blood of Christ should be had by us in *vivid remembrance*. There is something to me most homely about that cup filled with the fruit of the vine. The bread of the Supper is the bread of our common meal, and the wine is the usual attendant of feasts. That same pure blood of the grape which is set on our sacramental table I drink with my friend. Look at those ruby, ruddy drops, suggesting your Lord's own blood. I had not dared to invent the symbol, nor might any man of mortal mould have ventured on such a thing, lest he should seem to bring that august death down to our lowly

level; but in infinite condescension Jesus himself chooses the symbol, and while by its materialism he sets forth the reality of the sacrifice, by its commonness he shows how freely we may partake thereof. He would not have us know him after the flesh, and forget the spiritual nature of his griefs; but yet he would have us know that he was in a real body when he bled, and that he died a real death, and became most truly fit for burial; and therefore he symbolizes his blood, not by some airy fancy, or mystic sign, but by common wine in the cup. Thus would he reach us by our eye and by our taste, using two gates of our nature which lead up to the castle of the heart, but are not often the King's roadway thereto. O blessed Master, dost thou arrange to teach us so forcibly? Then let us be impressed with the reality of the lesson, and never treat thy passion as a thing of sentiment, nor make it a myth, nor view it as a dream of poesy. Thou shalt be in death most real to us, even as is that cup whereof we drink.

The dear memorials of our Lord's blood-shedding are intended for *a personal remembrance*. There is no Lord's Supper except as the wine touches the lip, and is received into the communicant's own self. All must partake. He says, "Drink ye all of it." You cannot take the Lord's Supper by deputy or representative; you must each of you approach the table, and personally eat and drink. Beloved, we *must* come into personal contact with the death of Christ. This is essential. We must each one say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." In his blood you must be personally washed; by his blood you must be personally reconciled to God; through his blood you must personally have access to God; and by his blood you must personally overcome the enemy of your souls. As the Israelite's own door must be smeared with the blood of the Paschal lamb, so must you individually partake of the true Sacrifice, and know each one for himself the power of his redemption.

As it is personal, it is a charming fact that it is *a happy remembrance*. Our remembrance of Christ is chastened with repentance, but it is also perfumed with faith. The Lord's Supper is no funeral meal, but a festival; most fitly do we begin it with the giving of thanks, and close it with a hymn. It is by many called the "Eucharist," or the giving of thanks: it is not a fast, but a feast. My happiest moments are spent with the King at his table, when his banner over me is love. The death of Christ is a well-spring of solemn joy. Before our great Sacrifice died, the best token of his death was the blood of bulls and of goats. See how the victims writhe in death! The sacrificial knife does terrible work at the foot of the altar; it is hard to stand by, and see the creatures bleed. After our Lord's death was over, the blood of animals was not the type, but the blood of the grape. That which was terrible in prospect is joyous in remembrance. That which was blood in the shedding is wine in the receiving. It came from him with a wound, but it comes to us with a blessing. His blood is our song in the house of our pilgrimage, and it shall add the best music to our heavenly harmonies as we sing before the throne: "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory for ever and ever." If our Lord Jesus has made the memory of his love to be more sweet than wine, let us never turn from it as though it had

become a distasteful theme. Let us find our choicest pleasures at the cross.

Once more, our Saviour meant us to maintain the doctrine of his death, and the shedding of his blood for the remission of sins, even to the end of time, for he made it to be of *perpetual remembrance*. We drink this cup "until he come." If the Lord Jesus had foreseen with approbation the changes in religious thought which would be brought about by growing "culture," he would surely have arranged a change of symbols to suit the change of doctrines. Would he not have warned us that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, men would become so "enlightened" that the faith of Christendom must of necessity take a new departure, and therefore he had appointed a change of sacramental memorials? But he has not warned us of the coming of those eminently great and wise men who have changed all things, and abolished the old-fashioned truths for which martyrs died. Brethren, I do not believe in the wisdom of these men, and their changes I abhor; but had there been any ground for such changes, the Lord's Supper would not have been made of perpetual obligation. The perpetuity of ordinances indicates a perpetuity of doctrine. But hear the moderns talk—"The Apostles, the Fathers, the Puritans, they were excellent men, no doubt, but then, you see, they lived before the uprise of those wonderful scientific men who have enlightened us so much." Let me repeat what I have said. If we had come to a new point as to believing, should we not have come to a new point as to the ordinances in which those beliefs are embodied? I think so. The evident intent of Christ in giving us settled ordinances, and especially in settling this one which so clearly commemorates his bloodshedding, was that we might know that the truth of his sacrifice is for ever fixed and settled, and must unchangeably remain the essence of his gospel. Neither nineteen centuries, nor nineteen thousand centuries, can make the slightest difference in this truth, nor in the relative proportion of this truth to other truths, so long as this dispensation lasts. Until he comes a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation, the grand work of his first coming must be kept first and foremost in all our teaching, trusting, and testifying. As in the southern hemisphere the cross is the mariner's guide, so, under all skies, is the death of our Redeemer the polestar of our hope upon the sea of life. In life and in death we will glory in the cross of Christ, and never be ashamed of it, be we where we may.

II. Secondly, note well THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WITH THE COVENANT. Read the text again: "This is my blood of the new testament." The translation would be better, "This is my blood of the covenant."

What is this covenant? The covenant is that which I read to you just now in Jeremiah xxxi. 33: "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." See also Jeremiah xxxii. 40: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Turn also to Ezekiel xi. 19: "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take

the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." Look in the same prophecy at xxxvi. 26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." What a Magna Charta is this! The old covenant saith, "Keep the law and live." The new covenant is, "Thou shalt live, and I will lead thee to keep my law, for I will write it on thine heart." Happy men who know their standing under this covenant!

What has the blood of Jesus Christ to do with this covenant? It has everything to do with it, for the covenant could never have been made apart from the blood of Jesus. Atonement was taken for granted in the establishment of the covenant. No one else could have stood as our representative, to fulfil our side of the covenant, except the Lord Jesus Christ; and even he could only have performed that covenant by shedding his blood. In that cup you see the emblem of the blood which made the covenant possible.

Moreover, the blood of Jesus makes the covenant sure. His death has fulfilled man's side of the covenant, and God's part standeth sure. The stipulation of the covenant is fulfilled in Christ, and now the tenor of it is pure promise. Note how the "shalls" and "wills" follow each other in quick succession. An arrangement of absolute grace on God's part towards the undeserving sons of men is now in full action through the sacrifice of Christ.

This covenant of grace, when rightly understood, exerts a blessed influence over the minds of men conscious of sin. The chaplain of a jail, a dear friend of mine, once told me of a surprising case of conversion in which a knowledge of the covenant of grace was the chief instrument of the Holy Spirit. My friend had under his charge a man most cunning and brutal. He was singularly repulsive, even in comparison with other convicts. He had been renowned for his daring, and for the utter absence of all feeling when committing acts of violence. I think he had been called "the king of the garotters." The chaplain had spoken to him several times, but had not succeeded even in getting an answer. The man was sullenly set against all instruction. At last he expressed a desire for a certain book, but as it was not in the library the chaplain pointed to the Bible, which was placed in his cell, and said, "Did you ever read *that* Book?" He gave no answer, but looked at the good man as if he would kill him. The question was kindly repeated, with the assurance that he would find it well worth reading. "Sir," said the convict, "you would not ask me such a question if you knew who I was. What have I to do with a Book of that sort?" He was told that his character was well known to the chaplain, and that for this very reason he recommended the Bible as a Book which would suit his case. "It would do me no good," he cried, "I am past all feeling." Doubling up his fist he struck the iron door of the cell, and said, "My heart is as hard as that iron; there is nothing in any book that will ever touch me." "Well," said the chaplain, "You want a new heart. Did you ever read the covenant of grace?" To which the man answered sullenly by enquiring what he meant by such talk. His friend replied, "Listen to these words—'A new heart also will I give you, and a

new spirit will I put within you.'” The words struck the man with amazement, as well they might; he asked to have the passage found for him in the Bible. He read the words again and again; and when the chaplain came back to him next day, the wild beast was tamed. “Oh, sir,” he said, “I never dreamed of such a promise! I never believed it possible that God would speak in such a way as that to men. If he gives me a new heart it will be a miracle of mercy; and yet I think,” he said, “he is going to work that miracle upon me, for the very hope of a new nature is beginning to touch me as I never was touched before.” That man became gentle in manner, obedient to authority, and childlike in spirit. Though my friend has nothing left of the sanguine hopes he once entertained of converted criminals, he yet believes that in this case no observer could have questioned the thorough nature of the work, and yet the only means was the doctrine of the covenant. My rebellious heart is not affected by the fact that God commands me to do this or that; but when he declares free and full forgiveness, and goes on to promise love and favour, and renewal of nature, I feel broken down. How can I rebel against one who does such wonders in me, and designs such great things for me?

“Dissolved by his goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.”

How dear and precious this makes the blood of Christ, since it is the blood of the everlasting covenant! Coming under this blessed covenant, we henceforth adore the fulness of that grace which, at the cost of the most precious of all lives, has made this arrangement for unworthy men.

You will perhaps say to me, “Why did our translators use the word ‘testament’ in our Authorized Version?” They were hardly so wise as usual in this instance, for “covenant” is the better word of the two to set forth the original; but yet the idea of a testament is there also. The original may signify either or both. The word “settlement,” which has dropped out of use nowadays, was often employed by our Calvinistic forefathers when they spoke of the everlasting arrangement of grace. The word settlement might take in both covenant and testament—there is a covenant of grace, but the covenant stipulation being fulfilled by our Lord Jesus, the arrangement becomes virtually a testament, through which, by the will of God, countless blessings are secured to the heirs of salvation. The blood of Jesus is the seal of the covenant, and transforms its blessings into bequests of love, entailed upon believers. The settlement or arrangement, by which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, and can deal with believers, not on terms of law, but on terms of pure grace, is established by the sacrifice of our Lord. O my brethren, as God’s covenanted ones, drink ye of the cup with joy, and renew your pledge with the Lord your God!

III. A third point comes up in the text very manifestly: **THE BLOOD HAS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH REMISSION.** The text says, “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Jesus suffering, bleeding, dying, has procured for sinners the forgiveness of their sins.

Of what sins? Of all sins of every sort and kind, however heinous, aggravated, and multiplied. The blood of the covenant takes every sin away, be it what it may; there was never a sin believingly confessed and taken to Christ that ever baffled his power to cleanse it. This fountain has never been tried in vain. Murderers, thieves, liars, adulterers, and what not, have come to Jesus by penitence and faith, and through the merit of his sacrifice their sins have been put away.

Of what nature is the remission? It is pardon, freely given, acting immediately, and abiding for ever, so that there is no fear of the guilt ever being again laid to the charge of the forgiven one. Through the precious blood our sins are blotted out, cast into the depths of the sea, and removed as far from us as the east is from the west. Our sins cease to be; they are made an end of; they cannot be found against us any more for ever. Yes, hear it, hear it, O wide earth! Let the glad news startle thy darkest dens of infamy, there is absolute remission of sins! The precious blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin: yes, turns the scarlet into a whiteness which exceeds that of the newly-fallen snow—a whiteness which never can be tarnished. Washed by Jesus, the blackest of sinners shall appear before the judgment-seat of the all-seeing Judge without spot.

How is it that the blood of Jesus effects this? The secret lies in the vicarious or substitutionary character of our Lord's suffering and death. Because he stood in our place the justice of God is vindicated, and the threatening of the law is fulfilled. It is now just for God to pardon sin. Christ's bearing the penalty of human sin instead of men has made the moral government of God perfect in justice, has laid a basis for peace of conscience, and has rendered sin immeasurably hateful, though its punishment does not fall upon the believer. This is the great secret, this is the heavenly news, the gospel of salvation, that through the blood of Jesus sin is justly put away. Oh, how my very soul loves this truth! Therefore do I speak it in unmistakable terms.

And for what end is this remission of sins secured? My brethren, if there were no other end for the remission of sins but its own self, it would be a noble purpose, and it would be worth preaching every day of our lives; but it does not end here. We mistake if we think that the pardon of sins is God's ultimatum. No, no; it is but a beginning, a means to a further purpose. He forgives our sins with the design of curing our sinfulness. We are pardoned that we may become holy. God forgives the sin that he may purify the sinner. If he had not aimed at thy holiness, there had not been so imperative a necessity for an atonement; but to impress thee with the guilt of sin, to make thee feel the evil which sin hath wrought, to let thee know thine obligation to divine love, the Lord has not forgiven thee without a sacrifice. Ah, what a sacrifice! He aims at the death of thy sinfulness, that thou mayest henceforth love him, and serve him, and crucify the lusts which crucified thy Lord. The Lord aims at working in thee the likeness of his dear Son. Jesus hath saved thee by his self-sacrificing obedience to justice, that thou mayest yield thy whole soul to God, and be willing to die for the upholding of the kingdom of love and truth. The death of Christ for thee pledges thee to be dead to sin, that by his

resurrection from the dead thou mayest rise into newness of life, and so become like thy Lord. Pardon by blood aims at this. Dost thou catch the thought? If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's intent is to make thee like the Firstborn among many brethren, and to work in thee everything that is comely and of good report. Even this is not all: he hath a further design to bring thee into everlasting fellowship with himself. He is sanctifying thee, that thou mayest behold his face, and that thou mayest be fit to be a comrade of his only-begotten Son throughout eternity. Thou art to be the choice and dear companion of the Lord of love. He has a throne for thee, a mansion and a crown for thee, and an immortality of such inconceivable glory and blessedness that, if thou didst but form even a distant conception of it, no golden apple of earth would turn thee aside from pursuing the prize of thy high calling. Oh, to be for ever with the Lord! For ever to behold his face! I fail to reach the height of this great argument! See, my brethren, to what the blood of your Lord destines you. O my soul, bless God for that one cup, which reminds thee of the great sacrifice, and prophesies to thee thy glory at the right hand of God for ever!

IV. I cannot forget to notice, in closing, THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH MEN. We are told in the text that this blood is shed "for many for the remission of sins." In that large word "many" let us exceedingly rejoice. Christ's blood was not shed for the handful of apostles alone. There were but eleven of them who really partook of the blood symbolized by the cup. The Saviour does not say, "This is my blood which is shed for you, the favoured eleven;" but "shed for many." Jesus did not die for the clergy alone. I recollect in Martin Luther's life that he saw, in one of the Romish churches, a picture of the Pope, and the cardinals, and bishops, and priests, and monks, and friars, all on board a ship. They were all safe, every one of them. As for the laity, poor wretches, they were struggling in the sea, and many of them drowning. Only those were saved to whom the good men in the ship were so kind as to hand out a rope or a plank. That is not our Lord's teaching: his blood is shed "for many," and not for the few. He is not the Christ of a caste, or a class, but the Christ of all conditions of men. His blood is shed for many sinners, that their sins may be remitted.

Those in the upper room were all Jews, but the Lord Jesus Christ said to them, "This blood is shed for many," to let them see that he did not die alone for the seed of Abraham, but for all races of men that dwell upon the face of the earth. "Shed for many." His eye, I doubt not, glanced at these far-off islands, and at the vast lands beyond the western sea. He thought of Africa, and India, and the land of Sinim. A multitude that no man can number gladdened the far-seeing and fore-seeing eye of the Redeemer. He spoke with joyful emphasis when he said, "shed for many for the remission of sins." Believe in the immeasurable results of redemption. Whenever we are making arrangements for the preaching of this precious blood, let us make them on a large scale. The mansion of love should be built for a large family. Let us not sing—

"We are a garden walled around,
Pray keep the walls most tight and sound."

Let us expect to see large numbers brought within the sacred enclosure. We must yet break forth on the right hand and on the left. The masses must be compelled to come in. This blood is shed for many. A group of half-a-dozen converts makes us very glad, and so it should; but oh, to have half-a-dozen thousand at once! Why not? This blood is shed "for many." Let us cast the great net into the sea. You young men, preach the gospel in the streets of this crowded city, for it is meant for many! You who go from door to door, do not think you can be too hopeful, since your Saviour's blood is shed for many, and Christ's "many" is a very great many. It is shed for all who ever shall believe in him—shed for thee, sinner, if thou wilt now trust him. Only confess thy sin, and trust Christ, and be assured that Jesus died in thy place and stead. It is shed for many, so that no man or woman born shall ever trust Christ in vain, or find the atonement insufficient for him. Oh, for a large-hearted faith, so that by holy effort we may lengthen our cords, and strengthen our stakes, expecting to see the household of our Lord become exceeding numerous! He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his righteousness shall he justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. Dwell on that word "many," and let it nerve you for far-reaching labours.

V. Now note THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH OURSELVES. Dear hearer, are you among the many? Why are you not? May his grace bring you to trust in him, and you may not doubt that you are among the many. "Ah," say you, "that is what I am listening for! How can I partake in the effect of this sacrifice?" Seest thou that wine-cup which I set before thee just now? How art thou to enjoy that wine which fills the cup? Its ruddy drops, how are they to be thine? The matter is very simple. I think I see thee take the chalice in thine hand, and raise it to thy mouth. Thou drinkest, and the deed is done. This is no mystery. Bread and wine are ours by eating and drinking; Christ is ours by our receiving him. The merit of his precious blood becomes ours by that simple child-like faith which accepts Jesus to be our all. We say, "Here it is; I believe in it; I take it; I accept it as my own." It is yours. No man can take from you that which you have eaten and drunk. Christ is yours for ever if you receive him into your heart.

If you have any question as to whether you have drunk, I will tell you how to solve it—*drink again!* If you have been eating, and you have really forgotten whether you have eaten or not—such things do occur to busy men, who eat but little; if, I say, you would be sure that you have eaten, *eat again!* If thou wilt be assured that thou hast believed in Jesus, *believe again!* Whenever thou hast any doubt about whether Christ is thine, take him over again. I like to begin again. Often I find the best way of going forward is to go back to my first faith in Jesus and as a sinner renew my confidence in my Saviour. "Oh," says the devil, "thou art a preacher of the gospel, but thou dost not know it thyself." At one time I used to argue with the accuser; but he is not worth it, and it is by no means profitable to one's own heart. We cannot convert or convince the devil; it is better to refer him to our Lord. When he tells me I am not a saint, I answer, "Well, what am I,

then?" "A sinner," says he. "Well, so are you!" "Ah!" saith he, "you will be lost." "No," say I, "that is why I shall not be lost, since Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I therefore trust in him to save me." This is what Martin Luther calls cutting the devil's head off with his own sword, and it is the best course you can follow.

You say, "If I take Christ to myself as a man takes a cup and drinks the contents, am I saved?" Yes, thou art. "How am I to know it?" Know it because God says so. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." If I did not feel a pulse of that life (as I did not at first), I nevertheless would believe that I had it, simply on the strength of the divine assurance. Since my conversion, I have felt the pulsings of a life more strong and forcible than the life of the most vigorous youth that ever ran without weariness; but there are times when it is not so. Just now I feel the heavenly life joyously leaping within me; but when I do not feel it, I fall back on this: God has said "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." God's words against all my feelings! I may get into a fainting fit, and my circumstances may operate upon my heart, as this hot weather operates upon my body, and make me feel dull and sleepy; but this cannot make the Word of God of none effect. I go back to the Book, and believe the bare Word of the Lord, "He that believeth in him *hath* everlasting life." That is enough for me. I believe, and therefore I live. Our inward experience is fine corroborative evidence, but God's testimony is the best foundation our confidence can have.

I recollect a story told of William Dawson, whom our Wesleyan friends used to call Billy Dawson, one of the best preachers that ever entered a pulpit. He once gave out as his text, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." When he had given out his text he dropped down to the bottom of the pulpit, so that nothing could be seen of him, only there was a voice heard saying, "Not the man in the pulpit, he is out of sight, but the Man in the Book. The Man described in the Book is the Man through whom is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." I put myself and you, and everybody else out of sight, and I preach to you the remission of sins through Jesus only. I would sing with the children, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Shut your eyes to all things but the cross. Jesus died, and rose again, and went to heaven, and all your hope must go with him! Come, my hearer, take Jesus by a distinct act of faith this morning! May God the Holy Ghost constrain thee to do so, and then thou mayest go on thy way rejoicing! So be it in the name of Jesus.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Matthew xxvi. 14—30; Jeremiah xxxi. 31—37.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—429, 296.

SORROW AT THE CROSS TURNED INTO JOY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3RD, 1878, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”—John xvi. 20—22.

WE were singing just now a hymn in which the first verse started a difficult question—

“‘It is finish’d;’ shall we raise
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?
Mourn to see the Saviour die,
Or proclaim his victory?”

The case is very well argued in the second and third verses—

“If of Calvary we tell,
How can songs of triumph swell?
If of man redeem’d from woe,
How shall notes of mourning flow?
Ours the guilt which pierced his side,
Ours the sin for which he died;
But the blood which flow’d that day
Wash’d our sin and guilt away.”

The conclusion at which we arrived in the concluding verse seems to me to be the right one—

“Lamb of God! Thy death hath given
Pardon, peace, and hope of heaven:
‘It is finish’d;’ let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”

The chief thought connected with the Redeemer’s death should be that of grateful praise. That our Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross is a very natural cause for sorrow, and well may they who pierced him, and

we are all among the number, look unto him and mourn for their sin, and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. Before we know that we are pardoned our grief may well be exceeding heavy, for till sin is put away we stand guilty of the Saviour's blood. While our souls are only conscious of our guilty share in the Redeemer's blood, we may well stand aghast at the sight of the accursed tree, but the case is altered when by faith we discern the glorious fruit of our Lord's sufferings, and know that on the cross he saved us and triumphed in the deed. The feeling of sorrow at the sight of the crucified Saviour is one to be cultivated up to a certain point, especially if we take care to avoid mere sentiment and turn our grief into repentance: then it is "godly sorrow," which worketh after a godly sort, and it is likely to create in us an intense horror of sin, and a strong determination to purge ourselves from all fellowship with the works of darkness. We do not therefore condemn those who frequently preach upon the sufferings of our Lord, with the view of exciting emotions of grief in the hearts of their hearers, for such emotions have a softening and sanctifying influence if attended by faith, and directed by sound wisdom. There is, however, a middle path in everything, and this needs to be followed, for we believe that such preaching may be carried too far. It is most remarkable and instructive that the apostles do not appear in their sermons or epistles to have spoken of the death of our Lord with any kind of regret. The gospels mention their distress during the actual occurrence of the crucifixion, but after the resurrection, and especially after Pentecost, we hear of no such grief. I can scarcely find a passage from which I could preach a sermon upon sorrow on account of the death of Jesus, if I confine myself to the sayings and writings of the apostles; on the contrary, there are many expressions which treat of the crucifixion in the spirit of exulting joy. Remember the well-known exclamation of Paul—"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He had, no doubt, as vivid an idea of the agonies of our Lord as any of us have ever attained, and yet, instead of saying, "God forbid that I should cease to weep at the sight of my crucified Master," he declares that he glories in his cross. The death of Jesus was to him a thing to rejoice in, and even to glory in; he kept no black fasts to commemorate the world's redemption. Note well the exalted key in which he speaks of our Lord's death in the epistle to the Colossians: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." When you turn to John's epistles, where most of all pathos and tenderness would naturally abound, you hear no weeping and wailing, but he speaks of the cleansing blood, which is the very centre of the great sacrifice, in a calm, quiet, happy manner, which is far removed from bursting grief and flowing tears. He says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This allusion to the blood of atonement rather suggests joy and peace than woe and agony. "This is he," saith John, "that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood;" and it is evidently to him a theme of

congratulation and delight rather than a cause for sorrow that Jesus did come by blood as well as by water. So Peter, also, when he mentions the death of his Lord and Master, speaks of "the precious blood of Christ," but not in words of sadness, and he describes our Lord's bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, but not in the language of lament. He says of those who suffered for the gospel, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers in Christ's sufferings." Now, if he finds joy in those sufferings of ours which are in fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, much more I gather did he find ground for rejoicing in the sufferings of Christ himself. I do not believe that the "three hours' agony," the darkened church, the altar in mourning, the tolling of a bell, and all the other mock funeral rites of superstition derive even the least encouragement from the spirit and language of the apostles. Those practical charades in which the crucifixion is mimicked in many churches on Good Friday are more worthy of the heathen women weeping for Thammuz, or of Baal's priests crying and cutting themselves with knives, than of a Christian assembly who know that the Lord is not here, for he is risen.

Let us mourn by all means, for Jesus died; but by no means let us make mourning the prominent thought in connection with his death, if we have obtained thereby the pardon of our sins. The language of our text allowed and yet forbade sorrow; it gave permission to weep, but only for a little while, and then it forbade all further weeping by the promise to turn the sorrow into joy. "Ye shall weep and lament," that is, his disciples, while he was dying, and dead and buried, would be sorely distressed. "And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy;" their grief would end when they saw him risen from the dead; and so it did, for we read, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." The sight of the cross to their unbelief was sadness, and sadness only, but now to the eye of faith it is the gladdest sight that ever the human eye can rest upon: the cross is as the light of the morning, which ends the long and dreary darkness which covered the nations. Oh, wounds of Jesus, ye are as stars, breaking the night of man's despair. Oh, spear, thou hast opened the fountain of healing for mortal woe. Oh, crown of thorns, thou art a constellation of promises. Eyes that were red with weeping sparkle with hope at the sight of thee, O bleeding Lord. As for thy tortured body, O Emmanuel, the blood which dropped therefrom cried from the ground, and proclaimed peace, pardon, Paradise to all believers. Though laid in the grave by thy weeping friends, thy body, O divine Saviour, is no longer in Joseph's tomb, for thou art risen from the dead, and we find in the songs of resurrection and ascension an abundant solace for the griefs of thy death. Like a woman to whom a son is born, we forget the travail for the joy of the glorious birth which the church and the world may now gaze upon with the utmost delight as they behold in Jesus "the firstborn from the dead."

The subject for this morning, then, you will readily guess is, how far we should sorrow for the death of Jesus, and how much further we are permitted to rejoice therein. The first point will be, *the death of our Lord was and still is a theme for sorrow*; but secondly, *that sorrow is transmuted into joy*. When we have meditated upon these two points we shall for a little space notice *a general principle which underlies all holy sorrow as well as this particular form of it*.

I. First, then, THE DEATH OF OUR LORD WAS AND IS A THEME FOR SORROW. I make a point of saying it *was* so, because during the three days of the Saviour's burial there was more cause for distress than there can be now that he is risen. To the disciples first of all the death of Jesus was *the loss of his personal presence*. It was a great delight to that little family to have the Lord always among them as their father and their teacher, and it was a great grief to think that they should no more hear his loving voice, or catch the smile of his benignant countenance. It brought untold comforts to them to be able to go to him with all their questions, to fly to him in every moment of difficulty, to resort to him in every hour of sorrow. Happy, happy disciples to have such a Master always in their midst, communing with them in love, guiding them by his perfect example, animating them by his glorious presence, relieving all their wants and guarding them from all ills. Do you wonder that their hearts were heavy at the prospect of his going away from them? They felt that they would be sheep without a shepherd: orphan children bereft of their best friend and helper. Do you wonder, I say, that they wept and lamented when the Rock of their confidence, the delight of their eyes, the hope of their souls, was taken from them? What would you think if your best earthly friend was hurried away from you by a shameful death? They sorrowed not only because of their own personal loss by his removal, but because he himself was very dear to them. They could not bear that he should be gone in whom their hearts centred all their affection. Their sorrow showed that their hearts were loyal to their Beloved, and would never receive another occupant to sit upon the throne of their affections. They wept and they lamented because their bosom's Lord was gone and his seat was empty. They could not endure the absence of their best Beloved. As pines the dove for its mate, so mourned they for him whom their soul loved. Whom had they in heaven if Jesus were gone? Certainly there was none upon earth that they could desire beside him. They were widowed, and they wept and refused to be comforted. Nothing could compensate them for Jesus' absence, for he was their all in all. For his sake they had left all and followed him, and now they cannot bear that they should lose him, and so lose more than all. You who have been bereaved of those whom you have dearly loved, and deeply revered, will be able to guess what kind of sorrow filled the hearts of the disciples when their Beloved said that he was about to go from them, and that they would not see him for awhile. This mourning was natural; and it is natural that we also should feel some regret that our Lord is away from us now, as to his bodily presence, though I trust we have by this time learned to see the expediency of his absence, and are so satisfied with it that we patiently wait, and quietly hope until his next appearing.

It added greatly to the disciples' sorrow that *the world would be rejoicing* because their Lord was gone. "The world shall rejoice." His eager enemies would hasten him off to Pilate's judgment-seat, and triumph when they forced an unwilling sentence from that time-serving ruler. They would rejoice when they saw him bearing his cross along the way of dolours. They would stand around the cross and mock him with their cruel gazes and with their ribald speeches, and when he was

dead they would say, "This deceiver can speak no more; we have triumphed over him who set our pretensions at nought, and exposed us before the people." They thought that they had quenched the light which had proved painful to their darkened eyes, and therefore they were glad, and by their gladness swelled the torrent of the disciples' sorrow. Brethren, you know when you are in pain or in sorrow yourselves, how very bitter is the coarse laugh of an adversary who exults over your misery and extracts mirth from your tears. This made the disciples smart at their Lord's death. Why should the wicked rejoice over him? Why should the scornful Pharisee and priest insult over his dead body? This rubbed salt into the wounds of the downcast disciples, and infused a double gall and wormwood into the cup which was bitter enough already. You do not wonder, therefore, that they wept and lamented when their Lord was put to death by wicked hands. Magdalene weeping at the sepulchre acted as her gracious nature prompted her, and she was a fair sample of all the rest.

They had this also to make them sorrowful, that *his death was for a time the disappointment of all their hopes*. They at first had fondly looked for a kingdom—a temporal kingdom, such as their brother Jews expected. Even when our Lord had moderated their expectations and enlightened their views, so that they did not quite so much look for an actual temporal sovereignty, yet still that thought that "this was he that would have restored the kingdom to Israel" lingered with them. If any of them were so enlightened as to believe in a spiritual kingdom, as perhaps some of them were in a measure, yet by Jesus' death it must have seemed that all their hopes were shattered. Without a leader, how could they succeed? How could a kingdom be set up when the King himself was slain? He who has been by coward hands betrayed, how can he reign? He that was to be the King has been spat upon and mocked, and nailed up like a felon to the gibbet of wood—where is his dominion? He is cut off out of the land of the living, who will now serve him? Clay cold his body lies in Joseph's tomb, and a seal is set upon the stone which shuts up the sepulchre; is there not an end of holy hopes, a final close to all holy ambitions? How can they be happy who have seen an end of their fairest life-dream? Poor followers of the dead monarch, how can they have hope for his cause and crown? Doubtless in their unbelief they sorrowed deeply because their hope seemed blasted and their faith o'erturned. They knew so little of the meaning of the present, and guessed so little of what the future would be, that sorrow filled their hearts, and they were ready to perish.

You must remember that added to this was *the sight* which many of them had of *their beloved Master in his agonies*. Who would not grieve to see him hurried away at dead of night from holy retirement to be falsely accused? Might not angels wish to weep in sympathy with him? Who can forbear to sorrow when Jesus stands insulted by menials, reviled by abjects, forsaken by his friends, blasphemed by his foes. It was enough to make a man's heart break to see the Lamb of God so roughly handled. Who can endure to see the innocent Saviour nailed up there in the midst of a scornful crew? Who could endure to see his pangs as they were mirrored in his countenance, or to hear his sorrows as they expressed themselves in his painful cries of "I thirst," and in the still sharper agonising

exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is little marvel that it was said of the Virgin that the sword pierced through her heart, for surely there was never sorrow like unto Jesus' sorrow, nor grief which could be likened unto his grief. His heavy woes must have pierced through the heart of all right-minded men who beheld his unexampled miseries; and especially must all personal lovers of Christ have felt ready to die themselves when they saw him thus put to death. Oh deeps of sorrow which my Lord has suffered, shall there be no deeps to answer to you? When all God's waves and billows go over thee, O Jesus, shall not we be plunged into sorrow also? Yes, verily, we will drink of thy cup and be baptized with thy baptism. We will now sit down before thy cross and watch with thee one hour, while love and grief conjointly occupy our souls.

Now, even at the recollection of what our Lord endured, every Christian feels sympathy with him. You cannot read the four stories of the evangelists, and weave them into one by imagination and affection, without feeling that the minor key befits your voice at such a time, if you at all attempt to sing. There must be, it is natural that there should be, sorrow because Christ has died.

One of the sharpest points about our sorrow at Jesus' death is this—that *we were the cause of it*. We virtually crucified the Lord, seeing it was because we were sinners that he must needs be made a sacrifice. Had none of us gone astray like lost sheep, then our wanderings would not have been gathered up and laid upon the shepherd's head. The sword which pierced his heart through and through was forged by our offences: the vengeance was due for sins which *we* had committed, and justice exacted its rights at his hands. What loving disciple will refuse to sorrow when he sees that he himself has put his Lord to death?

Now, putting all these things together, I think I see abundant reason why the disciples should be sorrowful, and why they should even express their sorrow by weeping and lamenting. They sorrowed as those do who attend a funeral: for weeping and lamenting abound at eastern funerals. Orientals are much more demonstrative than we are, and therefore at the deaths of relatives they make a far greater show of grief by loud cries and flowing tears. The disciples are represented as using the same forcible expressions to set forth their woe—"Ye shall weep and lament,"—a woe worthy of the buried One whom they mourned. "Ye shall weep and lament": there was a double vent for a double sorrow, eyes wept and voices lamented. Christ's death was a true funeral to his followers, and caused a crushing sorrow as much as if they had each one been bereft of all his house. Who marvels that it was so?

"Sorrow hath filled your hearts," says Christ: they had no room to think of anything else but his death. Their heart was full to bursting with grief because he was taken from them, and that grief was so sharp as to be likened to one of the keenest pangs which nature is capable of bearing, the pangs of a travelling woman, pangs which seem as if they must bring death with them, and compared with which death itself might be a relief. The sharpness of their anguish in the hour of their trial was all that they could bear, more would have destroyed them. All this they felt, and it is no wonder if we feel in some degree as they

did when we take a retrospect of what the Saviour endured on our behalf. So far we are bound to concede that the death of our Lord worketh sorrow: but there is a moderation even in the most justifiable mourning, and we are not to indulge excessive grief even at the foot of the cross, lest it degenerate into folly.

II. Now, secondly, the truth taught expressly in the text is that **THIS SORROW IS CHANGED INTO JOY.** "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Not exchanged for joy, but actually transmuted, so that the grief becomes joy, the cause of sorrow becomes the source of rejoicing.

Begin with what I said was a very sharp point of this sorrow, and you will see at once how it is turned into joy. That Jesus Christ died for our sins is a sharp sorrow: we lament that our crimes became the nails and our unbelief the spear: and yet, my brethren, this is the greatest joy of all. If each one of us can say, "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*," we are truly happy. If you know by personal faith that Jesus took your sin and suffered for it on the tree, so that now your debt is paid and your transgression is blotted out for ever by his precious blood, you do not want half-a-dozen words from me to indicate that this, which was the centre of your grief, is also the essence of your joy. What were it to us if he had saved all the rest of mankind if he had not redeemed *us* unto God by his blood? We might have been glad from sheer humanity that others should be benefited, but what would have been our deep regret to be ourselves excluded from the grace. Blessed be the Saviour's name, we are not excepted: in proportion as we repentantly upbraid ourselves for Jesus' death in that same measure may we believingly exult in the fact that his sacrifice has for ever put away our sins, and therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because God hath condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ, therefore he will no more condemn us; but we are henceforth free, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Heartily do we lament our sin, but we do not lament that Christ has put it away nor lament the death by which he put it away; rather do our hearts rejoice in all his atoning agonies, and glory at every mention of that death by which he has reconciled us unto God. 'Tis a sad thought that we committed the sin which burdened our Lord, but it is a joy to think that he has taken on himself our personal sin and carried it right away.

The next point of joy is that Jesus Christ has now suffered all that was required of him. That he should suffer was cause for grief, but that he has now suffered all is equal cause for joy. When a champion returns from the wars bearing the scars of conflict by which he gained his honours, does anyone lament over his campaigns? When he left the castle his wife hung about his neck and mourned that her lord must go to the wars, to bleed and perhaps to die; but when he returns with sounding trumpet and banner held aloft, bringing his trophies with him, honoured and exalted by reason of his victories in many lands, do his dearest friends regret his toils and sufferings? Do they keep fasts correspondent to the days in which he was covered with the sweat and dust of battle!. Do they toll a bell on the anniversary of his conflict? Do they weep over the scars which are still upon him? Do they not glory in them as honourable memorials of his valour? They reckon

that the marks the hero bears in his flesh are the noblest insignia of his glory, and the best tokens of his prowess. So let us not grieve to-day that Jesus' hands were pierced; behold they are now "as gold rings set with the beryl." Let us not lament that his feet were nailed to the tree, for his legs are now as "pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold." The face more marred than that of any man is now the more lovely for its marring, and he himself, despite his agonies, is now endowed with a beauty, which even the ravished spouse in the song could only describe as "altogether lovely." The mighty love which enabled him to endure his mighty passion has impressed upon him charms altogether inconceivable in their sweetness. Let us not mourn, then, for the agony is all over now, and he is none the worse for having endured it. There is no cross for him now, except in the sense that the cross honours and glorifies him; there remains for him no cruel spear nor crown of thorns now, except that from these he derives a revenue of honour and titles ever new, which exalt him higher and yet higher in the love of his saints. Glory be unto God, Christ has not left a pang unsuffered of all his substitutionary sorrows; of our dread ransom price he has paid the utmost farthing. The atoning griefs have all been endured, the cup of wrath is drunk quite dry, and because of this we, with all the hosts above, will rejoice for ever and ever.

We are glad, not only that the hour of travail is over, but that our Lord has survived his pains. He died a real death, but now he lives a real life. He did lie in the tomb, and it was no fiction that the breath had departed from him: it is equally no fiction that our Redeemer liveth. The Lord is risen indeed. He hath survived the death struggle and the agony, and he lives unhurt: he has come out of the furnace without so much as the smell of fire upon him. He is not injured in any faculty, whether human or divine. He is not robbed of any glory, but his name is now surrounded with brighter lustre than ever. He has lost no dominion, he claims superior rights and rules over a new empire. He is a gainer by his losses, he has risen by his descent. All along the line he is victorious at every point. Never yet was there a victory won but what it was in some respects a loss as well as a gain, but our Lord's triumph is unmingled glory—to himself a gain as well as to us who share in it. Shall we not then rejoice? What, would ye sit and weep by a mother as she exultingly shows her new-born child? Would you call together a company of mourners to lament and to bewail when the heir is born into the household? This were to mock the mother's gladness. And so to-day shall we use dreary music and sing dolorous hymns when the Lord is risen, and is not only unhurt, unharmed, and unconquered, but is far more glorified and exalted than before his death? He hath gone into the glory because all his work is done, shall not your sorrow be turned into joy in the most emphatic sense?

And there is this to add to it, that the grand end which his death was meant to accomplish is all attained. What was that end? I may divide it into three parts.

It was the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of himself, and that is complete. He hath finished transgression, he hath made an end of sin; he hath taken the whole load of the sin of his elect and hurled it into the bottomless abyss; if it be searched for it shall not be found, yea, it

shall not be, saith the Lord. He hath put away our sin as far from us as the east is from the west, and he has risen again to prove that all for whom he died are justified in him.

A second purpose was the salvation of his chosen, and that salvation is secured. When he died and rose again the salvation of all that were in him was placed beyond all hazard. He hath redeemed us unto God by his blood by an effectual redemption. None shall be enslaved who were by him redeemed; none shall be left in sin or cast into hell whose names are graven on the palms of his hands. He has gone into glory, carrying their names upon his heart, and he stands pleading there for them, and therefore he is able to save them to the uttermost. "I will," saith he, "that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," and that effectual plea secures their being with him and like him when the end shall be.

The grand object, however, of his death was the glory of God, and truly God is glorified in the death of his Son, beyond anything that was known before or since; for here the very heart of God is laid open to the inspection of all believing eyes—his justice and his love, his stern severity which will not pass by sin without atonement, and his boundless love that gives his best self, his darling from his bosom, that he may bleed and die in our stead:—

"Here depths of wisdom shine,
Which angels cannot trace;
The highest rank of cherubim
Still lost in wonder gaze."

Yes, O Christ of God, "it is finished." Thou hast done all thou didst intend to do, the whole of thy design is achieved, not one purpose hath failed, nor even one part of it fallen through, and therefore shall we not rejoice? The child is born; shall we not be glad? The travail would have been a subject for great grief had the mother died, or had the child perished in the birth: but now that all is over, and all is well, why should we remember any more the anguish? Jesus lives, and his great salvation makes glad the sons of men. Wherefore should we tune the mournful string and mourn sore like doves? No! Ring out the clarion, for the battle is fought and the victory is won for ever. *Victory, VICTORY, VICTORY!* His own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory! Though the champion died in the conflict, yet in his death he slew death and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Our glorious Champion has risen from his fall, for he could not be holden by the bands of death. He hath smitten his enemies, but, as for himself, he hath come up from the grave, he hath risen as from the heart of the sea. Let us exult like Israel at the Red Sea when Pharaoh was overthrown! With timbrel and dance let the daughters of Israel go forth to sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, and utterly destroyed all our adversaries.

We have not yet completed this work of changing sorrow into joy till we notice that now the greatest possible blessings accrue to us, because he was made a curse for us. Through his death come pardon, reconciliation, access, acceptance: his blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel," and invokes all heaven's blessings upon our heads.

But Jesus is not dead. He is risen, and that resurrection brings justification, and the safeguard of his perpetual plea in heaven. It brings us his representative presence in glory, and the making all things ready for us in the many mansions: it brings us a share in that "all power which is given unto him in heaven and in earth," in the strength of which he bids us go and teach all nations, baptizing them into his sacred name. Beloved, Pentecost comes to us because Jesus went away from us; the gifts of the Holy Spirit—illuminating, comforting, quickening—the power to proclaim the word, and the might which attends that word, all have come to us because he is no longer with us, but through the regions of the dead has passed to reach his crown.

And now to-day we have this great joy again that because he died there is a kingdom set up in the world, a kingdom which never can be moved, a kingdom whose power lies in weakness, and yet it is irresistible: a kingdom whose glory lies in suffering, and yet it cannot be crushed: a kingdom of love, a kingdom of unselfishness, a kingdom of kindness, truth, purity, holiness, and happiness. Jesus wears the imperial purple of a kingdom in which God loves men and men love God: having proved himself the prince of self-sacrificing love he is justly exalted to the throne amid the acclamations of all his saints. His kingdom, shapeless as it looks to carnal eyes, like a stone cut out of a mountain without hands, will, nevertheless, break all the kingdoms of this world to shivers in due time, and fill the whole earth. His kingdom will grow and extend till from a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains its fruit shall so increase that it shall shake like Lebanon; a kingdom which shall comprehend all ranks and conditions of men, men of all colours, of all lands and nations, encircling all even as the ocean surrounds many lands. The unsuffering kingdom of the suffering shepherd, inaugurated by his death, established by his resurrection, extended by the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Ghost, and secured by the eternal covenant, is hastening on. Every winged hour brings it nearer to its perfect manifestation. Yes, the kingdom comes: the kingdom whose foundation was laid in the blood of its King at Calvary. Happy are they who are helping it on, for when the Lord shall be revealed they also shall be manifested with him. The Chief among ten thousand and the ten thousand who were with him shall stand side by side in the day of victory, even as they stood side by side in the hour of strife. Then, indeed, our sorrow shall be turned into joy.

There we must leave the subject, only noticing this one fact, that that joy is right hearty joy. "Your hearts shall rejoice," said the Saviour: ours is no superficial mirth, but heart-deep bliss. That joy is also abiding joy. "Your joy no man taketh from you." No, nor devil either. Nor time nor eternity can rob us of it. At the foot of the cross there wells up a flashing, sparkling fountain of joy, which never can be dried up, but must flow on for ever; in summer and in winter shall it be, and none shall be able to keep us back from the living flood, but we shall drink to the full for ever and ever.

III. And, now, my last point is to be THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN THIS ONE PARTICULAR INSTANCE.

The general principle is this, that in connection with Christ you must expect to have sorrow. "You shall weep and lament, but the world

shall rejoice." But whatever sorrow you feel in connection with Jesus there is this consolation—the pangs are all birth-pangs, they are all the necessary preliminaries of an ever-increasing, abounding joy. Brethren, since you have come to know Christ you have felt a smarter grief on account of sin. Let it continue with you, for it is working holiness in you, and holiness is happiness. You have felt of late a keener sensibility on account of the sins of those around you, do not wish to be deprived of it, it will be the means of your loving them more, praying more for them, and seeking more their good, and you will be the better qualified to do them real service and to lead them to your Lord. Perhaps you have had to bear a little persecution, hard words, and the cold shoulder. Do not fret, for all this is needful to make you have fellowship with Christ's sufferings that you may know more of him and may become more like him. You sometimes see the cause of Christ as it were dead, and you are grieved about it, as well you may be. The enemy triumphs, false doctrine is advanced, Jesus seems to be crucified afresh, or hidden away in the grave, forgotten, as a dead man out of mind. It is well that you should feel this, but in that very feeling there should be the full persuasion that the truth of Christ cannot long be buried, but waits to rise again with power. Never did the gospel lie in the grave more than its three days. Never did a lion roar upon it but what it turned and rent the enemy, and found honey in its carcase in after days. Whenever truth seems to be repulsed, she does but draw back to take a more wondrous leap forward. As when the tide ebbs out very far, we expect it again to return in the fulness of its strength, so is it with the church. If we see a small fall in the tide we know that it will not rise very far, but when we see the stream sinking right away, and leaving the river-bed almost dry, we expect to see it roll in at flood tide till the banks overflow. Always look for the triumph of Christianity when others tell you it is defeated; expect to find in the very quarter where it is covered with most obloquy and shame, that there it will win its most glorious laurels. The truth's superlative victories follow upon its worst defeats. Have faith in God. You tell me you have that; then, saith your Master, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Believe in Christ, trust in him, rest in him, fight for him, labour for him, suffer for him, for he must conquer. Even now doth he sit as King upon the hill of Zion, and soon the heathen shall become his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be his possession. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy in all these cases.

Whenever your sorrow is the result of your belonging to Christ always congratulate yourself upon it, since as the spring begetteth the summer so doth sorrow in connection with Christ bring forth to us joy in the Lord. By-and-by will come your last sorrow: unless the Lord should suddenly appear you will die. But be content to die. Look forward to it without the slightest alarm. Death is the gate of endless joy, and shall we dread to enter there? No, Jesus being with you, meet death joyfully, for to die is to burst the bonds of this death which everywhere surrounds us, and to enter into the true life of liberty and bliss. Even to the end sorrow shall be to you the birth-pang of your joy. Carry that thought with you and be always glad.

With one remark I finish. I will not dwell upon it, but leave it to

abide in the memories of those whom it concerns. I present it to the minds of all those who are not believers in Christ. Did you notice that the Lord said, "Ye shall weep and lament, *but the world shall rejoice*: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Now, what is implied there to complete the sentence? Why, that the world's joy shall be turned into sorrow. Even so shall it be. There is not a pleasure which the ungodly man enjoys when he is indulging in sin but what will curdle into grief and be his sorrow for ever. Depend upon it that the wine of transgression will sour into the griping vinegar of remorse, which shall dissolve the rebel's soul. The sparks which now delight you shall kindle the flames of your eternal misery. Every sin, though sweet when it is like a green fig, is bitterness itself when it cometh to its ripeness. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you that now rejoice in sin, for ye shall gnash your teeth, and weep and wail because of that very Christ whom now you reject. All things will soon be turned upside down. Blessed are ye that mourn now, for ye shall be comforted, but woe unto you that are full this day, for ye shall hunger. The sun will soon be set for you that rejoice in sin. Sadness like a thick cloud is now descending to surround you eternally in its horrid gloom. Out of that cloud shall leap the flashes of eternal justice, and forth from it shall peal the thunder-claps of righteous condemnation. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." The Lord deliver you from such a doom by leading you now to yield to Jesus, and to believe in his name. May he grant this prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 301, 287.

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 28TH, 1892,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 2nd, 1890.

'Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'—John xvi. 31, 32.

OUR Lord looks for faith as the result of his teaching; and I think that I hear him say, at the end of every service, "Do ye now believe? You have listened; you have made remarks upon the speaker; do ye now believe? You have been made to feel, you have brushed the tear away; but do ye now believe? For anything short of believing leaves you short of salvation." I would like to put the question of my text to every hearer in this great house to-night. You have listened now to years of sermons; "Do ye now believe?" You are getting grey now, the gospel is very familiar to your ear; you have heard it preached for many, many years; but "do ye now believe?" This is the crucial point. According to your answer, truthfully given to this question, you may decide as to your condition before God, "Do ye now believe?"

Christ loves faith wherever he sees it; it is to him a precious thing. To you that believe, he is precious, he is an honour; and upon him you who believe confer all the honour it is possible for you to confer. Your trust adorns him with jewels, your confidence in him puts the crown on his head. But our Lord is very discriminating; he distinguishes between faith and presumption, and between faith and our idea of faith. These disciples said now that they were sure: "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee." "Yes! Yes!" the Saviour seemed to say, "That is your measure of your own faith; but I do not measure it in the same way that you do." If there be any here who say, "As to the matter of faith, I need no caution, I scarcely need admonition, I believe, oh! you cannot tell how firmly." No, my dear friend, and perhaps you cannot tell how weakly you believe. At any rate, do not

No. 2,271.

mistake your belief in your own faith for faith in Christ; for belief in your own faith may be only self-conceit; but faith in Christ gives glory to God, and brings salvation to the believer.

To take the disciples down a notch, the Saviour reminds them that, whatever faith they had, they were a long while coming to it. "Do ye now believe? Three years have I been teaching you; three years have I wrought miracles in your midst; three years have you seen me, and you might in me have seen the Father, but after all this time have you at last come to a little faith?" Oh! friends, we have never any reason to boast of our faith; for we have been very long coming to it. We do trust Christ now; I hope that many of us can sincerely say that we lean all our weight on him. We believe in God, we believe also in his Son, Jesus Christ; but it took months to drive us out of our self-confidence; it took years to lift us out of despair; it has taken all this time for the Lord, in the power of his own Spirit, to work out what little faith we have.

Then our Lord reminded them of another thing more humbling still, that as their faith was long in coming, it might be very quick in going. "Do ye now believe?" saith he, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." O beloved, a little trouble arises, an unforeseen difficulty occurs, and where is your faith? A little persecution, the idle banter of an unbeliever, the sarcasm of an agnostic, and where is your faith? Is it not so with many, that while in good company, they can almost brag of their faith; but if the company is changed, they certainly have no faith to brag of? The men who were so glib of tongue are quiet now; and though, before, they wore their helmets bedight with plumes, they would hide them away, and hide their heads, too, if they could. They are ashamed of him, now, in whom, once, they gloried. O friends, let him that glorieth, glory only in the Lord. Let the believer never vaunt his believing, lest he be reminded how long he was in coming to it, and how soon he may be parted from it.

Our Lord's disciples did not very readily take this caution. I do not suppose any of them took it; certainly Peter did not, and the rest of them were very much like him. When Peter said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" we read, "Likewise also said all the disciples." We may say to-night, "There is no man among us who will ever be a traitor to Christ; there is no woman here who will ever grow cold of heart." That is our self-flattery. What others have done, however base and mean, we too are capable of doing. If we think we are not, it is our pride, and our pride alone, that makes us think so. Our Saviour, therefore, to call the particular attention of his disciples to their danger, said, not merely "the hour cometh," but, "Behold, the hour cometh." He puts in a "Behold!" an "*Ecce!*" As the old writers used to put a hand in the margin, or an N.B., *nota bene*, to call attention to something special, so the Saviour puts here a "Behold!" "Look here!" "See this." You who have just put on your armour think that you have won the victory. "Behold, the hour cometh,

yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone."

I pray you, therefore, brethren, and I speak to myself as well as to you, let us learn the lesson of our frailty; and though we are honestly trusting in Christ to-night, let each one cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Let the prayer go up from all of you who are in these galleries, and from all who are sitting downstairs in those pews, from the most experienced and best established of you, as well as from those who have but recently been brought to know the Lord, and let each one cry, "Lord, keep me, for I cannot keep myself!" Alas! alas! we have seen even the standard-bearers fall; and when that is the case, how sadly do the common soldiers mourn! They who stood like rocks have been made to totter. God keep us! Christ of God, keep us by thy eternal Spirit! Amen.

Now I am going to take you away from that prefatory consideration, keeping still, however, much in the same vein. Let us learn to-night from our Lord, first, *his trial*: "Ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone;" secondly, *his confidence*: "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me;" and then, thirdly, *his example*: for in all this, we are to follow his steps. May we, if we have our Lord's trial, also have his confidence because we imitate his example!

I. First, then, notice OUR LORD'S TRIAL, for the like of it may happen to you.

He was left alone. Why, these eleven apostles that are round him, and to whom he is talking, surely they will not leave their Lord! They are so sure that they will stand any fire that may be directed against them; and yet not one of them will stand firm. They will all forsake him and flee. In the garden, the three who are his body-guard will fall asleep, and the rest of the disciples will do the same; and when he stands before Pilate and Herod, none of them will be there to defend him; not a solitary voice will be lifted up for him.

The sure ones left him whom they so certainly believed; and they were honest men, too, when they spoke so confidently. There was no hypocrisy about what they said, they meant it all; they did each one verily believe that he could go to prison and to death, and that he would do so rather than deny his Lord. In their own esteem, they were not boasting; they were only saying what they really intended to do. Here is the bitterness of your trial, when, in your hour of need, your good, honest friends are gone, your real friends fainting and weary. They cannot go your pace; they cannot confront the storm that you are called upon to face, and they are gone. Alas, for our dear Lord, what grief it was to him! They who were so confident, and they who were really true, yet, nevertheless, were scattered, and he was left alone.

They also really loved Christ. I am sure that Peter's was not a new love when he said, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." He did love his Master. Even when he denied his Lord, there was love in his heart towards him. So was it with the other disciples, they all loved their Lord, yet all of them left him, and poor weak things that they were, they turned their backs in the day

of battle. It is a grief to our hearts to be forsaken of good friends and loving friends. I do not know; but if you were sure that they had been hypocrites, you might almost be glad that they were gone; but your very knowledge that they were true at heart, as true as such poor things could be, increases the bitterness that they should leave you. You need not think, when this occurs in your experience, that any strange thing has happened to you, for Christ was thus left alone.

Notice, that *he was left by every man*. "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own," "every man." When the trial comes, does not John remain? Does not he remember that dear breast on which he leaned his head? Is John gone? Yes, "every man." Christ looked, and there was none to stand by him. He must confront his accusers without a single witness in his favour; every man was gone. Ah, this was a trial, indeed! But one true friend, a Damon or a Pythias, to be faithful to one another even unto death, and the trial is not so overwhelming. But, no; every man is gone to his own, and Christ is left alone; of the people there is none with him, not even one of those who had been his most intimate friends.

What were they all at? Well, *every man was looking to his own safety*: "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own." Is not that the very essence of selfishness and of meanness, "Every man to his own"? This is all that Christ received from the best of his followers; they left him, and went every man to his own, to his own house, to see to his own security, to screen his own character, to preserve his own life. "Every man to his own." Are these thy friends, O Jesu? Lover of men, are these thy lovers? Do you wonder if, sometimes, you find that your friends would take care of you only that they must take care of themselves? They would keep you, but then you cost too much; you are too "dear" a friend! The expense of your friendship has to be looked at, and their income will not bear it. "Every man to his own." This also the Saviour had to feel.

And, remember, this happened *when Christ's special hour was come*. "The hour cometh," Christ's hour, the hour of the power of darkness. It was then that they left him. When he did not need their friendship, they were his very good friends. When they could do nothing for him if they tried, they were his faithful followers. But the pinch has come; now might they watch with him one hour, now might they go with him amid the rabble throng, and interpose at least the vote of the minority against the masses; but they are gone. Like your swallows, they have disappeared or e'er the first frost has covered the brook. Like the green leaves of summer, where are they now in this wintry time? Alas, alas, for friendship, when it fails when most it is needed! And it did fail the Saviour then.

He was left, also, *in violation of every bond*. These men who left him were pledged to stand by him. They had given him a promise to die with him. These were his choice companions; he had called them from the fishing-smacks of Galilee, and made them his disciples. These were his apostles, the chief men in his new kingdom. They were to sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. These, he had redeemed unto himself; these were to be partakers of his glory in the day of his appearing. Never were men bound to man as they were

bound to Christ; and yet they left him alone. Dear friend, do not expect gratitude from your fellow-creatures; it is a very scarce thing in this world. The more you do for men, the less will be their return. I speak not now like one who thinks ill of my fellows; but I know that it is so, alas! in many instances; and if it be not your lot, you may thank God that it is not, and wonder why you are an exception to the rule. If, by-and-by, you shall come down in the world, and need the help of those you helped in days gone by, they will, as a rule, be the last to help you, and the first to tread you down. Certainly, with our Lord Jesus Christ, those who were nearest and who owed him most fled from him, and he derived from them no succour. It was "every man to his own"; and they left him alone, to be bound and beaten by his unfeeling adversaries, and to be taken away to prison and to death.

There is the first division of our subject, our Lord's trial. I say again, that a like trial may happen to some here. It has happened often to bold defenders of the faith, to find themselves left to hold the bridge alone; but it is a sharp, stern trial to the man who is called to endure it.

II. More cheery talk shall we have on our second head, which is OUR LORD'S CONFIDENCE. He says, "Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

Observe, then, that Christ's confidence was confidence that the Father was with him, and this confidence *kept him to his purpose*. See, the disciples flee; they are all scattered, every man to his own. Has Christ gone? Not he. John, Peter, James, Thomas, and all the rest, are gone; has Christ gone? Not he. There he stands. They have left him alone; but there he is, still standing to his purpose. He has come to save, and he will save. He has come to redeem, and he will redeem. He has come to overcome the world, and he will overcome it. They have left him alone; they have not taken him away with them. He is no coward. From his purpose he doth never fly, blessed be his name! He stood fast in that dread hour when all forsook him and fled. This was because his confidence was in God.

Next, observe, that this confidence in God not only kept him to his purpose, but it *sustained him in the prospect of the trial*. Notice how it runs: "Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone." Christ does not say, "I shall not be alone." That was true; but he said, "I am not alone." I love to read the experience of the child of God in the present tense, the gifts, and graces, and promises of God in the present tense: "I am not alone." "The Lord *is* my Shepherd," as well as "I *shall* not want." "He *maketh* me to lie down in green pastures; he *leadeth* me beside the still waters." He is doing everything for me now. The blessed Christ says that the prospect of God's being with him all through the trouble, and the presence of God with him now, is his comfort in the prospect of it. You who were here this morning know what a sad discourse we had from the text, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* I took this text for my evening discourse because it is the counterpart of the one we

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,133. "Lama Sabachthani?"

considered this morning; for our Lord could truly say to his disciples, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

Our Lord's declaration was *contradicted by appearances*. Did he not have to say to God: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" How, then, could he say, "The Father is with me"? It was true; and in a part of my morning sermon I tried to show that, while God forsook him in his official capacity as the Lawgiver and the Executive of the law, yet in his personal relation to him he did not and could not forsake him. The Father was with him. Oh, is it not blessed on the part of Christ to stand to this? He knows that his Father is with him, even when he feels in another sense that the Father has forsaken him. Beloved, if everybody leaves you, and God seems to leave you, still hold to your confidence in God. Do not believe that God can forsake his own; do not even dream it; it cannot be. He never did forsake his own; he never can; and he never will. The Father is with Jesus Christ, even when he knows that he will have to say, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

Yet, *it was assuredly true* that the Father was with Christ when he was left alone. How was the Father with him, then? Beloved, even when the Father did not look on Christ, or give him one smile, or one word of comfort, he was still with him. How so? Well, he was with him as to his eternal purposes and covenant. They had entered into covenant together for the redemption of men, for the salvation of the elect, and they had crossed hands, and pledged each other to carry out the divine purpose and the everlasting covenant. I remember that passage about Abraham going with Isaac to mount Moriah, where Isaac was to be offered up. It is written, "So they went both of them together." So did the Eternal Father and his Well-beloved Son when God was about to give up his own Son to death. There was no divided purpose; they went both of them together. All the work of Christ was the work of the Father, and the Father supported him in it to the very full.

In the design and method of the atonement, the Father and the Son were together. "God so loved the world that he gave his Only-begotten Son;" but Jesus so loved the world that he gave himself. The atonement was the gift of the Father; but it was the work of the Son. In all that he suffered he could say, "The Father is with me in it. I am doing that which will glorify him, and content him." He went not alone to prison and to death. In all things he did that which pleased the Father, and the Father was with him in it all.

All the decrees of God were at the back of Christ. It is written in the sealed book, but who shall read it except the Christ? Whatever is written there is written in support of Christ. There is not a decree in the book of destiny but works out for Christ's glory, and according to Christ's mind. It is not merely twelve legions of angels that are behind the cross, but the God of the angels is there, too. It is not merely the forces of Providence that shall work together to achieve the purpose of the Creator, but the God of Providence, the infinite Jehovah, is in league with Jesus; and he can say it, as he goes out to die, "I am not alone: because the Father is with me." Is not this a glorious truth, that our Lord Christ was not alone?

So far as earthly companions were concerned, the words written by Isaiah could be literally uttered by Christ, "I have trodden the wine-press alone." Every man was gone, but God was always with him.

Since then, *it has been made manifest* that God was with Christ. He proved it by raising him from the dead. Did not the Father also prove that he was with the Son by sending the Holy Ghost at Pentecost with divers signs and wonders? Jesus is not alone. All the work of the Holy Spirit since, in convincing men of sin, and leading them to Jesus, is a proof that he is not alone. Beloved, all the history of Providence, since the day when Christ was taken up into heaven, proves that he is not alone. Alone? The Christ alone? Why, the beasts of the field are in league with him; the stars in their courses fight for him. Every event of history, give it but time and space, will make his kingdom come. Every turn of yonder enormous wheels of Providence shall make his chariot of triumph come nearer and nearer over the necks of his foes. Even now, by faith, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour."

"Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious,
See the "Man of Sorrows" now;
From the fight return'd victorious,
Every knee to him shall bow:
Crown him, crown him;
Crowns become the Victor's brow."

Jesus is the focus of all power and wisdom. God is with him; and the day comes when he shall appear in his glory. In his millennial reign among the sons of God it shall be seen that he is not alone; and when he shall come in the glory of the Father, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he be able to say with even greater emphasis, "I am not alone: because the Father is with me." And when he sits upon the great white throne, and divides mankind, his friends to the right, his foes to the left, and pronounces eternal wrath upon rebels, and opens heaven to believers, then shall all worlds know that the Man of Nazareth is not alone. Alone? I seem as if I must laugh at the very thought. All heaven and earth, things present and things to come, time and eternity, life and death, are all with him. Men may forsake him, but he is not alone.

III. Now, I want, in the third place, to teach the lessons of our LORD'S EXAMPLE. As my time has nearly gone, I must very briefly speak of these lessons.

First, *learn fidelity when others fail*. Are you a Christian? Do you trust Christ? Do you love him? Then, never desert him. "Oh! but," says one, "the current runs the other way now." Brother, let it run; it will leave off when it has run away. I believe in him who rose again from the dead, whose righteousness doth justify me, whose blood doth wash me whiter than snow. "But the philosophers tell us that this is not scientific." I am unscientific, then, and I delight to be unscientific. "Oh, but the deep thinkers say this is inconsistent with progress!" Well, let it be inconsistent with progress. "Oh, but all the world denies it!" So much the worse for the world. Let

it deny the truth if it will. That was a grand spirit of Athanasius when he said, "*Athanasius contra mundum*"; that is, "Athanasius against the whole world." And every Christian may be of this spirit, and ought to be of this spirit. Is this Book true? What matters it though every Tom Fool says that it is a lie! Let Tom Fools say that if they will; but it is true, and hold you to it. If God the Holy Ghost has taught you to trust in Christ, trust you in Christ, whatever other people do. What? Do you live on the breath of other men's nostrils? Do you count heads, and then jump with the larger number? Is that your way? Why, surely such a man as that is hardly worth saving. Is he a man, or is he not a cat that must look before he jumps? Nay, if thou art a man, and thou believest in Christ, stand up for Christ.

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!

Ye soldiers of the cross!
Lift high his royal banner;
It must not suffer loss:
From victory unto victory
His army shall he lead,
Till every foe is vanquish'd,
And Christ is Lord indeed.

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!

The trumpet-call obey;
Forth to the mighty conflict,
In this his glorious day;
Ye that are men, now serve him,
Against unnumber'd foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."

And when the many turn aside, stand you the more boldly and the more confidently, for your confidence and boldness are all the more needed at such a time. Your Lord did not forsake his grand errand when all men forsook him. Do not renounce your lifework and your faith, even though all others should renounce theirs.

Next, with your Master, *believe that God is all-sufficient*. Read this: "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because"—what? "Because there will be half-a-dozen of you faithful"? No. "Because three of you will cling to me"? No. "Because the Father is with me." Oh, we do not count as we should. There is a million against you. Is God for you? Well, then, you are in the majority. What is a million, after all, but one and so many ciphers? Trust thou in God, and let the millions go their way. God is enough. When he that spoke in the academy found everybody leaving him in his speaking except Plato, he still kept on; and one said, "Speaker, thou hast no audience but Plato." "No audience but Plato?" says he; "Plato is enough for fifty orators." So, truly, if thou hast no other helper but God, stand thou where thou art; for God is not only enough for thee, but for all the faithful, weak as they may be.

Next, learn another lesson. *Rest in God, despite appearances*. Art thou very poor? Art thou weak? Art thou slandered? Art thou

scourged with God's heaviest rod? Yet kick not thou at him, any more than thy Lord did. He said, "The Father is with me," even though he had to cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Believe him when thou canst not see him; believe him when he smiles not; believe him when he frowns; believe him when he smites; believe him when he slays, for that is the climax of it all, to say like Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It is his to do what he likes; it is mine to trust him, let him do as he will. I throw my arms about my God, and say, "My God, my God," even when no sensible joys are felt, and I am obliged to walk by faith.

Lastly, struggling child of God, standing firm for the truth and the right, *expect that thy trouble will not last long*. Did you notice how Christ puts it, "Behold, the hour cometh"? Only an hour. "Behold, the hour cometh." It is not a year, brother, it is not a year; it is not a month; it is not a day; it is but an hour. "The hour cometh." To Christ it was a long hour certainly, when he hung upon the cross; but he calls the whole period from the bloody sweat to the death of the cross, "the hour." It is the part of faith to shorten days to hours. It is your part, to-night, to recollect that, if you have to suffer, and to stand alone for Christ, it is but for an hour. How willingly have we waited when it has been but for an hour! How cheerfully have we gone on in the dark when we have known that it was only for an hour! Our trial is but for an hour. Literally, before another hour strikes, some of us may be with God; but whether it is so with us, or not, we may still sing,—

"Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose,
They only make heaven more sweet at the close:
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall,
An hour with my God will make up for them all."

But if not literally only an hour, yet certainly the longest reign of persecution is but short. It is soon over when we once get home. I think that it will help to make a merry holiday in the land that flows with milk and honey, to sit one of these days by one of those rippling streams, and say, "I remember when So-and-so forsook me, and I stood fast by the truth as I knew it and believed it. They all forsook me, and it did seem hard to bear at the time; but my loneliness did not last long, it was soon over; and when the Lord said, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' it did not seem then that it had been an hour, but only the winking of an eye, or as when, in the night, the candle is blown out, and lighted again by its own smoke, so short was the time of darkness." So it shall seem in heaven as if we never had suffered anything for Christ. The martyr shall go in the red-hot chariot from the stake; and when he gets to heaven, he shall have forgotten that he burned to death, in the exceeding joy of beholding his Master. It is but an hour, and we shall meet before the golden throne, and stand upon the sea of glass, and sing for ever, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVI. 16—33.

Verse 16. *A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

Remember that the disciples were on the verge of great trouble. Their Leader and Friend was about to be taken away from them by a cruel death. They were to be tried as they had never been tried before. The Saviour therefore prepared their minds for the trial. I have often noticed that before a great trouble comes, the Spirit of God secretly comforts in a very remarkable manner those who are to be tried. Perhaps, to-night, without knowing it, we may be near some great affliction or sorrow. If so, may the Lord store us with comfort and strength for the coming hour of need!

17, 18. *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

It was only too plain. We often do not understand our Master because we imagine that there is some deep significance in his words when their meaning lies upon the very surface. If you would understand the gospel as you understand the common talk of life, it would be wise. If we could but bring men to believe God as a child believes its mother, practically and really, then their salvation would be a very simple and speedy matter.

19, 20. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice:*

Sometimes the world appears to have the best of it. Its mouth is full of laughter while the child of God cannot speak for sorrow. Ah! well, there is time enough for a change. We may very well let those laugh to-day who will have to gnash their teeth for ever. Judge not God by your present circumstances. Take the rough with the smooth. Be willing to go to heaven up the bleak side of the hill.

20. *And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

So, the more of it the better. If your sorrow is to be turned into joy, then the more sorrow, the more joy. Happy is he who endureth trial, since his trial is to be turned into happiness.

21, 22. *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow:*

But your sorrow is the pang of life.

22. *But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

The joy that comes by sorrow in connection with Christ is the joy of which we shall never be bereaved. Let us thank God that there is a joy which no man can take away. Happy are they who have it.

23. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

This is a grand promise. If we dare ask in the name of Christ, and it is not everything that we could ask for in his name—if our petition is such that we honestly judge that we may put Christ's name to it, if it is a thing that Christ would have asked, if it is a thing that Christ could have asked, let us ask in Christ's name, and the Father will give it.

24. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name:*

You have not been bold enough. You have asked a few petty things, but you have never fully made use of Christ's name. How many Christians have never learned to pray in the name of Christ! They say at the end of their petition, "For Christ's sake." That is good as far as it goes. I may ask a man to give me such and such a thing for the sake of another; that is good pleading so far as it goes. But if I dare to use the authority that my friend gives me to put his name at the bottom of my request, that is another and a higher thing. To ask in the name of Christ, to plead under his authority, this is to pray indeed.

24. *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

"That your joy may be full," a ripe joy, a joy that fills your being, that sparkles in your eye, dances in your feet, leaps in your heart, an unutterable, inexpressible joy: "That your joy may be full."

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:*

Though that be true,

27. *For the Father himself loveth you,*

What a delightful little sentence! "The Father himself loveth you."

27. *Because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

God's first love to us is from himself alone. Then there is another love that grows in his heart because of our love to his Son. You love your child. The reason lies in your own heart. After a while, that dear, loving, affectionate child has won a farther place in your affection, and you love him because of his choice and special love to you. Remember that Psalm, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Our love of God wins from him another love, of a different sort, although it comes from the same fountain as the first: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

28—30. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, thou speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*

One does not see any reason why they should have been made so strong in faith just then. But we were not there to hear Christ's words. There is many a message which depends upon the tone and manner of the speaker for its influence over the people who hear it. When you read the story afterwards, without the earnest manner and the living tone of the speaker, you do not see why it had such a strange effect upon his hearers. So we do not quite see here, by the calm reading of this narrative, why the disciples leaped all of a sudden into such confidence.

31. *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?*

He did not feel so sure of their faith as they did. We often think we have great heaps of the gold of faith; and it glitters very brightly, but it is not the precious metal after all. So Jesus said, "Do ye now believe?"

32. *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

These poor creatures, who were so bold and so oversure, would all be unaways. If persecution were to arise in our day, I wonder how many of

us would be found true men. Ah! you think you are true blue; but you would run at the first touch of water, not to mention fire. Are there not many of us who are but poor believers? If our faith were sharply tried, would it stand the test?

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Christ wants his disciples to have peace. Are you fretting to-night? Are you afraid of Monday? Are you fearful about the trials of the week? Christ wants you to be at peace. Be quiet. Be quiet. Let all lie still within your heart, and wait your Father's will. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" on God's threshing-floor the flail will be kept going. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings; and good soldiers of Jesus Christ must expect to pass through the same experience. As long as you are here, you will be tried: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Think of that; the Christ who is about to sweat great drops of blood, and to die on the cross of Calvary, says, "I have overcome." It is not Julius Cæsar's "*Veni, vidi, vici*;" but it is Christ's "*Veni, vidi, vici*;"—"I came, I saw, I conquered:" "I have overcome." And as he has overcome, so shall you, if you be his true follower.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—685, 739.

CHRIST'S PASTORAL PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 22ND, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 1st, 1889.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them."—John xvii. 9, 10.

To begin with, I remark that our Lord Jesus pleads for his own people. When he puts on his priestly breastplate, it is for the tribes whose names are there. When he presents the atoning sacrifice, it is for Israel whom God hath chosen; and he utters this great truth, which some regard as narrow, but which we adore, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world." The point to which I want to call attention is this, the reason why Christ prays not for the world, but for his people. He puts it, "For they are thine," as if they were all the dearer to him because they were the Father's: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." We might have half thought that Jesus would have said, "They are mine, and therefore I pray for them." It would have been true; but there would not have been the beauty of truth about it which we have here. He loves us all the better, and he prays for us all the more fervently, because we are the Father's. Such is his love to his Father, that our being the Father's sheds upon us an extra halo of beauty. Because we belong to the Father, therefore does the Saviour plead for us with all the greater earnestness at the throne of the heavenly grace.

But this leads us on to remember that our Lord had undertaken suretyship engagements on account of his people; he undertook to preserve the Father's gift: "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." He looked upon the sheep of his pasture as belonging to his Father, and the Father had put them into his charge, saying to him, "Of thine hand will I require them." As Jacob kept his uncle's flocks, by day the heat devoured him, and at

night the frost; but he was more careful over them because they were Laban's than if they had been his own; he was to give in an account of all the sheep committed to him, and he did so, and he lost none of Laban's sheep; but his care over them was partly accounted for by the fact that they did not belong to himself, but belonged to his uncle Laban.

Understand this twofold reason, then, for Christ's pastoral prayer for his people. He first prays for them because they belong to the Father, and therefore have a peculiar value in his eye; and next, because they belong to the Father, he is under suretyship engagements to deliver them all to the Father in that last great day when the sheep shall pass under the rod of him that telleth them. Now you see where I am bringing you to-night. I am not going to preach at this time to the world any more than Christ upon this occasion prayed for the world; but I am going to preach to his own people as he in this intercessory prayer pleaded for them. I trust that they will all follow me, step by step, through this great theme; and I pray the Lord that, in these deep central truths of the gospel we may find real refreshment for our souls to-night.

I. In calling your attention to my text, I want you to notice, first, THE INTENSITY OF THE SENSE OF PROPERTY WHICH CHRIST HAS IN HIS PEOPLE.

Here are *six words setting forth Christ's property in those who are saved*: "Them which thou hast given me"—(that is one); "for they are *thine*. And all *mine* are *thine*, and *thine* are *mine*; and I am glorified in them." There are certain persons so precious to Christ that they are marked all over with special tokens that they belong to him; as I have known a man write his name in a book which he has greatly valued, and then he has turned over some pages, and he has written his name again; and as we have sometimes known persons, when they have highly valued a thing, to put their mark, their seal, their stamp, here, there, and almost everywhere upon it. So, notice in my text how the Lord seems to have the seal in his hand, and he stamps it all over his peculiar possession: "They are *thine*. And all *mine* are *thine*, and *thine* are *mine*." It is all possessive pronouns, to show that God looks upon his people as his portion, his possession, his property. "They shall be *mine*, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Every man has something or other which he values above the rest of his estate; and here the Lord, by so often reiterating the words which signify possession, proves that he values his people above everything. Let us show that we appreciate this privilege of being set apart unto God; and let us each one say to him—

"Take my poor heart, and let it be
For ever closed to all but thee!
Seal thou my breast, and let me wear
That pledge of love for ever there."

I call your attention, next, to the fact that, while there are these six expressions here, *they are all applied to the Lord's own people*. "Mine" (that is, the saints) "are *thine*" (that is, the saints); "and *thine*" (that is, the saints) "are *mine*" (that is, the saints). These broad

arrows of the King of kings are all stamped upon his people. While the marks of possession are numerous, they are all set upon one object. What, doth not God care for anything else? I answer, No; as compared with his own people, he cares for nothing else. "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Has not God other things? Ah, what is there that he has not? The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle on a thousand hills. All things are of God; of him, and by him, and through him, and to him are all things; yet he reckons them not in comparison with his people. You know how you, dearly beloved, value your children much more than you do anything else. If there were a fire in your house to-night, and you could only carry one thing out of it, mother, would you hesitate a moment as to what that one thing should be? You would carry your babe, and let everything else be consumed in the flames; and it is so with God. He cares for his people beyond everything else. He is the Lord God of Israel, and in Israel he hath set his name, and there he takes his delight. There doth he rest in his love, and over her doth he rejoice with singing.

I want you to notice these different points, not because I can fully explain them all to you; but if I can only give you some of these great truths to think about, and to help you to communion with Christ to-night, I shall have done well. I want you to remark yet further, concerning these notes of possession, that *they occur in the private intercourse between the Father and the Son*. It is in our Lord's prayer, when he is in the inner sanctuary speaking with the Father, that we have these words, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." It is not to you and to me that he is talking now; the Son of God is speaking with the Father when they are in very near communion one with the other. Now, what does this say to me but that the Father and the Son greatly value believers? What people talk about when they are alone, not what they say in the market, not what they talk of in the midst of the confused mob, but what they say when they are in private, that lays bare their heart. Here is the Son speaking to the Father, not about thrones and royalties, nor cherubim and seraphim, but about poor men and women, in those days mostly fishermen and peasant folk, who believed on him. They are talking about these people, and the Son is taking his own solace with the Father in their secret privacy by talking about these precious jewels, these dear ones that are their peculiar treasure. You have not any notion how much God loves you. Dear brother, dear sister, you have never yet had half an idea, or the tithe of an idea, of how precious you are to Christ. You think, because you are so imperfect, and you fall so much below your own ideal, that, therefore, he does not love you much; you think that he cannot do so. Have you ever measured the depth of Christ's agony in Gethsemane, and of his death on Calvary? If you have tried to do so, you will be quite sure that, apart from anything in you or about you, he loves you with a love that passeth knowledge. Believe it. "But I do not love him as I should," I think, I hear you say. No, and you never will unless you first know his love to you. Believe it; believe it to the highest degree, that he so loves you that, when there is no one who can commune with him but the Father, even then their converse

is about their mutual estimate of you, how much they love you: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine."

Only one other thought under this head, and I do but put it before you, and leave it with you, for I cannot expound it to-night. *All that Jesus says is about all his people*, for he says, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." These high, secret talks are not about some few saints who have reached a "higher life", but about all of us who belong to him. Jesus bears all of us on his heart, and he speaks of us all to the Father: "All mine are thine." "That poor woman who could never serve her Lord except by patient endurance, she is mine," says Jesus. "She is thine, great Father." "That poor girl, newly-converted, whose only spiritual life was spent upon a sick-bed, and then she exhaled to heaven, like a dewdrop of the morning, she is mine, and she is thine. That poor child of mine, who often stumbles, who never brought much credit to the sacred name, he is mine, and he is thine. All mine are thine." I seem as if I heard a silver bell ringing out; the very tones of the words are like the music from the harps of angels: "Mine,—thine; thine,—mine." May such sweet risings and fallings of heavenly melodies charm all our ears!

I think that I have said enough to show you the intensity of the sense of property which Christ has in his people: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine."

II. The next head of my discourse is, THE INTENSITY OF UNITED INTEREST BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON CONCERNING BELIEVERS.

First, let me say that *Jesus loves us because we belong to the Father*. Turn that truth over. "My Father has chosen them, my Father loves them; therefore," says Jesus, "I love them, and I lay down my life for them, and I will take my life again for them, and live throughout eternity for them. They are dear to me because they are dear to my Father." Have you not often loved another person for the sake of a third one upon whom all your heart was set? There is an old proverb, and I cannot help quoting it just now; it is, "Love me, love my dog." It is as if the Lord Jesus so loved the Father that even such poor dogs as we are get loved by him for his Father's sake. To the eyes of Jesus we are radiant with beauty because God hath loved us.

Now turn that thought round the other way, *the Father loves us because we belong to Christ*. At first, the Father's love in election was sovereign and self-contained; but now, to-day, since he has given us over to Christ, he takes a still greater delight in us. "They are my Son's sheep," says he; "he bought them with his blood." Better still, "That is my Son's spouse," says he, "that is my Son's bride. I love her for his sake." There was that first love which came fresh from the Father's heart, but now, through this one channel of love to Jesus, the Father pours a double flood of love on us for his dear Son's sake. He sees the blood of Jesus sprinkled on us; he remembers the token, and for the sake of his beloved Son he prizes us beyond all price. Jesus loves us because we belong to the Father, and the Father loves us because we belong to Jesus.

Now come closer still to the central thought of the text, "All mine are thine." *All who are the Son's are the Father's*. Do we belong to

Jesus? Then we belong to the Father. Have I been washed in the precious blood? Can I sing to-night—

“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away”?

Then, by redemption I belong to Christ; but at the same time I may be sure that I belong to the Father: “All mine are thine.” Are you trusting in Christ? Then you are one of God’s elect. That high and deep mystery of predestination need trouble no man’s heart if he be a believer in Christ. If thou believest in Christ, Christ hath redeemed thee, and the Father chose thee from before the foundation of the world. Rest thou happy in that firm belief, “All mine are thine.” How often have I met with people puzzling themselves about election! They want to know if they are elect. No man can come to the Father but by Christ; no man can come to election except through redemption. If you have come to Christ, and are his redeemed, it is certain beyond all doubt that you were chosen of God, and are the Father’s elect. “All mine are thine.”

So, if I am bought by Christ’s precious blood, I am not to sit down, and say how grateful I am to Christ as though he were apart from the Father, and more loving and more tender than the Father. No, no; I belong to the Father if I belong to Christ; and I have for the Father the same gratitude, the same love, and I would render the same service as to Jesus; for Jesus puts it, “All mine are thine.”

If, to-night, also, I am a servant of Christ, if, because he bought me, I try to serve him, then I am a servant of the Father if I am a servant of the Son. “All mine, whatever position they occupy, belong to thee, great Father,” and they have all the privileges which come to those who belong to the Father. I hope that I do not weary you; I cannot make these things entertaining to the careless, I do not try to do so; but you who love my Lord, and his truth, ought to rejoice to-night to think that, in being the property of Christ, you are assured that you are the property of the Father. “All mine are thine.”

“With Christ our Lord we share our part
In the affections of his heart;
Nor shall our souls be thence removed
Till he forgets his first-beloved.”

But now you have to look at the other part of it: “and thine are mine.” *All who are the Father’s are the Son’s.* If you belong to the Father, you belong to the Son. If you are elect, and so the Father’s, you are redeemed, and so the Son’s. If you are adopted, and so the Father’s, you are justified in Christ, and so you are the Son’s. If you are regenerated, and so are begotten of the Father, yet still your life is dependent upon the Son. Remember that, while one Biblical figure sets us forth as children who have each one a life within himself, another equally valid figure represents us as branches of the Vine, which die unless they continue united to the stem. “All thine are mine.” If you are the Father’s, you must be Christ’s. If your life is given you of the Father, it still depends entirely upon the Son.

What a wonderful mixture all this is! The Father and the Son are one, and we are one with the Father and with the Son. A mystic union is established between us and the Father, by reason of our union with the Son, and the Son's union with the Father. See to what a glorious height our humanity has risen through Christ. By the grace of God, ye who were like stones in the brook are made sons of God. Lifted out of your dead materialism, you are elevated into a spiritual life, and you are united unto God. You have not any idea to-night of what God has already done for you, and truly it doth not yet appear what you shall be. A Christian man is the noblest work of God. God has here reached the fulness of his power and his grace, in making us to be one with his own dear Son, and so bringing us into union and communion with himself. Oh, if the words that I speak could convey to you the fulness of their own meaning, you might spring to your feet, electrified with holy joy to think of this, that we should be Christ's, and the Father's, and that we should be thought worthy to be the object of intricate transactions and inter-communions of the dearest kind between the Father and the Son! We, even we, who are but dust and ashes at our very best, are favoured as angels never were; therefore let all praise be ascribed to sovereign grace!

III. And now I shall only detain you a few minutes longer while I speak upon the third part of our subject, that is, THE GLORY OF CHRIST: "And I am glorified in them." I must confess that, while the former part of my subject was very deep, this third part seems to me to be deeper still, "I am glorified in them."

If Christ had said, "I will glorify them," I could have understood it. If he had said, "I am pleased with them," I might have set it down to his great kindness to them; but when he says, "I am glorified in them," it is very wonderful. The sun can be reflected, but you need proper objects to act as reflectors; and the brighter they are, the better will they reflect. You and I do not seem to have the power of reflecting Christ's glory; we break up the glorious rays that shine upon us; we spoil, we ruin so much of the good that falls upon us. Yet Christ says that he is glorified in us. Take these words home, dear friend, to yourself, and think that the Lord Jesus met you to-night, and as you went out of the Tabernacle, said to you, "Thou art mine, thou art my Father's; and I am glorified in thee" I dare not say that it would be a proud moment for you; but I dare to say that there would be more in it to make you feel exalted for him to say, "I am glorified in you," than if you could have all the honours that all the kings can put upon all men in the world. I think that I could say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word," if he would but say to me, "I am glorified in thy ministry." I hope that he is; I believe that he is; but, oh, for an assuring word, if not spoken to us personally, yet spoken to his Father about us. as in our text, "I am glorified in them"!

How can this be? Well, it is a very wide subject. Christ is glorified in his people in many ways. *He is glorified by saving such sinners*, taking these people, so sinful, so lost, so unworthy. When the Lord lays hold upon a drunkard, a thief, an adulterer, when he arrests one who has been guilty of blasphemy, whose very heart is reeking with evil

thoughts, when he picks up the far-off one, the abandoned, the dissolute, the fallen, as he often does, and when he says, "These shall be mine; I will wash these in my blood; I will use these to speak my word," oh, then, he is glorified in them! Read the lives of many great sinners who have afterwards become great saints, and you will see how they have tried to glorify him, not only she who washed his feet with her tears, but many another like her. Oh, how they have loved to praise him! Eyes have wept tears, lips have spoken words, but hearts have felt what neither eyes nor lips could speak, of adoring gratitude to him. "I am glorified in them." Great sinners, Christ is glorified in you. Some of you Pharisees, if you were to be converted, would not bring Christ such glory as he gets through saving publicans and harlots. Even if you struggled into heaven, it would be with very little music for him on the road, certainly no tears and no ointment for his feet, and no wiping them with the hairs of your head. You are too respectable ever to do that; but when he saves great sinners, he can truly say, "I am glorified in them," and each of them can sing,—

"It passeth praises, that dear love of thine,
My Jesus, Saviour: yet this heart of mine
Would sing that love, so full, so rich, so free,
Which brings a rebel sinner, such as me,
Nigh unto God."

And Christ is glorified by the perseverance which he shows in the matter of their salvation. See how he begins to save, and the man resists. He follows up his kind endeavour, and the man rebels. He hunts him, pursues him, dogs his footsteps. He will have the man, and the man will not have him. But the Lord, without violating the free will of man, which he never does, yet at length brings the one who was most unwilling to lie at his feet, and he that hated most begins to love, and he that was most stout-hearted bows the knee in lowliest humility. It is wonderful how persevering the Lord is in the salvation of a sinner; ay, and in the salvation of his own, for you would have broken loose long ago if your great Shepherd had not penned you up within the fold. Many of you would have started aside, and have lost yourselves, if it had not been for constraints of sovereign grace which have kept you to this day, and will not let you go. Christ is glorified in you. Oh, when you once get to heaven, when the angels know all that you were, and all that you tried to be, when the whole story of almighty, infinite grace is told, as it will be told, then will Christ be glorified in you!

Beloved, we actively glorify Christ when we display Christian graces. You who are loving, forgiving, tender-hearted, gentle, meek, self-sacrificing, you glorify him; he is glorified in you. You who are upright, and who will not be moved from your integrity, you who can despise the sinner's gold, and will not sell your conscience for it, you who are bold and brave for Christ, you who can bear and suffer for his name's sake, all your graces come from him. As all the flowers are bred and begotten of the sun, so all that is in you that is good comes from Christ, the Sun of righteousness; and therefore he is glorified in you.

But, beloved, God's people have glorified Christ in many other ways. *When they make him the object of all their trust, they glorify him*, when they say, "Though I am the chief of sinners, yet I trust him; though my mind is dark, and though my temptations abound, I believe that he can save to the uttermost, I do trust him." Christ is more glorified by a sinner's humble faith than by a seraph's loudest song. If thou believest, thou dost glorify him. Child of God, are you to-night very dark, and dull, and heavy? Do you feel half dead, spiritually? Come to your Lord's feet, and kiss them, and believe that he can save, nay, that he has saved you, even you; and thus you will glorify his holy name. "Oh!" said a believer, the other day, "I know whom I have believed; Christ is mine." "Ah!" said another, "that is presumption." Beloved, it is nothing of the kind; it is not presumption for a child to own his own father; it might be pride for him to be ashamed of his father; it is certainly great alienation from his father if he is ashamed to own him. "I know whom I have believed." Happy state of heart, to be absolutely sure that you are resting upon Christ, that he is your Saviour, that you believe in him, for Jesus said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." I believe on him, and I have everlasting life. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." I believe on him, and I am not condemned. Make sure work of this, not only by signs and evidences, but do even better; make the one sign and the one evidence to be this, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; I, a sinner, accept his great sacrifice, and I am saved."

Especially, I think that *God's people glorify Christ by a cheerful conversation*. If you go about moaning and mourning, pining and complaining, you bring no honour to his name; but if, when thou fastest, thou appear not unto men to fast, if thou canst wear a cheerful countenance, even when thy heart is heavy, and if, above all, thou canst rally thy spirit out of its depths, and begin to bless God when the cupboard is empty, and friends are few, then thou wilt indeed glorify Christ.

Many are the ways in which this good work may be done; let us try to do it. "I am glorified in them," says Christ; that is, *by their bold confession of Christ*. Do I address myself to any here who love Christ, but who have never owned it? Do come out, and come out very soon. He deserves to have all the glory that you can give him. If he has healed you, be not like the nine who forgot that Christ had healed their leprosy. Come and praise the name of the great Healer, and let others know what Christ can do. I am afraid that there are a great many here to-night who hope that they are Christians, but they have never said so. What are you ashamed of? Ashamed of your Lord? I am afraid that you do not, after all, love him. Now, at this time, at this particular crisis of the history of the Church and the world, if we do not publicly take sides with Christ, we shall really be against him. The time is come now when we cannot afford to have go-betweens. You must be for him or for his enemies; and to-night he asks you if you are really his, to say it. Come forward, unite yourself with his people, and let it be seen by your life and conversation that you do belong to Christ. If not, how can it be true, "I am glorified in them"? Is Christ glorified in a non-confessing people, a

people that hope to go slinking into heaven by the by-roads or across the fields, but dare not come into the King's highway, and travel with the King's subjects, and own that they belong to him?

Lastly, I think that *Christ is glorified in his people by their efforts to extend his kingdom*. What efforts are you making? There is a great deal of force in a church like this; but I am afraid that there is a great deal of waste steam, waste power here. The tendency is, so often, to leave everything to be done by the minister, or else by one or two leading people; but I do pray you, beloved, if you be Christ's, and if you belong to the Father, if, unworthy though you be, you are claimed with a double ownership by the Father and the Son, do try to be of use to them. Let it be seen by your winning others to Christ that he is glorified in you. I believe that, by diligent attendance to even the smallest Sabbath-school class, Christ is glorified in you. By that private conversation in your own room, by that letter which you dropped into the post with many a prayer, by anything that you have done with a pure motive, trusting in God in order to glorify Christ, he is glorified in you. Do not mistake my meaning with regard to serving the Lord. I think it exceedingly wrong when I hear exhortations made to young people, "Quit your service as domestics, and come out into spiritual work. Business men, leave your shops. Workmen, give up your trades. You cannot serve Christ in that calling, come away from it altogether." I beg to say that nothing will be more pestilent than such advice as that. There are men called by the grace of God to separate themselves from every earthly occupation, and they have special gifts for the work of the ministry; but ever to imagine that the bulk of Christian people cannot serve God in their daily calling, is to think altogether contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God. If you are a servant, remain a servant. If you are a waiter, go on with your waiting. If you are a tradesman, go on with your trade. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called, unless there be to him some special call from God to devote himself to the ministry. Go on with your employment, dear Christian people, and do not imagine that you are to turn hermits, or monks, or nuns. You would not glorify God if you did so act. Soldiers of Christ are to fight the battle out where they are. To quit the field, and shut yourselves up alone, would be to render it impossible that you should get the victory. The work of God is as holy and acceptable in domestic service, or in trade, as any service that can be rendered in the pulpit, or even by the foreign missionary. We thank God for the men specially called and set apart for his own work; but we know that they would do nothing unless the salt of our holy faith should permeate the daily life of other Christians. You godly mothers, you are the glory of the Church of Christ. You hard-working men and women, who endure patiently "as seeing him who is invisible," are the crown and glory of the Church of God. You who do not shirk your daily labour, but stand manfully to it, obeying Christ in it, are proving what the Christian religion was meant to do. We can, if we are truly priests unto God, make our everyday garments into vestments, our meals into sacraments, and our houses into temples for God's worship. Our very

beds will be within the veil, and our inmost thoughts will be as a sweet incense perpetually smoking up to the Most High. Dream not that there is anything about any honest calling that degrades a man, or hinders him in glorifying God; but sanctify it all, till the bells upon the horses shall ring out, "Holiness to the Lord," and the pots in your houses shall be as holy as the vessels of the sanctuary.

Now, I want that we should so come to the communion-table to-night, that even here Christ may be glorified in us. Ah, you may sit at the Lord's table wearing a fine dress or a diamond ring, and you may think that you are somebody of importance, but you are not! Ah, you may come to the Lord's table, and say, "Here is an experienced Christian man who knows a thing or two." You are not glorifying Christ that way; you are only a nobody. But if you come to-night saying, "Lord, I am hungry, thou canst feed me;" that is glorifying him. If you come saying, "Lord, I have no merit, and no worthiness, I come because thou hast died for me, and I trust thee," you are glorifying him. He glorifies Christ most who takes most from him, and who then gives most back to him. Come, empty pitcher, come and be filled; and, when thou art filled, pour all out at the dear feet of him who filled thee. Come, trembler, come and let him touch thee with his strengthening hand, and then go out and work, and use the strength which he has given thee. I fear that I have not led you where I wanted to bring you, close to my Lord and to the Father, yet I have done my best. May the Lord forgive my feebleness and wandering, and yet bless you for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVII.

Verses 1, 2. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

Here the doctrines of a general and a particular redemption sweetly blend: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh," they are all under Christ's mediatorial government by virtue of his matchless sacrifice; but the object in view is specially the gift of everlasting life to the chosen people: "that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

No man has life eternal, then, who is in ignorance of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ; but once to know God, and to know Christ, is sure evidence that we possess a life that can never die: "This is life eternal."

4—6. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

Is not that sweetly put on the part of our divine Lord? These chosen men had been poor creatures at the very best; very forgetful and very

erring; yet their Lord brings no charges against them. but he says to his Father, "They have kept thy word."

7. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*

"They have learnt to link the Father and the Son; they know that though I am the channel of all blessing, yet thou, O my Father, art the fountain from which it flows."

"Jesus, we bless thy Father's name!
Thy God and ours are both the same;
What heavenly blessings from his throne
Flow down to sinners through his Son!"

8. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

He is looking at them in contrast with the world which utterly rejected him; in contrast with that world, the disciples had received and known Christ. Oh, what a blessed distinction does the grace of God make between men! We were all blind by nature; and now that we see, it is because the sacred finger of Christ hath touched our eyes, and opened them. Let him have all the glory of it; yet let us note how well he speaks of his people: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*

Oh, the blessed union of interests between Christ and the Father! How surely do we belong to the Father if we in very deed belong to Christ, and what a holy unity is thus established!

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

Here is a prayer, then, for the preservation and the unity of the people of God; two very necessary petitions. Would God that they might be fulfilled in us, that we might be kept, and kept even to the end, and then kept in living union with all the people of God, and with the Father and with the Son!

12, 13. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

In this wondrous prayer, note the special design of the words of Christ; not only that we might have joy, but that we might have Christ's joy, and not merely have a little of it, but might have it fulfilled in ourselves.

14—16. *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Jesus puts twice over this most special and important fact, which we must never forget: "They are not of the world." Let us never live as if we were of the world; but where such a vivid distinction has been made, God grant that there may be an equal distinction in our lives!

Now comes the prayer for sanctification.

17, 18. *Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

Christ was the great Missionary, the Messiah, the Sent One ; we are the minor missionaries, sent out into the world to accomplish the Father's will and purpose.

19, 20. *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ;*

That shows that Christ's prayer embraces us also who have been brought to believe on him through the word which the apostles declared. Christ, with prescient eye, looked on every one of us who believe on him, and prayed for each one of us as much as he did for John, and Peter, and James.

21, 22. *That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one :*

Unity is the glory of the Church of Christ. It shall be the very crown of the Church of the living God ; and when she puts it on, then will the wondering world acknowledge and accept her Lord.

23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*

Wonderful words ! How shall we dive into their depths ? To think that the Father should have loved us even as he loved his only-begotten Son ; oh, the heights and depths of this wondrous love !

24, 25. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee : but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.*

You notice the division that there is here. There are two parties ; there is the world, and there is the Church ; what is it that divides them ? Read these two clauses : "The world hath not known thee : " "These have known that thou hast sent me." What stands between ? "But I have known thee." It is Christ himself, coming in between the two parties, like the cloudy-fiery pillar, black with darkness to the Egyptians, but bright with light to the Israelites. Oh, to have Christ between you and the world ! It is the best form of separation : "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

26. *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it :*

I read it to you as it stands. Our good translators were always afraid of using a word too often, for fear of falling into tautology ; so for what they considered the beauty of the language they used the word "declared" instead of "made known" ; but why should they have done so ? Who were they that they should have wanted to improve on Christ's words ? It should be the same word right on : "The world hath not known thee : but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have made known unto them thy name, and will make it known : "

26. *That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

Oh, that this love may be in us, for Christ's sake ! Amen.

THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“A place called Gethsemane.”—Matthew xxvi. 36.

THOUGH I have taken only these few words for my text, I shall endeavour to bring the whole narrative before your mind's eye. It is a part of the teaching of Holy Writ that man is a composite being; his nature being divisible into three parts—“spirit,” “soul,” and “body.” I am not going to draw any nice distinctions to-night between the spirit and the soul, or to analyse the connecting link between our immaterial life and consciousness and the physical condition of our nature and the materialism of the world around us. Suffice it to say, that whenever our vital organization is mentioned, this triple constitution is pretty sure to be referred to. If you notice it carefully, you will see in our Saviour's sufferings on our behalf that the passion extended to his spirit, soul, and body; for although at the last extremity upon the cross it were hard to tell in which respect he suffered most, all three being strained to the utmost, yet it is certain there were three distinct conflicts in accordance with this threefold endowment of humanity.

The first part of our Lord's dolorous pain fell upon his spirit. This took place at the table, in that upper chamber where he ate the Passover with his disciples. Those of you who have read the narrative attentively, will have noticed these remarkable words in the thirteenth chapter of John and the twenty-first verse: “When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” Of that silent conflict in the Saviour's heart whilst he was sitting at table no one was a spectator. Into any man's spiritual apprehensions it were beyond the power of any other creature to penetrate; how much less into the spiritual conflicts of the man Christ Jesus! No one could by any possibility have gazed upon these veiled mysteries. He seems to have sat there for a time like one in the deepest abstraction. He fought a mighty battle within himself. When Judas rose and went out it may have been a relief. The Saviour gave out a hymn as if to celebrate his conflict; then, rising up, he went forth to the Mount of Olives. His discourse with his disciples there is recorded in that wonderful chapter, the fifteenth of John, so full of holy triumph, beginning thus, “I am the true vine.”

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He went to the agony in the same joyous spirit like a conqueror, and oh! how he prayed! That famous prayer, what a profound study it is for us! It ought, properly, to be called "The Lord's Prayer." The manner and the matter are alike impressive. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Glorify, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." He seems to have been chanting a melodious psalm just then at the thought that his first battle had been fought, that his spirit, which had been troubled, had risen superior to the conflict, and that he was already victorious in the first of the three terrible struggles. As soon as this had occurred there came another hour, and with it the power of darkness, in which not so much the spirit as the soul of our blessed Lord was to sustain the shock of the encounter. This took place in the garden: You know that after he had come forth triumphant in this death-struggle he went to the conflict more expressly in his body, undergoing in his physical nature the scourging, and the spitting, and the crucifixion; although in that third case there was a grief of spirit and an anguish of soul likewise, which mingled their tributary streams. We would counsel you to meditate upon each separately, according to the time and the circumstance in which the pre-eminence of any one of these is distinctly adverted to.

This second conflict which we have now before us well deserves our most reverent attention. I think it has been much misunderstood. Possibly a few thoughts may be given us to-night which shall clear away the mist from our understanding, and open some of the mystery to our hearts. It seems to me that the agony in the garden was a repetition of the temptation in the wilderness. These two contests with the prince of darkness have many points of exact correspondence. If carefully pondered, you may discover that there is a singular and striking connection between the triple temptation and the triple prayer. Having fought Satan at the first in the wilderness, on the threshold of his public ministry, our Lord now finds him at the last in the garden as he nears the termination of his mediatorial work on the earth. Keep in mind that it is the *soul* of Jesus of which we now have to speak, while I take up the several points consecutively, offering a few brief words on each.

THE PLACE OF CONFLICT has furnished the theme of so many discourses that you can hardly expect anything new to be said upon it. Let us, however, stir up your minds by way of remembrance. Jesus went to the GARDEN, there to endure the conflict, because it was the place of meditation. It seemed fit that his mental conflict should be carried on in the place where man is most at home in the pensive musings of his mind—

"The garden contemplation suits."

As Jesus had been accustomed to indulge himself with midnight reveries in the midst of those olive groves, he fitly chooses a place sacred to the studies of the mind to be the place memorable for the struggles of his soul—

"In a garden man became
Heir of endless death and pain."

It was there the first Adam fell, and it was meet that there

“The second Adam should restore
The ruins of the first.”

He went to that particular garden, it strikes me, because it was within the boundaries of Jerusalem. He might have gone to Bethany that night as he had on former nights, but why did he not? Do you not know that it was according to the Levitical law that the Israelites should sleep within the boundaries of Jerusalem, on the Paschal night? When they came up to the temple to keep the Passover they must not go away till that Paschal night was over. So our Lord selected a rendezvous within the liberties of the city, that he might not transgress even the slightest jot or tittle of the law. And again, he chose that garden, amongst others contiguous to Jerusalem, because Judas knew the place. He wanted retirement, but he did not want a place where he could skulk and hide himself. It was not for Christ to give himself up—that were like suicide; but it was not for him to withdraw and secrete himself—that were like cowardice. So he goes to a place which he is quite sure that Judas, who was aware of his habitudes, knows he is accustomed to visit; and there, like one who, so far from being afraid to meet his death, pants for the baptism with which he is to be baptized, he awaits the crisis that he had so distinctly anticipated. “If they seek me,” he seemed to say, “I will be where they can readily find me, and lead me away.” Every time we walk in a garden I think we ought to recollect the garden where the Saviour walked, and the sorrows that befel him there. Did he select a garden, I wonder, because we are all so fond of such places, thus linking our seasons of recreation with the most solemn mementoes of himself? Did he recollect what forgetful creatures we are, and did he therefore let his blood fall upon the soil of a garden, that so often as we dig and delve therein we might lift up our thoughts to him who fertilised earth’s soil, and delivered it from the curse by virtue of his own agony and griefs?

Our next thought shall be about the WITNESSES.

Christ’s spiritual suffering was altogether within the veil. As I have said, no one could descry or describe it. But his soul-sufferings had some witnesses. Not the rabble, not the multitude; when they saw his bodily suffering, that was all they could understand, therefore it was all they were permitted to see. Just so, Jesus had often shown them the flesh as it were, or the carnal things of his teaching, when he gave them a parable; but he had never shown them the soul, the hidden life of his teaching, this he reserved for his disciples. And thus it was in his passion; he let the Greek and the Roman gather around in mockery, and see his flesh torn, and rent, and bleeding, but he did not let them go into the garden with him to witness his anguish or his prayer. Within that enclosure none came but the disciples. And mark, my brethren, not all the disciples were there. There were a hundred and twenty of his disciples, at least, if not more, but only eleven bore him company then. Those eleven must cross that gloomy brook of Kedron with him, and eight of them are set to keep the door, their faces towards the world, there to sit and watch; only three go into the garden, and those three see something of his sufferings; they beheld him when

the agony begins, but still at a distance. He withdraws from them a stone's cast, for he must tread the wine-press alone, and it is not possible that the priestly sufferer should have a single compeer in the offering which he is to present to his God. At last it came to this, that there was only one observer. The chosen three had fallen asleep, God's un-sleeping eye alone looked down upon him. The Father's ear alone was attent to the piteous cries of the Redeemer.

“He knelt, the Saviour knelt and pray'd,
When but his Father's eye
Look'd through the lonely garden's shade
On that dread agony:
The Lord of all above, beneath,
Was bow'd with sorrow unto death!”

Then there came an unexpected visitor. Amazement wrapp'd the sky, as Christ was seen of angels to be sweating blood for us. “Give strength to Christ,” the Father said as he addressed some strong-winged spirit.

“The astonish'd seraph bow'd his head,
And flew from worlds on high.”

He stood to strengthen, not to fight, for Christ must fight alone; but applying some holy cordial, some sacred anointing to the oppressed Champion who was ready to faint, he, our great Deliverer, received strength from on high, and rose up to the last of his fights. Oh, my dear friends, does not all this teach us that the outside world knows nothing about Christ's soul-sufferings? They draw a picture of him; they carve a piece of wood or ivory, but they do not know his soul-sufferings; they cannot enter into them. Nay, the mass of his own people even do not know them, for they are not made conformable to those sufferings by a spiritual fellowship. We have not that keen sense of mental things to sympathize with such grievings as he had, and even the favoured ones, the three, the elect out of the elect, who have the most of spiritual graces and who have therefore the most of suffering to endure, and the most of depression of spirits, even they cannot pry into the fulness of the mystery. God only knows the soul-anguish of the Saviour when he sweat great drops of blood; angels saw it, but yet they understood it not. They must have wondered more when they saw the Lord of life and glory sorrowful with exceeding sorrowfulness, even unto death, than when they saw this round world spring into beautiful existence from nothingness, or when they saw Jehovah garnish the heavens with his Spirit, and with his hand form the crooked serpent. Brethren, we cannot expect to know the length and breadth and height of these things, but as our own experience deepens and darkens we shall know more and more of what Christ suffered in the garden.

Having thus spoken about the place and the witnesses, let us say a little concerning **THE CUP ITSELF**.

What was this “cup” about which our Saviour prayed—“If it be possible let this cup pass from me”? Some of us may have entertained the notion that Christ desired, if possible, to escape from the pangs of death. You may conjecture that, although he had undertaken to redeem his people, yet his human nature flinched and started back at the perilous

hour. I have thought so myself in times past, but on more mature consideration, I am fully persuaded that such a supposition would reflect upon the Saviour a dishonour. I do not consider that the expression "this cup" refers to death at all. Nor do I imagine that the dear Saviour meant for a single moment to express even a particle of desire to escape from the pangs which were necessary for our redemption. This "cup," it appears to me, relates to something altogether different—not to the last conflict, but to the conflict in which he was then engaged. If you study the words—and especially the Greek words—which are used by the various evangelists, I think you will find that they all tend to suggest and confirm this view of the subject. The Saviour's spirit having been vexed and having triumphed, there was next an attack made by the Evil Spirit upon his mental nature, and this mental nature became in consequence thereof most horribly despondent and cast down. As when on the pinnacle of the temple the Saviour felt the fear of falling, so when in the garden he felt a sinking of soul, an awful despondency, and he began to be very heavy. The cup, then, which he desired to pass from him was, I believe, that cup of despondency, and nothing more. I am the more disposed so to interpret it, because not a single word recorded by any of the four evangelists seems to exhibit the slightest wavering on the part of our Saviour as to offering himself up as an atoning sacrifice. Their testimony is frequent and conclusive: "He set his face to go towards Jerusalem;" "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished;" "The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of him." You never hear a sentence of reluctance or hesitancy. It does not seem to be consistent with the character of our blessed Lord, even as man, to suppose that he desired that final cup of his sufferings to pass away from him at all.

Moreover, there is this, which I take to be a strong argument. The apostle tells us that he was "heard in that he feared." Now, if he feared to die, he was not heard, for he did die. If he feared to bear the wrath of God, or the weight of human sin, and really desired to escape therefrom, then he was not heard, for he did feel the weight of sin, and he did suffer the weight of his Father's vindictive wrath. Thus it appears to me that what he feared was that dreadful depression of mind which had suddenly come upon him, so that his soul was very heavy. He prayed his Father that that cup might pass away; and so it did, for I do not see in all the Saviour's griefs afterwards that singular overwhelming depression he endured when in the garden. He suffered much in Pilate's hall, he suffered much upon the tree; but there was, I was almost about to say, a bold cheerfulness about him even to the last, when for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross; yea, when he cried, "I thirst," and, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I think I notice a holy force and vigour about the words and thoughts of the sufferer which not the weak and trembling state of his body could extinguish. The language of that twenty-second Psalm, which seems to have struck the key-note, if I may so speak, of his devotion on the cross, is full of faith and confidence. If the first verse contains the bitterest of woe, the twenty-first verse changes the plaintive strain. "Thou hast heard (or answered) me" marks a transition from suffering to satisfaction which it is delightful to dwell upon.

Now, perhaps some of you may think, that if this cup only meant depression of the spirits and dismay of the soul it was nothing of much moment or significance, or at least it weakens the spell of those unwonted words and deeds which twine around Gethsemane. Permit me to beg your pardon. Personally I know that there is nothing on earth that the human frame can suffer to be compared with despondency and prostration of mind. Such is the dolefulness and gloom of a heavy soul, yea, a soul exceeding heavy even unto death, that I could imagine the pangs of dissolution to be lighter. In our latest hour joy may light up the heart, and the sunshine of heaven within may bear up the soul when all without is dark. But when the iron entereth into a man's soul, he is unmanned indeed. In the cheerlessness of such exhausted spirits the mind is confounded; well can I understand the saying that is written, "I am a worm and no man," of one that is a prey to such melancholy. Oh that cup! When there is not a promise that can give you comfort, when everything in the world looks dark, when your very mercies affright you, and rise like hideous spectres and portents of evil before your view, when you are like the brethren of Benjamin as they opened the sacks and found the money, but instead of being comforted thereby said, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" when everything looks black, and you seem, through some morbid sensitiveness into which you have fallen, to distort every object and every circumstance into a dismal caricature, let me say to you, that for us poor sinful men this is a cup more horrible than any which inquisitors could mix. I can imagine Anne Askew on the rack, braving it out, like the bold woman she was, facing all her accusers, and saying—

"I am not she that lyst
My anchor to let fall;
For every dryzzling myst
My ship's substantiall,"

but I cannot think of a man in the soul-sickness of such depression of spirits as I am referring to, finding in thought or song a palliative for his woe. When God touches the very secret of a man's soul, and his spirit gives way, he cannot bear up very long; and this seems to me to have been the cup which the Saviour had to drink just then, from which he prayed to be delivered, and concerning which he was heard.

Consider for a moment what he had to depress his soul. Everything, my brethren, everything was draped in gloom, and overcast with darkness that might be felt. There was *the past*. Putting it as I think he would look at it, his life had been unsuccessful. He could say with Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And how poor was that little success he did have! There were his twelve disciples; one of them he knew to be on the way to betray him; eight of them were asleep at the entrance to the garden, and three asleep within the garden! He knew that they would, all forsake him, and one of them would deny him with oaths and curses! What was there to comfort him? When a man's spirit sinks he wants a cheerful companion; he wants somebody to talk to him. Was not this felt by the Saviour? Did not he go three times to his disciples? He knew they were but men; but then a man can comfort a man in such a time as

that. The sight of a friendly face may cheer one's own countenance, and enliven one's heart. But he had to shake them from their slumbers, and then they stared at him with unmeaning gaze. Did he not return back again to prayer because there was no eye to pity, and none that could help? He found no relief. Half a word sometimes, or even a smile, even though it be only from a child, will help you when you are sad and prostrate. But Christ could not get even that. He had to rebuke them almost bitterly. Is not there a tone of irony about his remonstrance? "Sleep on now and take your rest." He was not angry, but he did feel it. When a man is low-spirited he feels more keenly and acutely than at other times; and although the splendid charity of our Lord made that excuse—"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," yet it did cut him to the heart, and he had an anguish of soul like that which Joseph felt when he was sold into Egypt by his brethren. You will see, then, that both the past and the present were sufficient to depress him to the greatest degree. But there was *the future*; and as he looked forward to that, devoted as his heart was, and unfaltering as was the courage of his soul (for it were sacrilege and slander methinks to impute even a thought of finching to him), yet his human heart quailed; he seemed to think—"Oh! how shall I bear it?" The mind started back from the shame, and the body started back from the pain, and the soul and body both started back from the thought of death, and of death in such an ignominious way:—

"He proved them all—the doubt, the strife,
 The faint, perplexing dread;
 The mists that hang o'er parting life
 All gathered round his head:
 That he who gave man's breath might know
 The very depths of human woe."

Brethren, none of us have such cause for depression as the Saviour had. We have not his load to carry; and we have a helper to help us whom he had not, for God who forsook him will never forsake us. Our soul may be cast down within us, but we can never have such great reason for it, nor can we ever know it to so great an extent as our dear Redeemer did. I wish I could picture to you that lovely man, friendless like a stag at bay, with the dogs compassing him round about, and the assembly of the wicked enclosing him; foreseeing every incident of his passion, even to the piercing of his hands and his feet, the parting of his garments, and the lots cast upon his vesture, and anticipating that last death-sweat without a drop of water to cool his lips! I can but conceive that his soul must have felt within itself a solemn trembling, such as might well make him say, "I am exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

This, then, seems to me to be the cup which our Lord Jesus Christ desired to have passed from him, and which did pass from him in due time.

Advancing a little further, I want you to think of the **AGONY**.

We have been accustomed so to call this scene in the garden. You all know that it is a word which signifies "wrestling." Now, there is no wrestling where there is only one individual. To this agony, therefore, there must have been two parties. Were there not, however,

mystically speaking, two parties in Christ? What do I see in this King of Sharon but, as it were, two armies? There was the stern resolve to do all, and to accomplish the work which he had undertaken; and there was the mental weakness and depression which seemed to say to him, "You cannot; you will never accomplish it." "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered; they trusted in thee and were not confounded;" "but I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people;" so that the two thoughts come into conflict—the shrinking of the soul, and yet the determination of his invincible will to go on with it, and to work it out. He was in an agony in that struggle between the overwhelming fear of his mind and the noble eagerness of his spirit. I think, too, that Satan afflicted him; that the powers of darkness were permitted to use their utmost craft in order to drive the Saviour to absolute despair. One expression used to depict it I will handle very delicately; a word that, in its rougher sense, means, and has been applied to, persons out of their mind and bereft for awhile of reason. The term used concerning the Saviour in Gethsemane can only be interpreted by a word equivalent to our "distracted." He was like one bewildered with an overwhelming weight of anxiety and terror. But his divine nature awakened up his spiritual faculties and his mental energy to display their full power. His faith resisted the temptation to unbelief. The heavenly goodness that was within him so mightily contended with the Satanic suggestions and insinuations which were thrown in his way that it came to a wrestling. I should like you to catch the idea of wrestling, as though you saw two men trying to throw one another, struggling together till the muscles stand out and the veins start like whip-cord on their brows. That were a fearful spectacle when two men in desperate wrath thus close in with each other. But the Saviour was thus wrestling with the powers of darkness, and he grappled with such terrible earnestness in the fray that he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood:—

"The powers of hell united prest,
And squeezed his heart, and bruised his breast,
What dreadful conflicts raged within,
When sweat and blood forced through his skin!"

Observe the way in which Christ conducted the agony. It was by prayer. He turned to his Father three times with the self-same words. It is an index of distraction when you repeat yourself. Three times with the self-same words he approached his God—"My Father, let this cup pass from me." Prayer is the great cure-all for depression of spirit. "When my spirit is overwhelmed within me, I will look to the rock that is higher than I." There will be a breaking up altogether, and a bursting of spirit, unless you pull up the sluices of supplication, and let the soul flow out in secret communion with God. If we would state our griefs to God they would not fret and fume within, and wear out our patience as they are sometimes wont to do. In connection with the agony and the prayer there seems to have been a bloody sweat. It has been thought by some that the passage only means that the sweat was like drops of blood; but then the word "like," is used in Scripture to

signify not merely resemblance but the identical thing itself. We believe that the Saviour did sweat from his entire person, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Such an occurrence is very rare indeed among men. It has happened some few times. Books of surgery record a few instances, but I believe that the persons who under some horri- fying grief experience such a sudor never recover; they have always died. Our Saviour's anguish had this peculiarity about it, that though he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, so copiously as if in a crimson shower, yet he survived. His blood must needs be shed by the hands of others, and his soul poured out unto death in another form. Remembering the doom of sinful man—that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face, we see the penalty of sin exacted in awful measure of him who stood surety for sinners. As we eat bread this day at the table of the Lord we commemorate the drops of blood that he sweat. With the perspirings on his face, and huge drops on his brow man toils for the bread that perishes; but bread is only the staff of life: when Christ toiled for life itself to give it to men he sweat, not the common perspiration of the outward form, but the blood which flows from the very heart itself.

Would that I had words to bring all this before you. I want to make you see it; I want to make you feel it. The heavenly Lover who had nought to gain except to redeem our souls from sin and Satan, and to win our hearts for himself, leaves the shining courts of his eternal glory and comes down as a man, poor, feeble, and despised. He is so depressed at the thought of what is yet to be done and suffered, and under such pressure of Satanic influence, that he sweat drops of blood, falling upon the cold frosty soil in that moon-lit garden. Oh the love of Jesus! Oh the weight of sin! Oh the debt of gratitude which you and I owe to him!

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all,”

We must proceed with the rich narrative to meditate upon our SAVIOUR CONQUERING.

Our imagination is slow to fix upon this precious feature of the dolorous history. Though he had said, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me;” yet presently we observe how tranquil and calm he is when he rises up from that scene of prostrate devotion! He remarks, as though it were in an ordinary tone of voice he announced some expected circumstance,—“He is at hand that shall betray me; rise, let us be going.” There is no distraction now, no hurry, no turmoil, no exceeding sorrow even unto death. Judas comes, and Jesus says, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” You would hardly know him to be the same man that was so sorrowful just now. One word with an emanation of his Deity suffices to make all the soldiery fall backwards. Anon he turns round and touches the ear of the high priest's servant, and heals it as in happier days he was wont to heal the diseases and the wounds of the people that flocked round him in his journeys. Away he goes, so calm and collected that unjust accusations cannot extort a reply from him; and though beset on every hand yet is he led as a lamb to the

slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. That was a magnificent calmness of mind that sealed his lips, and kept him passive before his foes. You and I could not have done it. It must have been a deep profound peace within which enabled him to be thus mute and still amidst the hoarse murmur of the council and the boisterous tumult of the multitude. I believe that having fought the enemy within, he had achieved a splendid victory; he was heard in that he feared, and was now able in the fulness of his strength to go out to the last tremendous conflict in which he met the embattled hosts of earth and hell; and yet unabashed after he had encountered them all, to wave the banner of triumph, and to say, "It is finished."

What, then, let us ask in drawing to a conclusion, is the LESSON FROM ALL THIS?

I think I could draw out twenty lessons, but if I did they would not be so good and profitable as the one lesson which the Saviour draws Himself. What was the lesson which he particularly taught to his disciples? Now, Peter, and James, and John, open your ears; and thou, Magdalene, and thou, Mary, and thou, the wife of Herod's steward, and other gracious women, listen for the inference which I am going to draw. It is not mine; it is that of our Lord and Master himself. With how much heed should we treasure it up! "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." "Watch;" and yet again, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." I have been turning this over in my mind to make out the connection. Why on this particular occasion should he exhort them to watch? It strikes me that there were two sorts of watching. Did you notice that there were eight disciples at the garden gate? They were watching, or ought to have been; and three were inside the garden; they were watching, or ought to have been. But they watched differently. Which way were the eight looking? It strikes me that they were set there to look outwards, to watch lest Christ should be surprised by those who would attack him. That was the object of their being put there? The other three were set to watch his actions and his words; to look at the Saviour and see if they could help, or cheer, or encourage him. Now, you and I have reason to look both ways, and the Saviour seems to say as we look upon the agony—"You will have to feel something like this, therefore watch;" watch outwards; be always on your watch-tower, lest sin surprise you. It is through trespasses that you will be brought into this agony; it is by giving Satan an advantage over you that the sorrows of your soul will be multiplied. If your foot slip your heart will become the prey of gloom. If you neglect communion with Jesus, if you grow cold or lukewarm in your affections, if you do not live up to your privileges, you will become the prey of darkness, dejection, discouragement, and despair; therefore, watch, lest ye enter upon this great and terrible temptation. Satan cannot bring strong faith, when it is in healthy exercise, into such a state of desolation. It is when your faith declines and your love grows negligent, and your hope is inanimate, that he can bring you into such disconsolate heaviness that you see not your signs, nor know whether you are a believer or not. You will not be able to say, "My Father," for **your soul** will doubt whether you are a

child of God at all. When the ways of Zion mourn, the harps of the sons and daughters of Zion are unstrung. Therefore, keep good watch, ye who like the eight disciples are charged as sentinels at the threshold of the garden.

But ye three, watch inward. Look at Christ. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." Watch the Saviour, and watch with the Saviour. Brethren and sisters, I should like to speak this to you so emphatically that you would never forget it. Be familiar with the passion of your Lord. Get right up to the cross. Do not be satisfied with that, but get the cross on your shoulders; get yourself bound to the cross in the spirit of the apostle when he said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." I do not know that I have had sweeter work to do for a long time than when a few weeks ago I was looking over all the hymn-writers and all the poets I knew of for hymns upon the passion of the Lord. I tried to enjoy them as I selected them, and to get into the vein in which the poets were when they sung them. Believe me, there is no fount that yields such sweet water as the fount that springs from Calvary just at the foot of the cross. Here it is that there is a sight to be seen more astounding and more ravishing than even from the top of Pisgah. Get into the side of Christ; if is a cleft of the rock in which you may hide until the tempest is over-passed. Live in Christ; live near to Christ; and then, let the conflict come, and you will overcome even as he overcame, and rising up from your sweat and from your agony you will go forth to meet even death itself with a calm expression on your brow, saying, "My Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

"My God, I love thee; not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor because they who love thee not
Must burn eternally.

Thou, O my Jesus, thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace;

And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony;
Yea, death itself—and all for me
Who was thine enemy.

Then why, O blessèd Jesu Christ,
Should I not love thee well?
Not for the hope of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell;

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Nor seeking a reward;
But as thyself hast lovèd me,
O ever-loving Lord.

E'en so I love thee, and will love,
And in thy praise will sing;
Because thou art my loving God,
And my Eternal King."

I hope that this meditation may be profitable to some tried Christians,

and even to impenitent sinners likewise. Oh that the pictures I have been trying to draw might be seen by some who will come and trust in this wondrous man, this wondrous God, who saves all who trust in him. Oh, rest on him! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do but trust him, and you are saved. I do not say you shall be saved another day, but you are saved to-night. The sin which was on your shoulder heavy as a burden when you came into this house shall all be gone. Look now to him in the garden, on the cross, and on the throne. Trust him; trust him; trust him now; trust him only; trust him wholly;

"Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

May the Lord bless you, every one in this assembly, and at the table may you have his presence. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvi. 36—56.

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 23RD, 1902,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 6th, 1881.

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.”—John xviii. 1, 2.

I REMEMBER to have read somewhere, though I cannot just now recall the authority, that Bethany—to which place one would have thought the Saviour would have gone to spend the night, at the house of Mary and her sister Martha,—was over the brow of the Mount of Olives, and was out of the bounds of the city of Jerusalem. Now, at the passover, it was incumbent that all who kept the feast should spend the whole night within the bounds of the city; and our Divine Lord and Master, scrupulous to observe every point of the old law, did not go over the hill, but stayed within the area which was technically considered to be part and parcel of Jerusalem; so that his going to Gethsemane was, in part, a fulfilment of the ceremonial law; and, for that reason, he went no further, and sought no other shelter.

Our Lord also knew that, on that particular night, he would be betrayed into the hands of his enemies; and, therefore, he would need to be prepared, by a special season of devotion, for the terrible ordeal he was about to endure. That passover night was a night to be remembered on this account, and he would, therefore, keep it peculiarly sacred; but it was to be made still more memorable at the time of the commencement of his passion sufferings, so he determined to spend the whole night in prayer to his Father. In this act, he reminds us of Jacob by the brook Jabbok; when he had to face trouble on the morrow, he spent the night in wrestling prayer; and this greater Jacob spent his night, not by Jabbok, but by the black, foul brook of Kedron, and there wrestled with mightier power even than the patriarch put forth in his notable night struggle with the Angel of the covenant. I want you to try, in thought, to go as far as Gethsemane, and I think you ought to be

encouraged to go there because our text says, "Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples."

I. And, first, so far as we can in thought, LET US VIEW THE PLACE.

I have never seen the garden of Gethsemane; many travellers tell us that they have done so, and they have described what they saw there. My impression is, that not one of them ever saw the real spot, and that not a trace of it remains. There are certain old olive trees, within an enclosure, which are commonly thought to have been growing at the time of the Saviour; but that seems scarcely possible, for Josephus tells us that the whole of the trees round about Jerusalem were cut down, many of them to be made into crosses for the crucifixion of the Jews, others of them to assist in building the bulwarks with which the Roman emperor surrounded the doomed city. There does not seem to have been scarcely anything left that would be a true relic of the old city, and I cannot imagine that the olive trees would be spared. From what I have heard from brethren who have gone to the reputed garden of Gethsemane, I conclude that it is not very helpful to one's devotions to go there at all. One, who thought to spend a part of his Sabbath there, and who hoped to enjoy much fellowship with Christ in the place, said that he was made very bitterly to learn the meaning of our Saviour's words to the woman at the well of Sychar, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

I do not want to find out exactly where Gethsemane was; it is enough for me to know that it was at the side of Mount Olivet, and that *it was a very retired spot*. My conception of it is the result of having, for many winters, resided in a little town in the South of France where olive trees grow to perfection; and where, on the side of the hills, I have often sat me down in olive groves, and I have said to myself, "Gethsemane was a place just like this." I am sure it was so, because one olive garden, on the side of a hill, must necessarily be very like another. The hills are lined out in terrace above terrace, each one seldom above eight, ten, or twelve feet wide; then you rise, say, five, six, seven, or eight feet, and there is another terrace, and so on right up the hill; and on these terraces the olive trees grow.

One of the charms of an olive garden of that kind is that, as soon as you get into it, you may sit down under the lee of the bank at the back of the terrace,—perhaps in an angle where you are sheltered from the wind,—and you will be completely hidden from all observers. I have had persons sitting within a few yards of me, of whose presence I had no idea. One Sabbath day, when we had been spending a little time in prayer together, I saw what appeared to be an Englishman's tall hat moving away, at a little distance, just above one of the terraces. By-and-by, I recognized the head that was under the hat as that of a Christian brother whom I knew, and I found that he had been walking up and down

there, studying his sermon for the afternoon. He had not noticed us, except that he had heard some sounds that seemed to him like prayer and praise. Many of you might be in an olive garden; but, unless you made some sign of recognition to your friends, they would scarcely know that anybody else was there; and under the thick yet light foliage, with the glints of sunlight shining through, or at night, under the kind of ashy, grey colour, with the moonlight glimmering through with its silvery beams, I cannot imagine a more delightful place of retreat,—a place where one would feel surer of being quite alone, even though somebody might be near you,—a place where you might feel free to express your thoughts and your prayers; because, at any rate, to your own consciousness, you would seem to be entirely alone.

I cannot help thinking that our Saviour also loved to get among the olive trees, *because of the very congenial form of the olive*. It twists and winds and turns about as though it were in an agony. It has to draw up oil out of the flinty rock, and it seems to do so with great labour and travail; the very shape of many olive trees seems to suggest that thought. So, an olive garden is a place of painful pleasure and of fruitful toil, where the oil is rich and fat, but where much effort has to be expended in the extraction of it out of the hard soil on which the olive stands. I believe that others have felt about this matter as I have felt, namely, that there is no tree which seems more suggestive of a fellow-feeling with the sufferer than an olive,—no shade that is more sweetly pensive, more suitable to the season of sorrow, and the hour of devout meditation. I marvel not, therefore, that Jesus sought the garden of Gethsemane that he might be quite alone,—that he might pour out his soul before God, and yet might have some companions within call without being disturbed by their immediate presence.

One reason for his going to that particular garden was, because he had gone there so often that *he loved to be in the old familiar place*. Do you not feel something of that in your own special place of prayer? I do not like reading out of other people's Bibles so well as out of my own. I do not know how it is, but I like my own study Bible best of all; and if I must have a smaller one, I prefer one that has the words on the same page as in my Bible, so that I may easily find them; and I do not know whether you feel the same, but I can usually pray best in one place. There are certain spots where I delight to be when I draw near to God; there is some association, connected with them, of former interviews with my Heavenly Father, that makes the old arm-chair to be the very best place at which one can kneel. So, methinks, the Saviour loved Gethsemane, because he had oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples; and, therefore, he makes that the sacred spot where his last agony of prayer shall be poured out before his Father.

II. That, however, is only the introduction to the main matter of our meditations; so, now, **LET US VIEW THE SAVIOUR IN GETHSEMANE, THAT WE MAY IMITATE HIM.**

And, first, our blessed Lord is to be imitated by us in that *he*

frequently sought and enjoyed retirement. His was a very busy life; he had much more to do than you and I have; yet he found abundant time for private prayer. He was much holier than any of us are; yet he realized his need of private prayer and meditation. He was much wiser than we shall ever be; yet he felt the necessity for retiring into solitude for communion with his Father. He had much power over himself, he could control and compose himself far more readily than we can; yet, amid the distractions of the world, he felt that he must frequently get away alone. It would be well for us if we were more often alone; we are so busy—so taken up with this or that committee-meeting, working-class, Sunday-school, preaching, talking, visiting, gossiping,—all sorts of things, good, bad, or indifferent,—that we have no leisure for the due cultivation of our spiritual life. We rush from pillar to post, without proper time for rest; but, brothers and sisters, if we want to be strong, if we mean to be like Jesus our Lord and Saviour, we must have our Gethsemane, our place for secret retirement, where we can get alone with our God. I think it was Luther who said, "I have a hard day's work before me to-day; it will take me many hours, and there will be a stern struggle, so I must have at least three hours' prayer, that I may gain the necessary strength for my task." Ah! we do not act in that wise fashion nowadays; we feel as if we cannot spare the time for private prayer; but, had we more communion with God, we should have more influence with men.

But our blessed Master is especially to be imitated in that *he sought retirement when he was about to enter upon the great struggle of his life.* Just then, when Judas was about to give the traitor's kiss,—when scribes and Pharisees were about to hound him to the cross,—it was then that he felt that he must get away to Gethsemane, and be alone in prayer with his Father. What did you do, my dear brother, when you apprehended trial? Why, you sought out a sympathizing friend. I shall not blame you for desiring the consolations of true friendship, but I shall not commend you if you put them into the place of communion with God. Are you, even now, dreading some approaching calamity? What are you doing to meet it? I will not suggest that you should neglect certain precautions, but I would admonish you that the first and best precaution is to get away to your God in prayer. As the feeble conies find their shelter in the solid rock, and as the doves fly away to their home in the dovecot, so should Christians, when they expect trouble, fly straight away to their God upon the wings of fear and faith. Your great strength does not lie in your hair, else might you feel as proud as Samson was in the days of his victories; your great strength lies in your God. Wherefore, hie away to him with all speed, and ask from him help in this your hour of need.

Some of you pray when you are, as it were, at Calvary, but not at Gethsemane. I mean, you pray when the trouble comes upon you, but not when it is on the road; yet your Master here teaches you that to conquer at your Calvary, you must commence by wrestling at your Gethsemane. When as yet it is but the shadow of your

coming trial that spreads its black wings over you, cry unto God for help. When you are not emptying the bitter cup,—when you are only sipping the first drops of the wormwood and the gall, begin even then to pray, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt, O my Father!” You will thus be the better able to drink of the cup to its very dregs when God shall place it in your hand.

We may also imitate our Lord—as far as it would be in our line, *in his taking his disciples with him*. At any rate, if we do not imitate him in this respect, we may certainly admire him; for he took the disciples with him, I think, for two purposes. First, for their good. Remember, brethren and sisters, that the morrow was to be a day of trial for them as well as for himself. He was to be taken to trial and condemnation; but they were to be severely tried, in their fidelity to him, by seeing their Lord and Master put to a shameful death. So he took them with him that they also might pray,—that they might learn how to pray by hearing his wondrous prayers,—that they might watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. Now, sometimes, in your special hour of trouble, I believe that it will be for the good of others for you to communicate to them the story of your distress, and ask them to join you in prayer concerning it. I have often done this, so I can urge you to do the same. I found it a great blessing, on one dark day of my life, to ask my sons, though they were but lads, to come into my room, and pray with their father in his time of trouble. I know that it was good for them, and their prayers were helpful to me; but I acted as I did in part that they might realize their share in domestic responsibilities, that they might come to know their father’s God, and might learn to trust him in their time of trouble.

But our Saviour also took his disciples with him to Gethsemane that they might assist to comfort him; and, in this respect, he is to be imitated by us because of his wonderful humility. If those disciples had all done their best, what would it have been worth? But what they really did was most discouraging to Christ, instead of being at all helpful to him. They went to sleep when they should have watched with their Lord, and they did not assist him with their prayers as they might have done. It is noteworthy that he did not ask them to pray with him; he bade them watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation, but he said to them, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” He did not say, “What, could ye not *pray* with me one hour?” He knew that they could not do that. What mortal man could pray at such a time as that, when great drops of bloody sweat punctuated every paragraph of his petition? No; they could not pray with him, but they might have watched with him; yet that they did not do. Sometimes, dear friends, when a very great trial comes upon you, it will be well for you to ask some brothers and sisters, who cannot do much, but who can do something, to come and watch with you, and pray with you. If it does not do any good to you, it will be good for them; but it will do good to you also, I feel sure. Often—I have to confess it,—I have got two brethren to kneel with me in prayer, when I have been depressed through

this late illness of mine, and their honest, earnest, hearty prayers in my study have often lifted me right up into joy and peace. I believe it has done them good also; I know it has done me good, and I feel sure that you might often be a blessing to others if you did not mind confessing to them when you are depressed and sad at heart. Say, "Come into my room, and watch with me one hour;" and you may add to that request this other one, "Come and pray with me," for some of them can pray as well as you can, and even better. So imitate the Saviour in endeavouring not only to pray yourself, but to call to your assistance the praying legion of God's elect ones when a great trial is impending.

Still, our Lord's example may mainly be followed in another direction, namely, when we do pray in the presence of a great trouble, *it is well to pray with much importunity*. Our Saviour prayed in Gethsemane three times, using the same words. He prayed with such intensity of desire that his heart seemed to burn with anguish. The canals overflowed their banks, and the red streams came bursting down in bloody drops that fell upon the earth in that rightly-named "olive-press." Ah! that is the way to pray,—if not actually unto a bloody sweat, as we may not have to do, or be able to do, yet with such intensity of hearty earnestness as we can, and as we ought, when God the Holy Spirit is working mightily in us. We cannot expect to be helped in our time of trouble unless it is intense prayer that we send up to heaven.

But imitate Christ also *in the matter of your prayer*. I feel sure that he only softly whispered the request, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." You also may present that petition, but mind that you say it very softly. Yet I feel certain that it was with all his might that our Saviour said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." In the presence or in the prospect of a great trouble, make this your prayer to God, "Thy will be done." Brace up your soul to this point;—having asked the Lord to screen you, if it should seem good in his sight, resign yourself absolutely into his hands, and say, "Nevertheless, O my Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

It is prevailing prayer when one gets as far as that; a man is prepared to die when he knows how to present that petition. That is the best preparation for any cross that may come upon your shoulders. You can die a martyr's death, and clap your hands even in the midst of the fire, if you can, with all your soul, really pray as Jesus prayed, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is the object which I set before you, my brothers and sisters in Christ,—that, if you are expecting sickness,—if you are fearing loss,—if you are anticipating bereavement,—if you are dreading death,—let this be your great ultimatum, go to God now, in the time of your distress, and, by mighty prevailing prayer, with such prayerful sympathy as others can give you, breathe out this one petition, "Thy will be done, O my Father! Thy will be done; help me to do it; help me to bear it; help me to go through with it all, to thy honour and glory. Let me be baptized with thy baptism, and drink of thy cup, even to the dregs."

Sometimes, dear friends, you may wish, in your hearts, that the Lord would make great use of you, and yet perhaps he may not do so. Well, a man who holds his tongue, when Christ tells him to do so, is glorifying Christ more than if he opened his mouth, and broke the Master's commandment. There are some of the Lord's people who, by a quiet, holy, consistent manifestation of what the Lord has done for them, glorify him more than they would do if they went from place to place telling out his gospel in a way which would make the gospel itself disgusting to those who heard it. That is quite possible, for some people do it. If my Lord puts me in the front rank, blessed be his name for it, and I must fight for him there as best I can. But if he says to me, "Lie in bed! Be bed-ridden for seven years, and never get up!"—I have nothing to do but to glorify him in that way. He is the best soldier who does exactly what his captain bids him.

III. Now, in the third place, and only briefly, LET US VIEW THE DISCIPLES IN GETHSEMANE, BY WAY OF INSTRUCTION TO OURSELVES.

Probably, *the disciples had often been with their Master to Gethsemane*;—I suppose, sometimes by day, and oftentimes by night, in secret conclave they had been instructed in the olive garden. It had been their Academy; there they had been with the Master in prayer; no doubt, each one praying, and learning how to pray better from his divine example. Dear brothers and sisters, I recommend you oftentimes to get to the place where you can best commune with your God.

But, now, the disciples came to Gethsemane *because a great trouble was impending*. They were brought there that they might watch and pray. So, get you to the place of prayer, at this time of trouble, and at all other times of trial that shall come upon you throughout your whole life. Whenever you hear the knell ringing out all earthly joy, let it ring you into the garden of prayer. Whenever there is the shadow of a coming trouble looming before you, let there also be the substance of more intense communion with God. These disciples were, however, at this time, called to enter into fellowship with their Master in the thicker, deeper darkness that was coming over him,—far denser than any that was coming over them. And you are called, dear brothers and sisters, each in your measure, to be baptized unto Jesus in the cloud and in the sea, that you may have fellowship with him in his sufferings. Be not ashamed to go even to Gethsemane with Christ, entering into a knowledge of what he suffered by being made, according to your capacity, to suffer in the selfsame manner. All his true followers have to go there; some have only to stand at the outside gate, and keep watch; but his highly-favoured ones have to go into the denser gloom, and to be nearer to their Lord in his greatest agonies; but, if we are his true disciples, we must have fellowship with him in his sufferings.

Our difficulty is, that the flesh shrinks from this trial, and that, like the disciples, *we sleep when we ought to watch*. When the time of trial comes, if we get depressed in spirit about it, we are apt not to pray with that fervour and vigour which greater hopefulness

would have begotten; and when we come to feel something of what the Saviour endured, we are too apt to be overwhelmed by it rather than stimulated by it; and so, when he comes to us, he finds us, like the disciples, "sleeping for sorrow." The Master gently said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;" but I do not suppose that one of the disciples made any excuse for himself. I feel, if I may judge them from myself, that I should always have said, "I never can forgive myself for going to sleep that night; how could I fall asleep when he said, 'Watch with me'? And when he came again, with his face red with bloody sweat, and with that disappointed look upon his countenance, said, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?' how could I go to sleep a second time? and, then, how could I go to sleep a third time?" Oh, methinks that Simon Peter must ever have remembered that his Saviour said to him, "Simon, couldst not thou watch with me one hour?" That question must have stuck by him all his life; and James and John must have felt the same. Brethren and sisters, are any of you sleeping under similar circumstances,—while Christ's Church is suffering,—while Christ's cause is suffering,—while Christ's people are suffering,—while a trial is coming upon you to help you into fellowship with him? Are you, instead of being aroused to a higher and intenser devotion, sinking into deeper sleep? If so, Christ may in his great love excuse you, but I beg you not to begin making excuses for yourself. Nay, rouse ye, brethren, and "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

That slumber of theirs must have been *greatly rebuked by their Saviour's kindness to them*. As I understand the narrative, our Lord came to his disciples three times, and on the third occasion he found them still heavy with sleep, so he sat down beside them, and said to them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." There he sat, patiently waiting for the traitor's arrival;—not expecting any help or sympathy from his disciples, but just watching over them as they would not watch with him, praying for them as they would not pray for themselves, and letting them take another nap while he made himself ready to meet Judas and the rabble throng that would so soon surround him. Our Master, in his great tenderness, sometimes indulges us with such sleeps as these; yet we may have to regret them, and to wish that we had had sufficient strength of mind and earnestness of heart to keep awake, and watch with him in his season of sorrow. It appears to me that, of all the eleven good disciples, there was not one who kept awake. There was one vile traitor, and he was wide awake. He never went to sleep,—he was awake enough to sell his Master, and to act as guide to those who came to capture him.

I think also that, at least partly in consequence of that slumber of the disciples, within a short time, "*they all forsook him, and fled.*" They seem, for the time, to have slept away their attachment to their Lord, and waking, as from a disturbed dream, they scarcely knew what they did, and helter-skelter away they fled. The sheep were all scattered, and the Shepherd was left alone, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy, "Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be

scattered ;" and that other word, "I have trodden the winepress alone ; and of the people there was none with me." Wake up, brothers and sisters, else you too may forsake your Master ; and in the hour when you ought most to prove your fidelity, it may be that your slumbering state of heart will lead on to backsliding, and to forsaking of your Lord. God grant that it may not !

IV. Now I close with a word of warning which I have almost anticipated. LET US, IN THOUGHT, GO TO GETHSEMANE TO TAKE WARNING FROM JUDAS. Let me read to you the latter part of the text : "Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place : for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples."

"Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place." Yes, *he had probably, many times, been there all night with Christ.* He had sat with the other disciples in a circle round their Lord on one of those olive-clad terraces, and he had listened to his wondrous words in the soft moonlight. He had often heard his Master pray there. "Judas also, which betrayed him," had heard him pray in Gethsemane. He knew the tones of his voice, the pathos of his pleading, the intense agony of that great heart of love when it was poured out in prayer. He had, no doubt, joined with the other disciples when they said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

"Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place." He could have pointed out to us the very spot where the Saviour most loved to be,—that angle in the terrace, that little corner out of the way, where the Master was wont to find a seat when he sat down, and taught the chosen band around him. Yes, Judas knew the place ; and it was because he knew the place that he was able to betray Christ ; for, if he had not known where Jesus was, he could not have taken the guard there.

It does seem, to me, very dreadful that *familiarity with Christ should have qualified this man to become a traitor ;* and it is still true that, sometimes, familiarity with religion may qualify men to become apostates. Oh, if there be a Judas here, I would speak very solemnly to you ! You know the place ; you know all about church government and church order, and you can go and tell pretty tales about the mistakes made by some of God's servants, who would not err if they could help it. Yes ; you know the church members ; you know where there are any flaws of character and infirmity of spirit ; you know how to go and spread the story of them among worldlings, and you can make such mischief as you could not make if you had not known the place. Yes ; and you know the doctrines of grace, at least with a measure of head-knowledge, and you know how to twist them, so as to make them seem ridiculous, even those eternal verities, which ravish the hearts of angels and of the redeemed from among men. Because you know them so well, you know how to parody them, and to caricature them, and to make the grace of God itself seem to be a farce. Yes, you know the place ; you have been to the Lord's table, and you have heard the saints speak of their raptures and their ecstasies ; and you pretended that you were sharing them. So you know how to go back to the world, and to represent true godliness as being all

cant and hypocrisy; and you make rare fun out of those most solemn secrets of which a man would scarcely speak to his fellow because they are the private transactions between his soul and his God.

I can hardly realize how terrible will be the doom of those who, after making a profession of religion, have prostituted their knowledge of the inner working of the Church of God, and made it the material for novels in which Christ's gospel is held up to scorn. Yet there have been such men, who have not been content to be like birds that have fouled their own nests, for they have also gone forth, and tried also to foul the nest of every believing heart that they could reach. What a dreadful thing it will be if any one of us, here, should know the place, and therefore should betray the Saviour! Do you know the place of private prayer, or do you think you do? Do you know the place where men go when the shadow of a coming trial is looming before them? Do you think you know something about fellowship with Christ in his sufferings? But, what if the greed of gold should overmaster in you, as it did in Judas, such natural attachment as you feel towards Christ and better things? And what if even Gethsemane should, like a pit, open wide its mouth to swallow you up? It is terrible to contemplate, yet it may be true, for "Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place." I cannot bear to think that any one of you should be familiar with the ins and outs of this Tabernacle, and yet should betray Christ;—that you should be one of those who gather around this communion table, that you should be familiar with all the loving and tender expressions which we are wont to use here, and yet, after all, should forsake our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Pass the disciples' question round, and each one ask it, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?"

"When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas, what numbers do!)
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
'Wilt thou forsake me too?'

"Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last."

Therefore, hold thou me up, O Lord, and I shall be safe; keep me even to the end, for thy dear Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XV. 1—8.

On the way from the supper table to the garden of Gethsemane, or while still lingering in the upper room, our Lord spoke this wondrous parable.

Verse 1. *I am the true vine,*—

All other vines are but shadows of Christ. They represent Christ, but he is himself the substance, the essence, the one great reality. He is the

truth of all things that exist: "I am the true Vine." Does anybody ask which is the true Church? All who are vitally joined to Christ are in the true Church, for he says, "I am the true Vine,"—

1. *And my Father is the husbandman.*

He cares for the Church with infinite wisdom and love. No one else can care for that true Vine as the Father—the Husbandman—does.

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

If there be any, who are only nominally in Christ, and who therefore bear no fruit, their doom is to be taken away; for, in order to final perseverance and eternal safety, there must be fruit-bearing.

2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Pruning, then, is for fruit-bearers. If the branch were dead, what would be the good of pruning it? Say not, dear friend, that your afflictions must be caused by your sins; nay, rather they may come in consequence of your virtues. Because you do bear fruit, it is worth while for the Husbandman to use his knife upon you, that you may bring forth more fruit.

3, 4. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you.*

Give good heed to that sweet word, beloved brethren, "Abide in me." Do not seem to get into Christ, and then depart from him. Add constancy to all your other graces.

4, 5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

You know how the branch is in the vine, it is a component part of the vine; but do not forget that the vine is also in the branch,—that the sap, which is the very life of the vine, flows into every living branch. So we are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and he says to us, as the marginal reading has it, "Severed from me, ye can do nothing." What! not even a little, Lord? Can we not do something good, something acceptable apart from thee? No; "Without me, ye can do nothing."

6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

That is all that can be done with fruitless vine-branches. You cannot make anything of them. Other trees yield timber, and are useful for various purposes; but, with the vine, it is as the prophet Ezekiel says, "Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" It is useless if it is fruitless; and so is it with us, if we do not bear fruit unto God, we are of no service to him whatsoever.

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Here is the secret of prevailing prayer. It is not every man, who chooses to pray, who shall have whatever he asks of God; but the successful pleader is the man who abides in Christ, and in whom Christ's words abide. God will not hear our words if we disregard his words. We cannot expect our prayers to be prevalent if we are severed from our Lord.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

"Much fruit" should be produced by the disciples of the much-doing Christ. The true Vine was full of fruit, and it scarcely can be believed that we are branches of that Vine if we exhibit only a little fruit. It is "much fruit" that proves our union to this Vine.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—319, 271, 278.

THE WEAKENED CHRIST STRENGTHENED.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 9TH, 1902,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 5th, 1881.

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”—
Luke xxii. 43.

I SUPPOSE that this incident happened immediately after our Lord's first prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. His pleading became so fervent, so intense, that it forced from him a bloody sweat. He was, evidently, in a great agony of fear as he prayed and wrestled even unto blood. We are told, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that he “was heard in that he feared.” It is probable that this angel came in answer to that prayer. This was the Father's reply to the cry of his fainting Son, who was enduring an infinity of sorrow because of his people's sin; and who must, therefore, be divinely upheld as to his manhood, lest he should be utterly crushed beneath the terrible weight that was pressing upon his holy soul.

Scarcely had our Saviour prayed before the answer to his petition came. It reminds us of Daniel's supplication, and of the angelic messenger who was caused to fly so swiftly that, as soon as the prayer had left the prophet's lips, Gabriel stood there with the reply to it. So, brethren and sisters, whenever your times of trial come, always betake yourselves to your knees. Whatever shape your trouble may take,—if, to you, it should even seem to be a faint representation of your Lord's agony in Gethsemane, put yourselves into the same posture as that in which he sustained the great shock that came upon him. Kneel down, and cry to your Father who is in heaven, who is able to save you from death, who will prevent the trial from utterly destroying you, will give you strength that you may be able to endure it, and will bring you through it to the praise of the glory of his grace.

That is the first lesson for us to learn from our Lord's experience in Gethsemane,—the blessing of prayer. He has bidden us pray, but he has done more than that, for he has set us the example of prayer; and if example be, as

we are sure it is, far more powerful than precept, let us not fail to imitate our Saviour in the exercise of potent, prevalent, repeated supplication, whenever our spirits are cast down, and we are in sore distress of soul. Possibly, you have sometimes said, "I feel so sorrowful that I cannot pray." Nay, brother, that is the very time when you must pray. As the spices, when bruised, give forth all the more fragrance because of the bruising, so let the sorrow of your spirit cause it to send forth the more fervent prayer to the God who is both able and willing to deliver you. You must express your sorrow in one way or another; so let it not be expressed in murmuring, but in supplication. It is a vile temptation, on the part of Satan, to keep you away from the mercy-seat when you have most need to go there; but do not yield to that temptation. Pray till you can pray; and if you find that you are not filled with the Spirit of supplication, use whatever measure of the sacred bedewing you have; and so, by-and-by, you shall have the baptism of the Spirit, and prayer shall become to you a happier and more joyful exercise than it is at present. Our Saviour said to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" yet then, above all times, he was in an agony of prayer; and, in proportion to the intensity of his sorrow was the intensity of his supplication.

In our text, there are two things to note. First, *our Lord's weakness*; and, secondly, *our Lord's strengthening*.

I. First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD'S WEAKNESS.

That he was exceedingly weak, is clear from the fact that an angel came from heaven to strengthen him, for the holy angels never do anything that is superfluous. They are the servants of an eminently practical God, who never does that which it is unnecessary for him to do. If Jesus had not needed strengthening, an angel would not have come from heaven to strengthen him. But how strange it sounds, to our ears, that the Lord of life and glory should be so weak that he should need to be strengthened by one of his own creatures! How extraordinary it seems that he, who is "very God of very God," should, nevertheless, when he appeared on earth as Immanuel, God with us, so completely take upon himself our nature that he should become so weak as to need to be sustained by angelic agency! This struck some of the older saints as being derogatory to his divine dignity; so some manuscripts of the New Testament omit this passage; it is supposed that the verse was struck out by some who claimed to be orthodox, lest, perhaps, the Arians should lay hold upon it, and use it to bolster up their heresies. I cannot be sure who did strike it out, and I am not altogether surprised that they should have done so. They had no right to do anything of the kind, for whatever is revealed in the Scriptures must be true. But they seemed to shudder at the thought that the Son of God should ever have been so weakened as to need the support of an angelic messenger to strengthen him.

Yet, brethren and sisters, *this incident proves the reality of our Saviour's manhood*. Here you can perceive how fully he shares the

weakness of our humanity;—not in spiritual weakness, so as to become guilty of any sin;—but in mental weakness, so as to be capable of great depression of spirit; and in physical weakness, so as to be exhausted to the last degree by his terrible bloody sweat. What is extreme weakness? It is something different from pain, for sharp pain evidences at least some measure of strength; but perhaps some of you know what it is to feel as if you were scarcely alive; you were so weak that you could hardly realize that you were actually living. The blood flowed, if it flowed at all, but very slowly in the canals of your veins; everything seemed stagnant within you. You were very faint, you almost wished that you could become unconscious, for the consciousness you had was extremely painful; you were so weak and sick that you seemed almost ready to die. Our Master's words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," prove that the shadow of impending dissolution hung darkly over his spirit, soul, and body, so that he could truly quote the 22nd Psalm, and say, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." I think, beloved, that you ought to be glad it was so with your Lord, for now you can see how completely he is made like unto his brethren, in their mental depression and physical weakness, as well as in other respects.

It will help you to get an idea of the true manhood of Christ if you remember that *this was not the only time when he was weak*. He, the Son of man, was once a babe; and, therefore, all the tender ministries that have to be exercised because of the helplessness of infancy were necessary also in his case. Wrapped in swaddling bands, and lying in a manger, that little child was, all the while, the mighty God, though he condescended to keep his omnipotence in abeyance in order that he might redeem his people from their sins. Doubt not his true humanity, and learn from it how tenderly he is able to sympathize with all the ills of childhood, and all the griefs of boyhood, which are not so few or so small as some people imagine.

Besides being thus an infant, and gradually growing in stature just as other children do, our Lord Jesus was often very weary. How the angels must have wondered as they saw him, who sways the sceptre of universal sovereignty, and marshals all the starry hosts according to his will, as he, "being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well" at Sychar, waiting for the woman whose soul he had gone to win, and wiping the sweat from his brow, and resting himself after having travelled over the burning acres of the land. The prophet Isaiah truly said that "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." That is the divine side of his glorious nature. "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." That was the human side of his nature. We read that "he did eat nothing" during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness, and "he afterwards hungered." Have any of you ever known what it has been to suffer the bitterness of hunger? Then, remember that our Lord Jesus Christ also endured that pang. He, whom we rightly worship and adore as "God blessed for ever," as the Son of

man, the Mediator between God and men, hungered; and he also thirsted, for he said to the woman at the well, "Give me to drink."

In addition to this, our Saviour was often so weary that he slept, which is another proof of his true humanity. He was so tired, once, that he slept even when the ship was tossing to and fro in a storm, and was ready to sink. On one occasion, we read that the disciples "took him even as he was in the ship," which seems to me to imply even more than it says, namely, that he was so worn out that he was scarcely able to get into the ship; but "they took him even as he was," and there he fell asleep. We know, moreover, that "Jesus wept,"—not merely once, or twice, but many times; and we also know what completes the proof of his humanity,—that he died. It was a strange phenomenon that he, to whom the Father has given "to have life in himself," should have been called to pass through the gloomy shades of death, that he might in all points be made like unto his brethren, and so be able to fully sympathize with us. O ye weak ones, see how weak your Lord became that he might make you strong! We might read that familiar passage, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;" in a slightly different way, "though he was strong, yet for your sakes he became weak, that ye through his weakness might be strong." Therefore, beloved, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

What was *the reason for the special weakness of our Saviour when in the garden of Gethsemane?* I cannot now go fully into that matter, but I want you to notice what it was that tried him so severely there. I suppose, first, it was contact with sin. Our Saviour had always seen the effects of sin upon others, but it had never come home to him so closely as it did when he entered that garden; for there, more than ever before, the iniquity of his people was made to meet upon him, and that contact aroused in him a holy horror. You and I are not perfectly pure, so we are not as horrified at sin as we ought to be; yet, sometimes, we can say, with the psalmist, "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law;" but for our gracious Saviour—hearken to the inspired words, they are none of mine,—to be "numbered with the transgressors," must have been an awful thing to his pure and holy soul. He seemed to shrink back from such a position, and it needed that he should be strengthened in order that he might be able to endure the contact with that terrible mass of iniquity.

But he had, in addition, to bear the burden of that sin. It was not sufficient for him to come into contact with it; but it is written, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and as he began fully to realize all that was involved in his position as the great Sin-bearer, his spirit seemed to droop, and he became exceedingly weak. Ah, sir! if you have to bear the burden of your own sin when you appear before the judgment seat of God, it will sink you to the lowest hell; but what must Christ's agony have been when he was bearing the sin of all his people? As the mighty mass of their guilt came rolling upon him, his Father saw that the

human soul and the human body both needed to be upheld, else they would have been utterly crushed before the atoning work had been accomplished.

Contact with sin, and the bearing of sin's penalty, were reason enough to produce the Saviour's excessive weakness in Gethsemane; but, in addition, he was conscious of the approach of death. I have heard some people say that we ought not to shrink from death; but I aver that, in proportion as a man is a good man, death will be distasteful to him. You and I have become, to a large extent, familiarized with the thought of death. We know that we must die,—unless the Lord should come soon,—for all who have gone before us have done so, and the seeds of death are sown in us, and, like some fell disease, they are beginning to work within our nature. It is natural that we should expect to die, for we know that we are mortal. If anybody were to tell us that we should be annihilated, any reasonable and sensible man would be horrified at the idea, for that is not natural to the soul of man. Well, now, death was as unnatural to Christ as annihilation would be to us. It had never come to be a part of his nature, his holy soul had none of the seeds of death in it; and his untainted body,—which had never known any kind of disease or corruption, but was as pure as when, first of all, "that holy thing" was created by the Spirit of God,—that also shrank back from death. There were not in it any of the things which make death natural; and, therefore, because of the very purity of his nature, he recoiled at the approach of death, and needed to be specially strengthened in order to meet "the last enemy."

Probably, however, it was the sense of utter desertion that was preying upon his mind, and so produced that extremity of weakness. All his disciples had failed him, and presently would forsake him. Judas had lifted up his heel against him, and there was not one of all his professed followers who would faithfully cleave to him. Kings, princes, scribes, and rulers were all united against him, and of the people, there were none with him. Worst of all, by the necessity of his expiatory sacrifice, and his substitution for his people, his Father himself withdrew from him the light of his countenance; and, even in the garden, he was beginning to feel that agony of soul which, on the cross, wrung from him that doleful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And that sense of utter loneliness and desertion, added to all that he had endured, made him so exceedingly weak that it was necessary that he should be specially strengthened for the ordeal through which he had still to pass.

II. Now, in the second place, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD'S STRENGTHENING: "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."

It is night, and there he kneels, under the olives, offering up, as Paul says, "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." While wrestling there, he is brought into such a state of agony that he sweats great drops of blood; and, suddenly, there flashes before him, like a

meteor from the midnight sky, a bright spirit that had come straight from the throne of God to minister to him in his hour of need.

Think of *the condescension on Christ's part to allow an angel to come and strengthen him*. He is the Lord of angels as well as of men. At his bidding, they fly more swiftly than the lightning flash to do his will. Yet, in his extremity of weakness, he was succoured by one of them. It was a wondrous stoop for the infinitely-great and ever-blessed Christ of God to consent that a spirit of his own creation should appear unto him, and strengthen him.

But while I admire the condescension which permitted one angel to come, I equally admire *the self-restraint which allowed only one to come*; for, if he had so pleased, he might have appealed to his Father, and he would at once have sent to him "more than twelve legions of angels." No, he did not make such a request; he rejoiced to have one to strengthen him, but he would not have any more. Oh, what matchless beauties are combined in our blessed Saviour! You may look on this side of the shield, and you will perceive that it is of pure gold. Then you may look on the other side of it, but you will not discover that it is brass, as in the fable, for it is gold all through. Our Lord Jesus is "altogether lovely." What he does, or what he refrains from doing, equally deserves the praises of his people.

How could the angel strengthen Christ? That is a very natural enquiry; but it is quite possible that, when we have answered that question as well as we can, we shall not have given a full and satisfactory reply to it. Yet I can conceive that, in some mysterious manner, an angel from heaven *may have actually infused fresh vigour into the physical constitution of Christ*. I cannot positively affirm that it was so, but it seems to me a very likely thing. We do know that God can suddenly communicate new strength to fainting spirits; and, certainly, if he willed it, he could thus lift up the drooping head of his Son, and make him feel strong and resolute again.

Perhaps it was so; but, in any case, it must have strengthened the Saviour *to feel that he was in pure company*. It is a great joy to a man, who is battling for the right against a crowd who love the wrong, to find a comrade by his side who loves the truth as he loves it himself. To a pure mind, obliged to listen to the ribald jests of the licentious, I know of nothing that is more strengthening than to get a whisper in the ear from one who says, "I, too, love that which is chaste and pure, and hate the filthy conversation of the wicked." So, peradventure, the mere fact of that shining angel standing by the Saviour's side, or reverently bowing before him, may in itself have strengthened him.

Next to that, was *the tender sympathy which this angelic ministration proved*. I can imagine that all the holy angels leant over the battlements of heaven to watch the Saviour's wondrous life; and now that they see him in the garden, and perceive, by his whole appearance, and his desperate agony, that death is drawing near

to him, they are so astonished that they crave permission that at least one of their number shall go down to see if he cannot carry succour to him from his Father's house above. I can imagine the angels saying, "Did we not sing of him at Bethlehem when he was born? Did not some of us minister to him when he was in the desert, and amongst wild beasts, hungry after his long fast and terrible temptation? Has he not been seen of angels all the while he has been on earth? Oh, let some one of us go to his relief!" And I can readily suppose that God said to Gabriel, "Thy name means, 'The strength of God,' go and strengthen your Lord in Gethsemane," "and there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him;" and I think that he was strengthened, at least in part, by observing the sympathy of all the heavenly host with him in his season of secret sorrow. He might seem to be alone as man; but, as Lord and King, he had on his side an innumerable company of angels who waited to do his will; and here was one of them come to assure him that he was not alone, after all.

Next, no doubt, our Saviour was comforted by *the angel's willing service*. You know, dear brothers and sisters, how a little act of kindness will cheer us when we are very low in spirit. If we are despised and rejected of men, if we are deserted and defamed by those who ought to have dealt differently with us, even a tender look from a child will help to remove our depression. In times of loneliness, it is something even to have a dog with you, to lick your hand, and show you such kindness as is possible from him. And our blessed Master, who always appreciated, and still appreciates, the least service rendered to him,—for not a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in Christ's name, shall lose its reward,—was cheered by the devotion and homage of the ministering spirit that came from heaven to strengthen him. I wonder if the angel worshipped him,—I think that he could do no less; and it must have been something to worship the blood-red Son of God. Oh, that any one of us could have paid him such homage as that! The time for such special ministry as that is over now; yet my faith seems to bring him back here, at this moment, just as if we were in Gethsemane. I adore thee, thou blessed eternal God,—never more God-like than when thou didst prove thy perfect manhood by sweating great drops of blood in the awful weakness of thy depression in the garden of sorrow!

Peradventure, too, the angel's presence comforted and strengthened the Saviour *as being a sort of foretaste of his final victory*. What was this angel but the pioneer of all the heavenly host that would come to meet him when the fight was over? He was one who, in full confidence of his Lord's victory, had flown before the rest, to pay homage to the conquering Son of God, who would tread the old dragon beneath his feet. You remember how, when Jesus was born, first there came one angel who began to speak of him to the shepherds, "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The first angel had, as it were, stolen a march upon his brethren, and got

before them ; but, no sooner was the wondrous news bruited through heaven's streets, than every angel resolved to overtake him ere his message was completed. So, here again is one that had come as an outrider, to remind his Lord of his ultimate victory, and there were many more afterwards to come with the same glad tidings ; but, to the Saviour's heart, that angel's coming was a token that he would lead captivity captive ; and that myriads of other bright spirits would crowd around him, and cry, " Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors ; that the King of glory, fresh from his blood-red shame, may enter into his heavenly and eternal inheritance ! "

Yet once more, *is it not very likely that this angel brought the Saviour a message from heaven?* The angels are generally God's messengers, so they have something to communicate from him ; and, perhaps, this angel, bending over the Saviour's prostrate form, whispered in his ear, " Be of good cheer ; thou must pass through all this agony, but thou wilt thereby save an innumerable multitude of the sons and daughters of men, who will love and worship thee and thy Father for ever and for ever. He is with thee even at this moment. Though he must hide his face from thee, because of the requirements of justice that the atonement may be complete, his heart is with thee, and he loves thee ever." Oh, how our Lord Jesus must have been cheered if some such words as these were whispered into his ears !

Now, in closing, let us try to learn the lessons of this incident. Beloved brothers and sisters, you and I may have to pass through great griefs,—certainly, ours will never be so great as those of our Divine Master ;—but we may have to follow through the same waters. Well, at such times, as I have already said, let us resort to prayer, and *let us be content to receive comfort from the humblest instrumentality.* " That is too simple an observation," say you. It is a very simple one, but it is one that some people have need to remember. You remember how Naaman the Syrian was healed through the remark of a little captive girl ; and, sometimes, great saints have been cheered by the words of very little people. You recollect how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted " a bairn's hymn." It was just like him, great, glorious, simple-minded child-man that he was. He said what you and I must sometimes have felt that we wanted,—a bairn's hymn,—a child's joyful song to cheer us up in our hour of depression and sorrow.

There are some people, who seem as if they would not be converted unless they can see some eminent minister. Even that will not suit some of them ; they want a special revelation from heaven. They will not take a text from the Bible,—though I cannot conceive of anything better than that ;—but they think that, if they could dream something, or if they could hear words spoken, in the cool of the evening, by some strange voice in the sky, then they might be converted. Well, brothers and sisters, if you will not eat the apples that grow on trees, you must not expect angels to come and bring them to you. We have a more sure word of testimony in the Bible than we can have anywhere else. If you will not be converted

by that Word, it is a great pity; and it is much more than a pity, it is a great sin. If your Lord and Master condescended to receive consolation from an angel whom he had himself created, you ought to be willing to gather comfort from the feeblest speech of the poorest person,—from the least of the people of God when they try to cheer you.

I have known an old professor say of a young minister, "It is no use for me to hear him, for he has not had the experience that I have had, so how can he instruct or help me?" O sirs, I have known many old saints get more comfort out of godly boys than they did from those of their own age! God knows how, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, to perfect praise; and I have never heard that he has done that out of the mouths of old men. Why is that? Because they know too much; but the children do not know anything; and, therefore, out of their mouths the praise of God is perfect. So let us never despise God's messengers, however humble they may be.

The next lesson is, while you should be thankful for the least comforter; yet, *in your times of deepest need, you may expect the greatest comforters to come to you.* Let me remind you that an angel appeared to Joseph when Herod was seeking Christ's life. Then, later, angels appeared to Christ when the devil had been tempting him. And now, at Gethsemane, when there was a peculiar manifestation of diabolical malice, for it was the hour of the powers of darkness; then, when the devil was loose, and doing his utmost against Christ, an angel came from heaven to strengthen him. So, when you are in your heaviest trials, you shall have your greatest strength. Perhaps you will have little to do with angels till you get into deep trouble, and then shall the promise be fulfilled, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." They are always ready to be your keepers; but, in the matter of spiritual strengthening, these holy spirits may have little to do with some of you until you stand foot to foot with Apollyon, and have to fight stern battles with the evil one himself. It is worth while to go through rough places to have angels to bear you up. It is worth while to go to Gethsemane, if there we may have angels from heaven to strengthen us. So, be of good comfort, brethren, whatever lies before you. The darker your experience is, the brighter will be that which comes out of it. The disciples feared as they entered the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration; but when they had passed right into it, they saw Jesus, Moses, and Elias in glory. O ye who are the true followers of Christ, fear not the clouds that lower darkly over you, for you shall see the brightness behind them, and the Christ in them; and blessed shall your spirits be.

But if you are not believing in Christ, I am indeed grieved for you, for you shall have the sorrow without the solace,—the cup of bitterness without the angel,—the agony, and that for ever, without the messenger from heaven to console you. Oh, that ye would all believe in Jesus! God help you so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XXII. 14—46.

Verses 14—16. *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

And it is fulfilled, for Christ himself is the Lamb of our passover. His blood has been shed and sprinkled; his people have been brought up out of their Egyptian bondage; and, by faith, they feed upon him, and are glad. How sweetly the passover melted away into the Lord's supper, and how graciously did our Saviour thus teach us that, as a rule, he does not make violent changes in the development of his people's spiritual life, but he leads them on gradually from one stage to another! There may be, sometimes, very sudden elevations; but, as a general rule, we go from strength to strength, a step at a time; and the truth is revealed to us little by little.

17, 18. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*

This was the passover cup,—the cup with which they concluded the paschal supper. At such times, they also usually began to chant a Psalm in happy unison. Just at that point, Christ interjected the first part of the celebration of the new ordinance,—the Lord's supper, into which the paschal supper was to melt.

19. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

It was clearly impossible that he could have meant that bread to be literally his body, because his body was there at the table. Therefore, the misunderstanding, or misrepresentation, of the Church of Rome is altogether without excuse. Our Saviour plainly intended to say, "This bread represents my body; it is an emblem, a symbol, of my body." If this had been spoken concerning the bread after Christ had been dead and gone, and not before, there might have been some warrant for the teaching of the Papists; but there cannot be any such warrant, as he used the words while he was sitting there with his apostles. Let us be careful not to lose the true meaning of Christ's words, while we combat the false interpretation that has been given to them.

20. *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

He could not have meant that, literally, that cup was the new covenant; I never heard of anybody who thought so. Why, then, take one part of the ordinance literally, if not the other? But our Lord did mean that the contents of that cup represented the blood which seals and ratifies the eternal covenant on which our hopes are built.

21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*

Lamentable circumstance,—sad index of what often still occurs! The worst traitors to Christ are not outside, but inside the visible church; there they have the best opportunity for doing mischief; there they can give the unkindest cut of all. God grant that none of us may be among that miserable number!

22. *And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!*

The fact that it was determined, in the eternal decrees of God, that Christ should die, did not at all diminish the responsibility of all those who

had a share in bringing about that death. Learn, beloved, to believe firmly in Divine predestination without doubting human responsibility. Even though you may not be able to show how these two things agree, do not be anxious about that matter; be satisfied to believe what you cannot understand. Both these things are true, and they are both of them in this verse.

23, 24. *And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*

What a strange thing that it should have been so! Is there any such strife among us here? If so, how utterly unworthy are we to be the disciples of such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ!

25, 26. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

You know, brethren, that it always will be so. If a man tries to be great in the church, somehow or other his brethren generally think very little of him; but he who is willing to serve,—whose one ambition it is to lay himself out for the glory of his Master, and for the general good,—that man usually has a great deal more honour than he would have expected to receive. The way to be great in the church is to be serviceable to all around us, to be meek and lowly, to be willing to wait upon others. We have good reason for being the servants of our brethren when we remember the humble position that our Lord himself assumed.

27. *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

He served in the very humblest capacity, for did he not even wash the disciples' feet? And if he, who was the greatest of all, thus condescended to perform the lowliest service, who among us shall be so lifted up as to suppose that no common work is good enough for him? Brethren, we must be humble, or else we shall be humbled. And let me remark that the latter experience is by no means a pleasant one, while the former experience is most sweet and gracious. God give us the grace to be humble!

28—30. *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Yes, there are thrones and a kingdom for those who are faithful to the King of kings; but there is something else to think of beside that kind of glory, for notice our Saviour's next words:—

31. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

And between us and the kingdom there will be struggles and dangers; and watchfulness and wrestling prayer will be required of us. And here is our only hope of escape from the perils of the way, as it was with poor Peter:—

32—34. *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*

Though Peter did not really know himself, Christ knew him. That is one of our comforts,—that the Lord Jesus Christ foresees all future ill,

and so provides against it; he looks down into our nature, and deals with us as we need to be dealt with. It is well for us that we are in his hands.

35—40. *And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

Or, "into trial." We do not often enough present that petition, "Lead us not into temptation." We are not able to bear temptation if it goes beyond a certain point; and it is a greater mercy to escape temptation than it is to pass through it, and to overcome it. I mean, of course, only in some respects. We may ask to be delivered from the evil one, if we must be tempted by him; but our first prayer should be that we may not enter into temptation.

41, 42. *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

We can read these words in a calm, quiet tone; but they were uttered by our Lord with an intensity of agony which we can scarcely call up before our mind's eye. So terrible was that agony, that our Saviour became utterly weak and faint through the intensity of his pleading.

43, 44. *And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly:*

More and more intense was that brief prayer as his supplication was continued.

44. *And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Luke was a physician, you know, so he was the most likely one to record this phenomenon. It has happened—so we have been told,—to some other persons in intense fright or agony, that their sweat has been tinged with blood; but we never remember reading or hearing of anyone but our Lord of whom it could be said, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

45. *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,*

Great sorrow may have quite opposite effects upon different men. You have, perhaps, sometimes noticed that intoxication produces upon some men exactly the opposite effect to that which it produces upon others; some become irritable and noisy, while others become taciturn and quiet. It is also quite a matter of fact that great sorrow has various effects upon different minds. In the Saviour's case, it aroused him to an awful agony of earnestness in prayer. In the disciples' case, it sent them to sleep.

46. *And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

The great trial for them, as well as for their Lord, was close at hand then. It was late at night, and they were drowsy and sleepy; yet no time is amiss for supplication. Prayer is never out of season, and never unnecessary. We never know when temptation is near, so let us pray without ceasing to him who is able to preserve us from temptation, or to deliver us out of it.

GETHSEMANE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 8TH, 1863, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”—Luke xxii. 44.

FEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not there. They were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of “the agony.” Occupied with the passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes and sucklings as to the spirit of the gospel. The walls of Gethsemane fitly typify that weakness in grace which effectually shuts in the deeper marvels of communion from the gaze of ordinary believers. To twelve, nay, to eleven only was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and see this great sight. Out of the eleven, eight were left at some distance; they had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which the men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favoured ones, who had been with him on the mount of transfiguration, and had witnessed the life-giving miracle in the house of Jairus—only these three could approach the veil of his mysterious sorrow: within that veil even these must not intrude; a stone’s-cast distance must be left between. He must tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there must be none with him. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced, grace-taught saints, who may be written down as “Fathers;” these having done business on great waters, can in some degree, measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer’s passion; having been much alone with him, they can read his heart far better than those who merely see him amid the crowd. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for some future, special, and tremendous conflict, to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest; they have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and are made conformable unto his death. Yet I say, even these, the elect out of the elect, these choice and peculiar favourites among the king’s courtiers, even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Saviour’s woe, so as to comprehend all his agonies. “Thine unknown sufferings”

is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy; for there is an inner chamber in his grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. Was it not here that Christ was more than ever an "Unspeakable gift" to us? Is not Watts right when he sings—

"And all the unknown joys he gives,
Were bought with agonies unknown."

Since it would not be possible for any believer, however experienced, to know for himself all that our Lord endured in the place of the olive-press, when he was crushed beneath the upper and the nether mill-stone of mental suffering and hellish malice, it is clearly far beyond the preacher's capacity to set it forth to you. Jesus himself must give you access to the wonders of Gethsemane: as for me, I can but invite you to enter the garden, bidding you put your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. I am neither Peter, nor James, nor John, but one who would fain like them drink of the Master's cup, and be baptized with his baptism. I have hitherto advanced only so far as yonder band of eight, but there I have listened to the deep groanings of the man of sorrows. Some of you, my venerable friends, may have learned far more than I; but you will not refuse to hear again the roarings of the many waters which strove to quench the love of the Great Husband of our souls.

Several matters will require our brief consideration. Come Holy Spirit, breathe light into our thoughts, life into our words.

I. Come hither and behold the SAVIOUR'S UNUTTERABLE WOE.

The emotions of that dolorous night are expressed by several words in Scripture. John describes him as saying four days before his passion, "Now is my soul troubled," as he marked the gathering clouds he hardly knew where to turn himself, and cried out "What shall I say?" Matthew writes of him, "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Upon the word *αδημονειν* translated "very heavy," Goodwin remarks that there was a distraction in the Saviour's agony since the root of the word signifies "separated from the people—men in distraction, being separated from mankind." What a thought, my brethren, that our blessed Lord should be driven to the very verge of distraction by the intensity of his anguish. Matthew represents the Saviour himself as saying "My soul is *exceeding sorrowful*, even unto death." Here the word *Περίλυπος* means encompassed, encircled, overwhelmed with grief. "He was plunged head and ears in sorrow and had no breathing-hole," is the strong expression of Goodwin. Sin leaves no cranny for comfort to enter, and therefore the sin-bearer must be entirely immersed in woe. Mark records that he began to be *sore amazed*, and to be very heavy. In this case *θαμβεισθαι*, with the prefix *εκ*, shews extremity of amazement like that of Moses when he did exceedingly fear and quake. O blessed Saviour, how can we bear to think of thee as a man astonished and alarmed! Yet was it even so when the terrors of God set themselves in array against thee. Luke uses the strong language of my text—"being in an agony." These expressions, each of them worthy to be the theme of a discourse, are quite sufficient to show that the grief of the Saviour was of the most extraordinary character;

well justifying the prophetic exclamation "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which was done unto me." He stands before us peerless in misery. None are molested by the powers of evil as he was; as if the powers of hell had given commandment to their legions, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king himself."

Should we profess to understand all the sources of our Lord's agony, wisdom would rebuke us with the question "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depths?" We cannot do more than look at the revealed causes of grief. It partly arose from the horror of his soul *when fully comprehending the meaning of sin*. Brethren, when you were first convinced of sin and saw it as a thing exceeding sinful, though your perception of its sinfulness was but faint compared with its real heinousness, yet horror took hold upon you. Do you remember those sleepless nights? Like the Psalmist, you said "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Some of us can remember when our souls chose strangling rather than life; when if the shadows of death could have covered us from the wrath of God we would have been too glad to sleep in the grave that we might not make our bed in hell. Our blessed Lord saw sin in its natural blackness. He had a most distinct perception of its treasonable assault upon his God, its murderous hatred to himself, and its destructive influence upon mankind. Well might horror take hold upon him, for a sight of sin must be far more hideous than a sight of hell, which is but its offspring.

Another deep fountain of grief was found in the fact that Christ now *assumed more fully his official position with regard to sin*. He was now made *sin*. Hear the word! he, who knew no sin, was made *sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In that night the words of Isaiah were fulfilled—"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Now he stood as the sin-bearer, the substitute accepted by Divine justice to bear that we might never bear the whole of wrath divine. At that hour heaven looked on him as standing in the sinner's stead, and treated as sinful man had richly deserved to be treated. Oh! dear friends, when the immaculate Lamb of God found himself in the place of the guilty, when he could not repudiate that place because he had voluntarily accepted it in order to save his chosen, what must his soul have felt, how must his perfect nature have been shocked at such close association with iniquity?

We believe that at this time, *our Lord had a very clear view of all the shame and suffering of his crucifixion*. The agony was but one of the first drops of the tremendous shower which discharged itself upon his head. He foresaw the speedy coming of the traitor-disciple, the seizure by the officers, the mock-trials before the Sanhedrim, and Pilate, and Herod, the scourging and buffeting, the crown of thorns, the shame, the spitting. All these rose up before his mind, and, as it is a general law of our nature that the foresight of trial is more grievous than trial itself, we can conceive how it was that he who answered not a word when in the midst of the conflict, could not restrain himself

from strong crying and tears in the prospect of it. Beloved friends, if you can revive before your mind's eye the terrible incidents of his death, the hounding through the streets of Jerusalem, the nailing to the cross, the fever, the thirst, and, above all, the forsaking of his God, you cannot marvel that he began to be very heavy, and was sore amazed.

But possibly a yet more fruitful tree of bitterness was this—that *now his Father began to withdraw his presence from him*. The shadow of that great eclipse began to fall upon his spirit when he knelt in that cold midnight amidst the olives of Gethsemane. The sensible comforts which had cheered his spirit were taken away; that blessed application of promises which Christ Jesus needed as a man, was removed; all that we understand by the term "consolations of God" were hidden from his eyes. He was left single-handed in his weakness to contend for the deliverance of man. The Lord stood by as if he were an indifferent spectator, or rather, as if he were an adversary, he wounded him "with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one."

But in our judgment the fiercest heat of the Saviour's suffering in the garden lay in *the temptations of Satan*. That hour above any time in his life, even beyond the forty days' conflict in the wilderness, was *the time of his temptation*. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Now could he emphatically say, "The prince of this world cometh." This was his last hand-to-hand fight with all the hosts of hell, and here must he sweat great drops of blood before the victory can be achieved.

We have glanced at the fountains of the great deep which were broken up when the floods of grief deluged the Redeemer's soul. Brethren, this one lesson ere we pass from the contemplation. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Let us reflect that no suffering can be unknown to him. We do but run with footmen—he had to contend with horsemen; we do but wade up to our ankles in shallow streams of sorrow—he had to buffet with the swellings of Jordan. He will never fail to succour his people when tempted; even as it was said of old, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them."

II. Turn we next to contemplate THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

At the outset of his career, the serpent began to nibble at the heel of the promised deliverer; and now as the time approached when the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, that old dragon made a desperate attempt upon his great destroyer. It is not possible for us to lift the veil where revelation has permitted it to fall, but we can form some faint idea of the suggestions with which Satan tempted our Lord. Let us, however, remark by way of caution, before we attempt to paint this picture, that whatever Satan may have suggested to our Lord, his perfect nature did not in any degree whatever submit to it so as to sin. The temptations were, doubtless, of the very foulest character, but they left no speck or flaw upon him, who remained still the fairest among ten thousand. The prince of this world came, but he had nothing in

Christ. He struck the sparks, but they did not fall, as in our case, upon dry tinder; they fell as into the sea, and were quenched at once. He hurled the fiery arrows, but they could not even scar the flesh of Christ; they smote upon the buckler of his perfectly righteous nature, and they fell off with their points broken, to the discomfiture of the adversary.

But what, think you, were these temptations? It strikes me, from some hints given, that they were somewhat as follows—there was, first, *a temptation to leave the work unfinished*; we may gather this from the prayer—"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "Son of God," the tempter said, "is it so? Art thou really called to bear the sin of man? Hath God said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty,' and art thou he, the chosen of God, to bear all this load? Look at thy weakness! Thou sweatest, even now, great drops of blood; surely thou art not he whom the Father hath ordained to be mighty to save; or if thou be, what wilt thou win by it? What will it avail thee? Thou hast glory enough already. See what miscreants they are for whom thou art to offer up thyself a sacrifice. Thy best friends are asleep about thee when most thou needest their comfort; thy treasurer, Judas, is hastening to betray thee for the price of a common slave. The world for which thou sacrificest thyself will cast out thy name as evil, and thy Church, for which thou dost pay the ransom-price, what is it worth? A company of mortals! Thy divinity could create the like any moment it pleaseth thee; why needest thou, then, pour out thy soul unto death?" Such arguments would Satan use; the hellish craft of one who had then been thousands of years tempting men, would know how to invent all manner of mischief. He would pour the hottest coals of hell upon the Saviour. It was in struggling with this temptation, among others, that, being in an agony, our Saviour prayed more earnestly.

Scripture implies that our Lord was assailed by *the fear that his strength would not be sufficient*. He was heard in that he feared. How, then, was he heard? An angel was sent unto him strengthening him. His fear, then, was probably produced by a sense of weakness. I imagine that the foul fiend would whisper in his ear—"Thou! thou endure to be smitten of God and abhorred of men! Reproach hath broken thy heart already; how wilt thou bear to be publicly put to shame and driven without the city as an unclean thing? How wilt thou bear to see thy weeping kinsfolk and thy broken-hearted mother standing at the foot of thy cross? Thy tender and sensitive spirit will quail under it. As for thy body, it is already emaciated; thy long fastings have brought thee very low; thou wilt become a prey to death long ere thy work is done. Thou wilt surely fail. God hath forsaken thee. Now will they persecute and take thee; they will give up thy soul to the lion, and thy darling to the power of the dog." Then would he picture all the sufferings of crucifixion, and say, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day when the Lord shall deal with thee?" The temptation of Satan was not directed against the Godhead, but the manhood of Christ, and therefore the fiend would probably dwell upon the feebleness of man. "Didst thou not say thyself, 'I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the despised of the

people?' How wilt thou bear it when the wrath-clouds of God gather about thee? The tempest will surely shipwreck all thy hopes. It cannot be; thou canst not drink of this cup, nor be baptized with this baptism." In this manner, we think, was our Master tried. But see, he yields not to it. Being in an agony, which word means in a wrestling, he struggles with the tempter like Jacob with the angel. "Nay," saith he, "I will not be subdued by taunts of my weakness; I am strong in the strength of my Godhead, I will overcome thee yet." Yet was the temptation so awful, that, in order to master it, his mental depression caused him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Possibly, also, the temptation may have arisen from a suggestion *that he was utterly forsaken*. I do not know—there may be sterner trials than this, but surely this is *one* of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. "See," said Satan, as he hissed it out between his teeth—"see, thou hast a friend nowhere! Look up to heaven, thy Father hath shut up the bowels of his compassion against thee. Not an angel in thy Father's courts will stretch out his hand to help thee. Look thou yonder, not one of those spirits who honoured thy birth will interfere to protect thy life. All heaven is false to thee; thou art left alone. And as for earth, do not all men thirst for thy blood? Will not the Jew be gratified to see thy flesh torn with nails, and will not the Roman gloat himself when thou, the King of the Jews, art fastened to the cross? Thou hast no friend among the nations; the high and mighty scoff at thee, and the poor thrust out their tongues in derision. Thou hadst not where to lay thy head when thou wast in thy best estate; thou hast no place now where shelter will be given thee. See the companions with whom thou hast taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there thy brother James, see there thy loved disciple John, and thy bold Apostle Peter—they sleep, they sleep; and yonder eight, how the cowards sleep when thou art in thy sufferings! And where are the four hundred others? They have forgotten thee; they will be at their farms and their merchandize by morning. Lo! thou hast no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against thee. I have stirred up mine infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon thee this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm thee; and what wilt thou do, thou solitary one?" It may be, this was the temptation; I think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto him strengthening him removed that fear. He was heard in that he feared; he was no more alone, but heaven was with him. It may be that this is the reason of his coming three times to his disciples—as Hart puts it—

"Backwards and forwards thrice he ran,
As if he sought some help from man."

He would see for himself whether it was really true that all men had forsaken him; he found them all asleep; but perhaps he gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak.

We think Satan also assaulted our Lord with a bitter taunt indeed. You know in what guise the tempter can dress it, and how bitterly sarcastic he can make the insinuation—"Ah! thou wilt not be able to achieve the redemption of thy people. Thy grand benevolence will prove a mockery, and thy beloved ones will perish. Thou shalt not prevail to save them from my grasp. Thy scattered sheep shall surely be my prey. Son of David, I am a match for thee; thou canst not deliver out of my hand. Many of thy chosen have entered heaven on the strength of thine atonement, but I will drag them thence, and quench the stars of glory; I will thin the courts of heaven of the choristers of God, for thou wilt not fulfil thy suretyship; thou canst not do it. Thou art not able to bring up all this great people; they will perish yet. See, are not the sheep scattered now that the Shepherd is smitten? They will all forget thee. Thou wilt never see of the travail of thy soul. Thy desired end will never be reached. Thou wilt be for ever the man that began to build but was not able to finish." Perhaps this is more truly the reason why Christ went three times to look at his disciples. You have seen a mother; she is very faint, weary with a heavy sickness, but she labours under a sore dread that her child will die. She has started from her couch, upon which disease had thrown her, to snatch a moment's rest. She gazes anxiously upon her child. She marks the faintest sign of recovery. But she is sore sick herself, and cannot remain more than an instant from her own bed. She cannot sleep, she tosses painfully, for her thoughts wander; she rises to gaze again—"How art thou, my child, how art thou? Are those palpitations of thy heart less violent? Is thy pulse more gentle?" But, alas! she is faint, and she must go to her bed again, yet she can get no rest. She will return again and again to watch the loved one. So, methinks, Christ looked upon Peter, and James, and John, as much as to say, "No, they are not all lost yet; there are three left;" and, looking upon them as the type of all the Church, he seemed to say—"No, no; I will overcome; I will get the mastery; I will struggle even unto blood; I will pay the ransom-price, and deliver my darlings from their foe."

Now these, methinks, were his temptations. If you can form a fuller idea of what they were than this, then right happy shall I be. With this one lesson I leave the point—"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." This is Christ's own expression; his own deduction from his trial. You have all read, dear friends, John Bunyan's picture of Christian fighting with Apollyon. That master-painter has sketched it to the very life. He says, though "this sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent, I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile and look upward! But it was the dreadfulest sight I ever saw." That is the meaning of that prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." Oh you that go recklessly where you are tempted, you that pray for afflictions—and I have known some silly enough to do that—you that put yourselves where you tempt the devil to tempt you, take heed from the Master's own example. He sweats great drops of blood when he is

tempted. Oh! pray God to spare you such a trial. Pray this morning and every day, "Lead me not into temptation."

III. Behold, dear brethren, THE BLOODY SWEAT.

We read, that "he sweat as it were great drops of blood." Hence a few writers have supposed that the sweat was not actually blood, but had the appearance of it. That interpretation, however, has been rejected by most commentators, from Augustine downward, and it is generally held that the words "as it were" do not only set forth *likeness* to blood, but signify that it was actually and literally blood. We find the same idiom used in the text—"We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Now, clearly, this does not mean that Christ was like the only-begotten of the Father, since he is really so. So that generally this expression of Holy Scripture sets forth, not a mere likeness to a thing, but the very thing itself. We believe, then, that Christ did really sweat blood. This phenomenon, though somewhat unusual, has been witnessed in other persons. There are several cases on record, some in the old medicine books of Galen, and others of more recent date, of persons who after long weakness, under fear of death have sweat blood. But this case is altogether one by itself for several reasons. If you will notice, he not only sweat blood, but it was in great drops; the blood coagulated, and formed large masses. I cannot better express what is meant than by the word "gouts"—big, heavy drops. This has not been seen in any case. Some slight effusions of blood have been known in cases of persons who were previously enfeebled, but great drops never. When it is said "falling to the ground"—it shows their copiousness, so that they not only stood upon the surface and were sucked up by his garments till he became like the red heifer which was slaughtered on that very spot, but the drops fell to the ground. Here he stands unrivalled. He was a man in good health, only about thirty years of age, and was labouring under no fear of death; but the mental pressure arising from his struggle with temptation, and the straining of all his strength, in order to baffle the temptation of Satan, so forced his frame to an unnatural excitement, that his pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able so to crush the Saviour that he distilled drops of blood! This proves too, my brethren, the mighty power of his love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry "Spring up, O well;" of itself it flows in crimson torrents. Dearly beloved friends, if men suffer some frightful pain of mind—I am not acquainted with the medical matter—apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward, as if to nourish the inner man while passing

through its trial. But see our Saviour in his agony; he is so utterly oblivious of self, that instead of his agony driving his blood to the heart to nourish himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours him out upon the ground, pictures the fulness of the offering which he made for men.

Do you not perceive, my brethren, how intense must have been the wrestling through which he passed, and will you not hear its voice to you?—"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." It has been the lot of some of us to have sore temptations—else we did not know how to teach others—so sore that in wrestling against them the cold, clammy sweat has stood upon our brow. The place will never be forgotten by me—a lonely spot; where, musing upon my God, an awful rush of blasphemy went over my soul, till I would have preferred death to the trial; and I fell on my knees there and then, for the agony was awful, while my hand was at my mouth to keep the blasphemies from being spoken. Once let Satan be permitted really to try you with a temptation to blasphemy, and you will never forget it, though you live till your hairs are blanched; or let him attack you with some lust, and though you hate and loathe the very thought of it, and would lose your right arm sooner than indulge in it, yet it will come, and hunt, and persecute, and torment you. Wrestle against it even unto sweat, my brethren, yea, even unto blood. None of you should say, "I could not help it; I was tempted." Resist till you sweat blood rather than sin. Do not say, "I was so pressed with it; and it so suited my natural temperament, that I could not help falling into it." Look at the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls. Pray that ye enter not into temptation, so that when ye enter into it ye may with confidence say, "Lord, I did not seek this, therefore help me through with it, for thy name's sake."

IV. I want you, in the fourth place, to notice THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYER.

Dear friends, when we are tempted and desire to overcome, the best weapon is prayer. When you cannot use the sword and the shield, take to yourself the famous weapon of All-prayer. So your Saviour did. Let us notice his prayer. *It was lonely prayer.* He withdrew even from his three best friends about a stone's cast. Believer, especially in temptation, be much in solitary prayer. As private prayer is the key to open heaven, so is it the key to shut the gates of hell. As it is a shield to prevent, so is it the sword with which to fight against temptation. Family-prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church, will not suffice, these are very precious, but the best beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God. Betake yourselves to solitude if you would overcome.

Mark, too, it was *humble prayer.* Luke says he knelt, but another evangelist says he fell on his face. What! does the King fall on his face? Where, then, must be thy place, thou humble servant of the great Master? Doth the Prince fall flat to the ground? Where, then, wilt thou lie? What dust and ashes shall cover thy head? What sackcloth shall gird thy loins? Humility gives us good foot-hold in

prayer. There is no hope of any real prevalence with God, who casteth down the proud, unless we abase ourselves that he may exalt us in due time.

Further, it was *filial prayer*. Matthew describes him as saying "O my Father," and Mark puts it, "Abba, Father." You will find this always a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. Hence that prayer, in which it is written, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," begins with "Our Father which art in heaven." Plead as a child. You have no rights as a subject; you have forfeited them by your treason, but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not then ashamed to say, "My Father, hear my cry."

Again, observe that it was *persevering prayer*. He prayed three times, using the same words. Be not content until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Further, see how it glowed to a red-hot heat—it was *earnest prayer*. "He prayed more earnestly." What groans were those which were uttered by Christ! What tears, which welled up from the deep fountains of his nature! Make earnest supplication if you would prevail against the adversary.

And last, it was *the prayer of resignation*. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Yield, and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will will it that it shall be for the best. Be thou perfectly content to leave the result of thy prayer in his hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading, earnestly, importunately, yet mingling with it humility and resignation, thou shalt yet prevail.

Dear friends, we must conclude, turn to the last point with this as a practical lesson—"Rise and pray." When the disciples were lying down they slept; sitting was the posture that was congenial to sleep. Rise; shake yourselves; stand up in the name of God; rise and pray. And if you are in temptation, be you more than ever you were in your life before, instant, passionate, importunate with God that he would deliver you in the day of your conflict.

V. As time has failed us we close with the last point, which is, THE SAVIOUR'S PREVALENCE.

The cloud has passed away. Christ has knelt, and the prayer is over. "But," says one, "did Christ prevail in prayer?" Beloved, could we have any hope that he would prevail in heaven if he had not prevailed on earth? Should we not have had a suspicion that if his strong crying and tears had not been heard *then*, he would fail *now*? His prayers did speed, and therefore he is a good intercessor for us. "How was he heard?" The answer shall be given very briefly indeed. He was heard, I think, in three respects. The first gracious answer that was given him was, *that his mind was suddenly rendered calm*. What a difference there is between "My soul is exceeding sorrowful,"—his hurrying too and fro, his repetition of the prayer three times, the singular agitation that was upon him—what a contrast between all these

and his going forth to meet the traitor with "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Like a troubled sea before, and now as calm as when he himself said, "Peace be still," and the waves were quiet. You cannot know a profounder peace than that which reigned in the Saviour when before Pilate he answered him not a word. He is calm to the last, as calm as though it were his day of triumph rather than his day of trouble. Now I think this was vouchsafed to him in answer to his prayer. He had sufferings perhaps more intense, but his mind was now quieted so as to meet them with greater deliberation. Like some men, who when they first hear the firing of the shots in a battle are all trepidation, but as the fight grows hotter and they are in greater danger, they are cool and collected; they are wounded, they are bleeding, they are dying; yet are they quiet as a summer's eve; the first young flush of trouble is gone, and they can meet the foe with peace—so the Father heard the Saviour's cry, and breathed such a profound peace into his soul, that it was like a river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Next, we believe that he was answered *by God strengthening him through an angel*. How that was done we do not know. Probably it was by what the angel said, and equally likely is it that it was by what he did. The angel may have whispered the promises; pictured before his mind's eye the glory of his success; sketched his resurrection; portrayed the scene when his angels would bring his chariots from on high to bear him to his throne; revived before him the recollection of the time of his advent, the prospect when he should reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth; and so have made him strong. Or, perhaps, by some unknown method God sent such power to our Christ, who had been like Samson with his locks shorn, that he suddenly received all the might and majestic energy that were needed for the terrific struggle. Then he walked out of the garden no more a worm and no man, but made strong with an invisible might that made him a match for all the armies that were round about him. A troop had overcome him, like Gad of old, but he overcame at last. Now he can dash through a troop; now he can leap over a wall. God has sent by his angel force from on high, and made the man Christ strong for battle and for victory.

And I think we may conclude with saying, that God heard him in granting him now, not simply strength, *but a real victory over Satan*. I do not know whether what Adam Clarke supposes is correct, that in the garden Christ did pay more of the price than he did even on the cross; but I am quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such refinement that they think the atonement was made on the cross, and nowhere else at all. We believe that it was made in the garden as well as on the cross; and it strikes me that in the garden one part of Christ's work was finished, wholly finished, and that was his conflict with Satan. I conceive that Christ had now rather to bear the absence of his Father's presence and the revilings of the people and the sons of men, than the temptations of the devil. I do think that these were over when he rose from his knees in prayer, when he lifted himself from the ground where he marked his visage in the clay in drops of blood. The temptation of Satan was then over, and

he might have said concerning that part of the work—"It is finished; broken is the dragon's head; I have overcome him." Perhaps in those few hours that Christ spent in the garden the whole energy of the agents of iniquity was concentrated and dissipated. Perhaps in that one conflict all that craft could invent, all that malice could devise, all that infernal practice could suggest, was tried on Christ, the devil having his chain loosened for that purpose, having Christ given up to him, as Job was, that he might touch him in his bones and in his flesh, yea, touch him in his heart and his soul, and vex him in his spirit. It may be that every devil in hell and every fiend of the pit was summoned, each to vent his own spite and to pour their united energy and malice upon the head of Christ. And there he stood, and he could have said as he stood up to meet the next adversary—a devil in the form of man—Judas—"I come this day from Bozrah, with garments dyed red from Edom; I have trampled on my enemies, and overcome them once for all; now go I to bear man's sin and my Father's wrath, and to finish the work which he has given me to do." If this be so, Christ was then heard in that he feared; he feared the temptation of Satan, and he was delivered from it; he feared his own weakness, and he was strengthened; he feared his own trepidation of mind, and he was made calm.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion, but this lesson. Does it not say "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall have." Then if your temptations reach the most tremendous height and force, still lay hold of God in prayer and you shall prevail. Convinced sinner! that is a comfort for you. Troubled saint! that is a joy for you. To one and all of us is this lesson of this morning—"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." If in temptation let us ask that Christ may pray for us that our faith fail not, and when we have passed through the trouble let us try to strengthen our brethren, even as Christ has strengthened us this day."

THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 18TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”—Luke xxii. 44.

OUR Lord, after having eaten the passover and celebrated the supper with his disciples, went with them to the Mount of Olives, and entered the garden of Gethsemane. What induced him to select that place to be the scene of his terrible agony? Why there in preference to anywhere else would he be arrested by his enemies? May we not conceive that as in a garden Adam's self-indulgence ruined us, so in another garden the agonies of the second Adam should restore us. Gethsemane supplies the medicine for the ills which followed upon the forbidden fruit of Eden. No flowers which bloomed upon the banks of the four-fold river were ever so precious to our race as the bitter herbs which grew hard by the black and sullen stream of Kedron.

May not our Lord also have thought of David, when on that memorable occasion he fled out of the city from his rebellious son, and it is written, “The king also himself passed over the brook Kedron,” and he and his people went up bare-footed and bare-headed, weeping as they went? Behold, the greater David leaves the temple to become desolate, and forsakes the city which had rejected his admonitions, and with a sorrowful heart crosses the foul brook, to find in solitude a solace for his woes. Our Lord Jesus, moreover, meant us to see that our sin changed everything about him into sorrow, it turned his riches into poverty, his peace into travail, his glory into shame, and so the place of his peaceful retirement, where in hallowed devotion he had been nearest heaven in communion with God, our sin transformed into the focus of his sorrow, the centre of his woe. Where he had enjoyed most, there he must be called to suffer most. Our Lord may also have chosen the garden, because needing every remembrance that could sustain him in the conflict, he felt refreshed by the memory of former hours which there had passed away so quietly. He had there prayed.

and gained strength and comfort. Those gnarled and twisted olives knew him well; there was scarce a blade of grass in the garden which he had not knelt upon; he had consecrated the spot to fellowship with God. What wonder then that he preferred this favoured soil? Just as a man would choose in sickness to lie in his own bed, so Jesus chose to endure his agony in his own oratory, where the recollections of former communings with his Father would come vividly before him.

But, probably, the chief reason for his resort to Gethsemane was, that it was his well-known haunt, and John tells us, "Judas also knew the place." Our Lord did not wish to conceal himself, he did not need to be hunted down like a thief, or searched out by spies. He went boldly to the place where his enemies knew that he was accustomed to pray, for he was willing to be taken to suffering and to death. They did not drag him off to Pilate's hall against his will, but he went with them voluntarily. When the hour was come for him to be betrayed there was he in a place where the traitor could readily find him, and when Judas would betray him with a kiss his cheek was ready to receive the traitorous salutation. The blessed Saviour delighted to do the will of the Lord, though it involved obedience unto death.

We have thus come to the gate of the garden of Gethsemane, let us now enter; but first let us put off our shoe from our foot, as Moses did, when he also saw the bush which burned with fire, and was not consumed. Surely we may say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" I tremble at the task which lies before me, for how shall my feeble speech describe those agonies, for which strong crying and tears were scarcely an adequate expression? I desire with you to survey the sufferings of our Redeemer, but oh, may the Spirit of God prevent our mind from thinking aught amiss, or our tongue from speaking even one word which would be derogatory to him either in his immaculate manhood or his glorious Godhead. It is not easy when you are speaking of one who is both God and man to observe the exact line of correct speech; it is so easy to describe the divine side in such a manner as to trench upon the human, or to depict the human at the cost of the divine. Make me not an offender for a word if I should err. A man had need himself to be inspired, or to confine himself to the very words of inspiration, fitly to speak at all times upon the great "mystery of godliness," God manifest in the flesh, and especially when he has to dwell most upon God so manifest in suffering flesh that the weakest traits in manhood become the most conspicuous. O Lord, open thou my lips that my tongue may utter right words.

Meditating upon the agonizing scene in Gethsemane we are compelled to observe that our Saviour there endured a grief unknown to any previous period of his life, and therefore we will commence our discourse by raising the question, **WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR GRIEF OF GETHSEMANE?** Our Lord was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" throughout his whole life, and yet, though it may sound paradoxical, I scarcely think there existed on the face of the earth a happier man than Jesus of Nazareth, for the griefs which he endured were counterbalanced by the peace of purity, the calm of fellowship with God, and the joy of benevolence. This last every good man knows to be very sweet, and all the sweeter in proportion to the pain

which is voluntarily endured for the carrying out of its kind designs. It is always joy to do good, cost what it may. Moreover Jesus dwelt at perfect peace with God at all times; we know that he did so, for he regarded that peace as a choice legacy which he could bequeath to his disciples, and ere he died he said to them, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." He was meek and lowly of heart, and therefore his soul had rest; he was one of the meek who inherit the earth; one of the peacemakers who are and must be blessed. I think I mistake not when I say that our Lord was far from being an unhappy man. But in Gethsemane all seems changed, his peace is gone, his calm is turned to tempest. After supper our Lord had sung a hymn, but there was no singing in Gethsemane. Adown the steep bank which led from Jerusalem to the Kedron he talked very cheerfully, saying, "I am the vine and ye are the branches," and that wondrous prayer which he prayed with his disciples after that discourse, is very full of majesty: "Father, I will that they also whom thou has given me be with me where I am," is a very different prayer from that inside Gethsemane's walls, where he cries, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Notice that all his life long you scarcely find him uttering an expression of grief, and yet here he says, not only by his sighs and by his bloody sweat, but in so many words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." In the garden the sufferer could not conceal his grief, and does not appear to have wished to do so. Backward and forward thrice he ran to his disciples, he let them see his sorrow and appealed to them for sympathy; his exclamations were very piteous, and his sighs and groans were, I doubt not, very terrible to hear. Chiefly did that sorrow reveal itself in bloody sweat, which is a very unusual phenomenon, although I suppose we must believe those writers who record instances somewhat similar. The old physician Galen gives an instance in which, through extremity of horror, an individual poured forth a discoloured sweat, so nearly crimson as at any rate to appear to have been blood. Other cases are given by medical authorities. We do not, however, on any previous occasion observe anything like this in our Lord's life; it was only in the last grim struggle among the olive trees that our champion resisted unto blood, agonizing against sin. What ailed Thee, O Lord, that thou shouldst be so sorely troubled just then?

We are clear that his deep sorrow and distress were not occasioned by any bodily pain. Our Saviour had doubtless been familiar with weakness and pain, for he took our sicknesses, but he never in any previous instance complained of physical suffering. Neither at the time when he entered Gethsemane had he been grieved by any bereavement. We know why it is written "Jesus wept," it was because his friend Lazarus was dead; but here there was no funeral, nor sick bed, nor particular cause of grief in that direction. Nor was it the revived remembrance of any past reproaches which had lain dormant in his mind. Long before this "reproach had broken his heart," and he had known to the full the vexations of contumely and scorn. They had called him a "drunken man and a wine bibber," they had charged him with casting out devils by the prince of the devils; they could not say more and yet he had bravely faced it all. It could not be possible that he was now

sorrowful unto death for such a cause. There must have been a something sharper than pain, more cutting than reproach, more terrible than bereavement, which now at this time grappled with the Saviour, and made him "exceeding sorrowful, and very heavy."

Do you suppose it was the fear of coming scorn, or the dread of crucifixion? Was it terror at the thought of death? Is not such a supposition impossible? Every man dreads death, and as man Jesus could not but shrink from it. When we were originally made we were created for immortality, and therefore to die is strange and uncongenial work to us, and the instincts of self-preservation cause us to start back from it; but surely in our Lord's case that natural cause could not have produced such specially painful results. It does not make even such poor cowards as we are sweat great drops of blood, why then should it work such terror in him? It is dishonouring to our Lord to imagine him less brave than his own disciples, yet we have seen some of the very feeblest of his saints triumphant in the prospect of departing. Read the stories of the martyrs, and you will frequently find them exultant in the near approach of the most cruel sufferings. The joy of the Lord has given such strength to them, that no coward thought has alarmed them for a single moment, but they have gone to the stake, or to the block, with psalms of victory upon their lips. Our Master must not be thought of as inferior to his boldest servants, it cannot be that he should tremble where they were brave. Oh, no; the noblest spirit among yon martyr-band is the Leader himself, who in suffering and heroism surpassed them all; none could so defy the pangs of death as the Lord Jesus, who, for the joy which was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

I cannot conceive that the pangs of Gethsemane were occasioned by any extraordinary attack from Satan. It is possible that Satan was there, and that his presence may have darkened the shade, but he was not the most prominent cause of that hour of darkness. Thus much is quite clear, that our Lord at the commencement of his ministry engaged in a very severe duel with the prince of darkness, and yet we do not read concerning that temptation in the wilderness a single syllable as to his soul's being exceeding sorrowful, neither do we find that he "was sore amazed and was very heavy," nor is there a solitary hint at anything approaching to bloody sweat. When the Lord of angels condescended to stand foot to foot with the prince of the power of the air, he had no such dread of him as to utter strong cries and tears and fall prostrate on the ground with threefold appeals to the Great Father. Comparatively speaking, to put his foot on the old serpent was an easy task for Christ, and did but cost him a bruised heel, but this Gethsemane agony wounded his very soul even unto death.

What is it then, think you, that so peculiarly marks off Gethsemane and the griefs thereof? We believe that now the Father put him to grief for us. It was now that our Lord had to take a certain cup *from the Father's hand*. Not from the Jews, not from the traitor Judas, not from the sleeping disciples, not from the devil came the trial now, but it was a cup filled by one whom he knew to be his Father, but who nevertheless he understood to have appointed him a very bitter potion, a cup not to be drunk by his body and to spend its gall upon his flesh.

but a cup which specially amazed his soul and troubled his inmost heart. He shrunk from it, and therefore be ye sure that it was a draught more dreadful than physical pain, since from that he did not shrink; it was a potion more dreadful than reproach, from that he had not turned aside; more dreadful than Satanic temptation,—*that* he had overcome: it was a something inconceivably terrible, amazingly full of dread, which came from the Father's hand. This removes all doubt as to what it was, for we read "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "The Lord hath made to meet on him the iniquity of us all." He hath made him to be sin for us though he knew no sin. This, then, is that which caused the Saviour such extraordinary depression. He was now about to "taste death for every man," to bear the curse which was due to sinners, because he stood in the sinner's place and must suffer in the sinner's stead. Here is the secret of those agonies which it is not possible for me to set forth in order before you, so true is it that—

"'Tis to God, and God alone,
That his griefs are fully known."

Yet would I exhort you to consider these griefs awhile, that you may love the sufferer. He now realized, perhaps for the first time, what it was to be a sin bearer. As God he was perfectly holy and incapable of sin, and as man he was without original taint and spotlessly pure; yet he had to bear sin, to be led forth as the scape goat bearing the iniquity of Israel upon his head, to be taken and made a sin offering, and as a loathsome thing (for nothing was more loathsome than the sin offering) to be taken without the camp and utterly consumed with the fire of divine wrath. Do you wonder that his infinite purity started back from that? Would he have been what he was if it had not been a very solemn thing for him to stand before God in the position of a sinner? yea, and as Luther would have said it, to be looked upon by God as if he were all the sinners in the world, and as if he had committed all the sin that ever had been committed by his people, for it was all laid on him, and on him must the vengeance due for it all be poured; he must be the centre of all the vengeance and bear away upon himself what ought to have fallen upon the guilty sons of men. To stand in such a position when once it was realised must have been very terrible to the Redeemer's holy soul. Now also the Saviour's mind was intently fixed upon the dreadful nature of sin. Sin had always been abhorrent to him, but now his thoughts were engrossed with it, he saw its worse than deadly nature, its heinous character, and horrible aim. Probably at this time beyond any former period he had, as man, a view of the wide range and all-pervading evil of sin, and a sense of the blackness of its darkness, and the desperateness of its guilt as being a direct attack upon the throne, yea, and upon the very being of God. He saw in his own person to what lengths sinners would go, how they would sell their Lord like Judas, and seek to destroy him as did the Jews. The cruel and ungenerous treatment he had himself received displayed man's hate of God, and, as he saw it, horror took hold upon him, and his soul was heavy to think that he must bear such an evil and be numbered with such transgressors, to be wounded

for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. Not the wounding nor the bruising distressed him so much as the sin itself, and that utterly overwhelmed his soul.

Then, too, no doubt the penalty of sin began to be realised by him in the Garden—first the sin which had put him in the position of a suffering substitute, and then the penalty which must be borne, because he was in that position. I dread to the last degree that kind of theology which is so common now-a-days, which seeks to depreciate and diminish our estimate of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, that was no trifling suffering which made recompense to the justice of God for the sins of men. I am never afraid of exaggeration, when I speak of what my Lord endured. All hell was distilled into that cup, of which our God and Saviour Jesus Christ was made to drink. It was not eternal suffering, but since he was divine he could in a short time offer unto God a vindication of his justice which sinners in hell could not have offered had they been left to suffer in their own persons for ever. The woe that broke over the Saviour's spirit, the great and fathomless ocean of inexpressible anguish which dashed over the Saviour's soul when he died, is so inconceivable, that I must not venture far, lest I be accused of a vain attempt to express the unutterable; but this I will say, the very spray from that great tempestuous deep, as it fell on Christ, baptised him in a bloody sweat. He had not yet come to the raging billows of the penalty itself, but even standing on the shore, as he heard the awful surf breaking at his feet, his soul was sore amazed and very heavy. It was the shadow of the coming tempest, it was the prelude of the dread desertion which he had to endure, when he stood where we ought to have stood, and paid to his Father's justice the debt which was due from us; it was this which laid him low. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten as a sinner, though in him was no sin,—this it was which caused him the agony of which our text speaks.

Having thus spoken of the cause of his peculiar grief, I think we shall be able to support our view of the matter, while we lead you to consider, WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER OF THE GRIEF ITSELF? I shall trouble you, as little as possible, with the Greek words used by the evangelists; I have studied each one of them, to try and find out the shades of their meaning, but it will suffice if I give you the results of my careful investigation. What was the grief itself? How was it described? This great sorrow assailed our Lord some four days before he suffered. If you turn to John xii. 27, you find that remarkable utterance, "Now is my soul troubled." We never knew him say that before. This was a foretaste of the great depression of spirit which was so soon to lay him prostrate in Gethsemane. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." After that we read of him in Matthew xxvi. 37, that "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy." The depression had come over him again. It was not pain, it was not a palpitation of the heart, or an aching of the brow, it was worse than these. Trouble of spirit is worse than pain of body; pain may bring trouble and be the incidental cause of sorrow, but if the mind is perfectly untroubled, how well a man can bear pain, and when the

soul is exhilarated and lifted up with inward joy pain of body is almost forgotten, the soul conquering the body. On the other hand the soul's sorrow will create bodily pain, the lower nature sympathizing with the higher. Our Lord's main suffering lay in his soul—his soul-sufferings were the soul of his sufferings. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Pain of spirit is the worst of pain, sorrow of heart is the climax of griefs. Let those who have ever known sinking spirits, despondency, and mental gloom, attest the truth of what I say!

This sorrow of heart appears to have led to a very deep depression of our Lord's spirit. In the 26th of Matthew, 37th verse, you find it recorded that he was "*very heavy*," and that expression is full of meaning,—of more meaning, indeed, than it would be easy to explain. The word in the original is a very difficult one to translate. It may signify the abstraction of the mind, and its complete occupation by sorrow, to the exclusion of every thought which might have alleviated the distress. One burning thought consumed his whole soul, and burned up all that might have yielded comfort. For awhile his mind refused to dwell upon the result of his death, the consequent joy which was set before him. His position as a sinbearer, and the desertion by his Father which was necessitated thereby, engrossed his contemplations and hurried his soul away from all else. Some have seen in the word a measure of distraction, and though I will not go far in that direction, yet it does seem as if our Saviour's mind underwent perturbations and convulsions widely different from his usual calm, collected spirit. He was tossed to and fro as upon a mighty sea of trouble, which was wrought to tempest, and carried him away in its fury. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." As the psalmist said, innumerable evils compassed him about so that his heart failed him. His heart was melted like wax in the midst of his bowels with sheer dismay. He was "*very heavy*." Some consider the word to signify at its root, "*separated from the people*," as if he had become unlike other men, even as one whose mind is staggered by a sudden blow, or pressed with some astounding calamity, is no more as ordinary men are. Mere onlookers would have thought our Lord to be a man distraught, burdened beyond the wont of men, and borne down by a sorrow unparalleled among men. The learned Thomas Goodwin says, "The word denotes a failing, deficiency, and sinking of spirit, such as happens to men in sickness and swooning." Epaphroditus' sickness, whereby he was brought near to death, is called by the same word; so that, we see, that Christ's soul was sick and fainted. Was not his sweat produced by exhaustion? The cold, clammy sweat of dying men comes through faintness of body, but the bloody sweat of Jesus came from an utter faintness and prostration of soul. He was in an awful soul-swoon, and suffered an inward death, whose accompaniment was not watery tears from the eyes, but a weeping of blood from the entire man. Many of you, however, know in your measure what it is to be very heavy without my multiplying words in explanation, and if you do not know by personal experience all explanations must be vain. When deep despondency comes on, when you forget everything that would sustain you, and your spirit sinks down, down, down, then can you sympathise with your Lord. Others think you

foolish, call you nervous, and bid you rally yourself, but they know not your case. Did they understand it they would not mock you with such admonitions, impossible to those who are sinking beneath inward woe. Our Lord was "very heavy," very sinking, very despondent, overwhelmed with grief.

Mark tells us next, in his fourteenth chapter and thirty-third verse, that our Lord was "*sore amazed*." The Greek word does not merely import that he was astonished and surprised, but that his amazement went to an extremity of horror, such as men fall into when their hair stands on end and their flesh trembles. As the delivery of the law made Moses exceedingly fear and quake, and as David said, "My flesh trembleth because of thy judgments," so our Lord was stricken with horror at the sight of the sin which was laid upon him and the vengeance which was due on account of it. The Saviour was first "sorrowful," then depressed, and "heavy," and lastly, sore amazed and filled with amazement; for even he as a man could scarce have known what it was that he had undertaken to bear. He had looked at it calmly and quietly, and felt that whatever it was he would bear it for our sake; but when it actually came to the bearing of sin he was utterly astonished and taken aback at the dreadful position of standing in the sinner's place before God, of having his holy Father look upon him as the sinner's representative, and of being forsaken by that Father with whom he had lived on terms of amity and delight from old eternity. It staggered his holy, tender, loving nature, and he was "sore amazed" and was "very heavy."

We are further taught that there surrounded, encompassed, and overwhelmed him an ocean of sorrow, for the thirty-eighth verse of the twenty-sixth of Matthew contains the word *perilupos*, which signifies an encompassing around with sorrows. In all ordinary miseries there is generally some loophole of escape, some breathing place for hope. We can generally remind our friends in trouble that their case might be worse, but in our Lord's griefs worse could not be imagined; for he could say with David, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." All God's waves and billows went over him. Above him, beneath him, around him, without him, and within, all, all was anguish, neither was there one alleviation or source of consolation. His disciples could not help him,—they were all but one sleeping, and he who was awake was on the road to betray him. His spirit cried out in the presence of the Almighty God beneath the crushing burden and unbearable load of his miseries. No griefs could have gone further than Christ's, and he himself said, "My soul is *exceeding sorrowful*," or surrounded with sorrow "even unto death." He did not die in the garden, but he suffered as much as if he had died. He endured death intensively, though not extensively. It did not extend to the making his body a corpse, but it went as far in pain as if it had been so. His pangs and anguish went up to the mortal agony, and only paused on the verge of death.

Luke, to crown all, tells us in our text, that our Lord was *in an agony*. The expression "agony" signifies a conflict, a contest, a wrestling. With whom was the agony? With whom did he wrestle? I believe it was with himself; the contest here intended was not with his God; no, "not as I will but as thou wilt" does not look like

wrestling with God; it was not a contest with Satan, for, as we have already seen, he would not have been so sore amazed had that been the conflict, but it was a terrible combat within himself, an agony within his own soul. Remember that he could have escaped from all this grief with one resolve of his will, and naturally the manhood in him said, "Do not bear it!" and the purity of his heart said, "Oh do not bear it, do not stand in the place of the sinner;" and the delicate sensitiveness of his mysterious nature shrank altogether from any form of connection with sin; yet infinite love said, "Bear it, stoop beneath the load"; and so there was agony between the attributes of his nature, a battle on an awful scale in the arena of his soul. The purity which cannot bear to come into contact with sin must have been very mighty in Christ, while the love which would not let his people perish was very mighty too. It was a struggle on a Titanic scale, as if a Hercules had met another Hercules; two tremendous forces strove and fought and agonised within the bleeding heart of Jesus. Nothing causes a man more torture than to be dragged hither and thither with contending emotions; as civil war is the worst and most cruel kind of war, so a war within a man's soul when two great passions in him struggle for the mastery, and both noble passions too, causes a trouble and distress which none but he that feels it can understand. I marvel not that our Lord's sweat was as it were great drops of blood, when such an inward pressure made him like a cluster trodden in the wine-press. I hope I have not presumptuously looked into the ark, or gazed within the veiled holy of holies; God forbid that curiosity or pride should urge me to intrude where the Lord has set a barrier. I have brought you as far as I can, and must again drop the curtain with the words I used just now,

" 'Tis to God, and God alone,
That his griefs are fully known."

Our third question shall be, WHAT WAS OUR LORD'S SOLACE IN ALL THIS? He sought help in human companionship, and very natural it was that he should do so. God has created in our human nature a craving for sympathy. We do not amiss when we expect our brethren to watch with us in our hour of trial; but our Lord did not find that men were able to assist him; however willing their spirit might be, their flesh was weak. What, then, did he do? He resorted to prayer, and especially to prayer to God under the character of Father. I have learned by experience that we never know the sweetness of the Fatherhood of God so much as when we are in very bitter anguish; I can understand why the Saviour said "Abba, Father," it was anguish that brought him down as a chastened child to appeal plaintively to a Father's love. In the bitterness of my soul I have cried, "If, indeed, thou be my Father, by the bowels of thy fatherhood have pity on thy child;" and here Jesus pleads with his Father as we have done, and finds comfort in that pleading. Prayer was the channel of the Redeemer's comfort, earnest, intense, reverent, repeated prayer, and after each time of prayer he seems to have grown quiet, and to have gone to his disciples with a measure of restored peace of mind. The sight of their sleeping helped to bring back his griefs, and therefore he returned to pray

again, and each time he was comforted, so that when he had prayed for the third time he was prepared to meet Judas and the soldiers and to go with silent patience to judgment and to death. His great comfort was prayer and submission to the divine will, for when he had laid his own will down at his Father's feet the feebleness of his flesh spoke no more complainingly, but in sweet silence, like a sheep dumb before her shearers, he contained his soul in patience and rest. Dear brothers and sisters, if any of you shall have your Gethsemane and your heavy griefs, imitate your Master by resorting to prayer, by crying to your Father, and by learning submission to his will.

I shall conclude by drawing two or three inferences from the whole subject. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

The first is this—Learn, dear brethren, *the real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Do not think of him as God merely, though he is assuredly divine, but feel him to be near of kin to you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. How thoroughly can he sympathize with you! He has been burdened with all your burdens and grieved with all your griefs. Are the waters very deep through which you are passing? Yet they are not deep compared with the torrents with which he was buffeted. Never a pang penetrates your spirit to which your covenant Head was a stranger. Jesus can sympathize with you in all your sorrows, for he has suffered far more than you have ever suffered, and is able therefore to succour you in your temptations. Lay hold on Jesus as your familiar friend, your brother born for adversity, and you will have obtained a consolation which will bear you through the uttermost deeps.

Next see here *the intolerable evil of sin*. You are a sinner, which Jesus never was, yet even to stand in the sinner's place was so dreadful to him that he was sorrowful even unto death. What will sin one day be to you if you should be found guilty at the last! Oh, could we tell the horror of sin there is not one among us that would be satisfied to remain in sin for a single moment; I believe there would go up from this house of prayer this morning a weeping and a wailing such as might be heard in the very streets, if men and women here who are living in sin could really know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is that rests upon them, and what the judgments of God will be that will shortly surround them and destroy them. Oh soul, sin must be an awful thing if it so crushed our Lord. If the very imputation of it fetched bloody sweat from the pure and holy Saviour, what must sin itself be? Avoid it, pass not by it, turn away from the very appearance of it, walk humbly and carefully with your God that sin may not harm you, for it is an exceeding plague, an infinite pest.

Learn next, but oh how few minutes have I in which to speak of such a lesson, *the matchless love of Jesus*, that for your sakes and mine he would not merely suffer in body, but consented even to bear the horror of being accounted a sinner, and coming under the wrath of God because of our sins. though it cost him suffering unto death and sore amazement, yet sooner than that we shall perish, the Lord smarted as our surety. Can we not cheerfully endure persecution for his sake? Can we not labour earnestly for him? Are we so ungenerous that his cause shall know a lack while we have the means of helping it?

Are we so base that his work shall flag while we have strength to carry it on? I charge you by Gethsemane, my brethren, if you have a part and lot in the passion of your Saviour, love him much who loved you so immeasurably, and spend and be spent for him.

Again looking at Jesus in the garden, we learn the *excellence and completeness of the atonement*. How black I am, how filthy, how loathsome in the sight of God,—I feel myself only fit to be cast into the lowest hell, and I wonder that God has not long ago cast me there; but I go into Gethsemane, and I peer under those gnarled olive trees, and I see my Saviour. Yes, I see him wallowing on the ground in anguish, and hear such groans come from him as never came from human breast before. I look upon the earth and see it red with his blood, while his face is smeared with gory sweat, and I say to myself, “My God, my Saviour, what aileth thee?” I hear him reply, “I am suffering for thy sin,” and then I take comfort, for while I fain would have spared my Lord such an anguish, now that the anguish is over I can understand how Jehovah can spare me, because he smote his Son in my stead. Now I have hope of justification, for I bring before the justice of God and my own conscience the remembrance of my bleeding Saviour, and I say, Canst thou twice demand payment, first at the hand of thy agonising Son and then again at mine? Sinner as I am, I stand before the burning throne of the severity of God, and am not afraid of it. Canst thou scorch me, O consuming fire, when thou hast not only scorched but utterly consumed my substitute? Nay, by faith, my soul sees justice satisfied, the law honoured, the moral government of God established, and yet my once guilty soul absolved and set free. The fire of avenging justice has spent itself, and the law has exhausted its most rigorous demands upon the person of him who was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Oh the sweetness of the comfort which flows from the atoning blood! Obtain that comfort, my brethren, and never leave it. Cling to your Lord’s bleeding heart, and drink in abundant consolation.

Last of all, *what must be the terror of the punishment which will fall upon those men who reject the atoning blood*, and who will have to stand before God in their own proper persons to suffer for their sins. I will tell you, sirs, with pain in my heart as I tell you it, what will happen to those of you who reject my Lord. Jesus Christ my Lord and Master is a sign and prophecy to you of what will happen to you. Not in a garden, but on that bed of yours where you have so often been refreshed, you will be surprised and overtaken, and the pains of death will get hold upon you. With an exceeding sorrow and remorse for your misspent life and for a rejected Saviour you will be made very heavy. Then will your darling sin, your favourite lust, like another Judas, betray you with a kiss. While yet your soul lingers on your lip you will be seized and taken off by a body of evil ones, and carried away to the bar of God, just as Jesus was taken to the judgment seat of Caiaphas. There shall be a speedy, personal, and somewhat private judgment, by which you shall be committed to prison where, in darkness and weeping, and wailing, you shall spend the night before the great assize of the judgment morning. Then shall the day break and the resurrection morning come, and as our Lord then appeared before Pilate, so will you appear

before the highest tribunal, not that of Pilate, but the dread judgment seat of the Son of God, whom you have despised and rejected. Then will witnesses come against you, not false witnesses, but true, and you will stand speechless, even as Jesus said not a word before his accusers. Then will conscience and despair buffet you, until you will become such a monument of misery, such a spectacle of contempt, as to be fitly noted by another *Ecce.Homo*, and men shall look at you and say, "Behold the man and the suffering which has come upon him, because he despised his God and found pleasure in sin." Then shall you be condemned. "Depart, ye cursed," shall be your sentence, even as "Let him be crucified" was the doom of Jesus. You shall be taken away by the officers of justice to your doom. Then like the sinner's substitute you will cry, "I thirst," but not a drop of water shall be given you; you shall taste nothing but the gall of bitterness. You shall be executed publicly with your crimes written over your head that all may read and understand that you are justly condemned; and then will you be mocked as Jesus was, especially if you have been a professor of religion and a false one; all that pass by will say, "He saved others, he preached to others, but himself he cannot save." God himself will mock you. Nay, think not I dream, has he not said it: "I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh"? Cry unto your gods, that you once trusted in! Get comfort out of the lusts ye once delighted in, O ye that are cast away for ever! To your shame, and to the confusion of your nakedness, shall you that have despised the Saviour be made a spectacle of the justice of God for ever. It is right it should be so, justice rightly demands it. Sin made the Saviour suffer an agony, shall it not make you suffer? Moreover, in addition to your sin, you have rejected the Saviour; you have said, "He shall not be my trust and confidence." Voluntarily, presumptuously, and against your own conscience you have refused eternal life; and if you die rejecting mercy what can come of it but that first your sin, and secondly your unbelief, shall condemn you to misery without limit or end. Let Gethsemane warn you, let its groans, and tears, and bloody sweat admonish you. Repent of sin, and believe in Jesus. May his Spirit enable you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

“I WILL;” YET, “NOT AS I WILL.”

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1894,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 1st, 1888.

“Father, I will.”—John xvii. 24.

“Not as I will.”—Matthew xxvi. 39.

WE have here two prayers uttered by the same Person; yet there is the greatest possible contrast between them. How different men are at different times! Yet Jesus was always essentially the same: “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Still, his mood and state of mind varied from time to time. He seemed calmly happy when he prayed with his disciples, and said, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me;” but he was in an agony when, in Gethsemane, having withdrawn from his disciples, and fallen on his face, he prayed, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” It is the same Man, and an unchangeable Man, too, as to his essence, who uttered both prayers; yet see how different were his frames of mind, and how different the prayers he offered. Brother, you may be the same man, and quite as good a man, when you are groaning before God as when you are singing before him. There may be more grace even in the submissive “Not as I will” than in the triumphant “Father, I will.” Do not judge yourselves to have changed in your standing before God because you have undergone an alteration as to your feelings. If your Master prayed so differently at different times, you, who have not the fulness of grace that he had, must not wonder if you have a great variety of inward experiences.

Notice, also, that it was not only the same Person, but that he used these two expressions almost at the same time. I do not know how many minutes—I had better say minutes rather than hours—intervened between the last supper, and the wonderful high-priestly prayer, and the agonizing cries of Gethsemane. I suppose that it was only a

short walk from Jerusalem to the olive garden, and that it would not occupy long to traverse the distance. At one end of the walk, Jesus prays, "Father, I will;" and at the other end of it, he says, "Not as I will." In like manner, we may undergo great changes, and have to alter the tone of our prayers, in a few minutes. You prayed just now with holy confidence; you took firm hold of the covenant angel, and with wrestling Jacob you said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" and yet it may be equally becoming on your part, within an hour, to lie in the very dust, and in an agony to cry unto the Lord, "Pardon my prayers, forgive me that I was too bold, and hear me now as I cry to thee, and say, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.'"

"If but my fainting heart be blest
With thy sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God, to thee I leave the rest;
'Thy will be done!'"

Never be ashamed because you have to mend your prayers; be careful not to make a mistake if you can help it; but, if you make one, do not be ashamed to confess it, and to correct it as far as you can. One of our frequent mistakes is that we wonder that we make mistakes. Whenever a man says, "I should never have thought that I could have done such a foolish thing as that," it shows that he did not really know himself, for had he known himself, he would rather have wondered that he did not do worse, and he would have marvelled that he acted as wisely as he did. Only the grace of God can teach us how to run our prayers down the scale from the high note of "Father, hear me, for thou hast said, 'Ask what thou wilt,'" right down to the deep, deep bass of "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

I must further remark that these two prayers were equally characteristic of Christ. I think that I should know my Lord by his voice in either of them. Who but the eternal Son of God may dare to say, "Father, I will"? There speaks Incarnate Deity; that is the sublime utterance of the well-beloved Son. And yet who could say as he said it, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"? Perhaps you have uttered those words, dear friend; but in your case they were not concerning such a cup of woe as Christ emptied. There were but a few drops of gall in your cup. His was all bitterness, from the froth to the dregs; all bitterness, and such bitterness as, thank God, you and I can never taste! That cup he has drained to the dregs, and we shall not have to drink one drop from it; but it was of that cup that he said,—and I detect the voice of the Son of God, the Son of man, in that brief utterance,—"Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

My two texts make up a strange piece of music. Blessed are the lips that know how to express the confidence that rises to the height as far as we can go with Christ, and descends even to the deeps as far as we can go with him in full submission to the will of God. Does anybody say that he cannot understand the contrast between these two prayers? Dear friend, it is to be explained thus. There was a difference of position in the Suppliant on these two occasions. The first prayer, "Father, I will," is the prayer of our great High Priest,

with all his heavenly garments on, the blue, and purple, and fine twined linen, and the pomegranates, and the golden bells, and the breastplate, with the twelve precious stones bearing the names of his chosen people. It is our great High Priest, in the glory of his majestic office and power, who says to God, "Father, I will." The second Suppliant is not so much the Priest as the Victim. Our Lord is there seen bound to the altar, about to feel the sacrificial knife, about to be consumed with the sacrificial fire; and you hear him as though it were a lamb bleating, and the utterance is, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." The first petition is the language of Christ in power pleading for us; the second is the utterance of Christ made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. That is the difference of position that explains the contrast in the prayers.

Let me tell you also that there is a difference in the subject of his supplication, which is full of instruction. In the first prayer, where our Lord says so majestically, "Father, I will," he is pleading for his people, he is praying for what he knows to be the Father's will, he is officiating there before God as the very mouthpiece of God, and speaking of something about which he is perfectly clear and certain. When you are praying for God's people, you may pray very boldly. When you are pleading for God's cause, you may speak very positively. When you know you are asking what is definitely promised in the Scriptures as part of the covenant ordered in all things and sure, you may ask without hesitation, as our Lord did. But, in the second case, Jesus was praying for himself: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He was praying about a matter, concerning which he did not, as man, know the Father's will, for he says, "If it be possible." There is an "if" in it: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Whenever you go upstairs in an agony of distress, and begin to pray about yourself, and about a possible escape from suffering, always say, under such circumstances, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." It may be given you sometimes to pray very boldly even in such a case as that; but, if it is not given you, take care that you do not presume. I may pray for healing for my body, but not with such confidence as I pray for the prosperity of Zion and the glory of God. That which has to do with myself I may ask as a child of God asks of his Father; but I must ask submissively, leaving the decision wholly in his hands, feeling that, because it is for myself rather than for him, I must say, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." I think that there is a plain lesson here for Christians to take heed that, while they are very confident on one subject for which they pray, they are equally submissive on another, for there is a heavenly blending in the Christian character, as there was in Christ's character, a firm confidence and yet an absolute yielding to the will of God, let that will be what it may.

"Lord, my times are in thy hand;
 All my sanguine hopes have plann'd
 To thy wisdom I resign,
 And would make thy purpose mine."

Now all this while you may say that I have only been going round

the text. Very well; but, sometimes, there is a good deal of instruction to be picked up round a text. The manna fell round about the camp of Israel; peradventure there is some manna round about this text. May the Lord help every one of us to gather his portion!

I want you now, for a few minutes, to view this great Suppliant in the two moods in which he prayed, "Father, I will;" and, "Not as I will," and then to combine the two. We will, first, view *Jesus in the power of his intercession*; next, we will talk of *Jesus in the power of his submission*; and in the third place, we will try to *combine the two prayers*, "I will;" yet, "Not as I will."

I. First, let us view JESUS IN THE POWER OF HIS INTERCESSION, saying, "Father, I will."

Whence did he derive that power? Who enabled him thus to speak with God, and say, "Father, I will"? First, *Jesus prayed in the power of his Sonship*. Sons may say to a father what strangers may not dare to say; and such a Son as Jesus was,—so near to his Father's heart, one who could say, "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him;" one of whom the Father had said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"—well might he have power with God so as to be able to say, "Father, I will."

Next, he derived this power from *the Father's eternal love to him*. Did you notice how, in the very verse from which our text is taken, Jesus says to his Father, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"? We cannot conceive what the love of the Father is to Christ Jesus his Son. Remember, they are one in essence. God is one,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and, as the Incarnate God, Christ is unspeakably dear to the Father's heart. There is nothing about him of which the Father disapproves; there is nothing lacking in him, which the Father would desire to see there. He is God's ideal of himself: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Well may one who is the subject of his Father's eternal love be able to say, "Father, I will."

But *our Lord Jesus also based this prayer upon his finished work*. I grant you that he had not yet actually died, but in the certain prospect of his doing so, he had said to his Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Now, he has actually finished it; he has been able in the fullest sense to say, "It is finished," and he has gone up to take his place in glory at his Father's side. You remember the argument with which Paul begins his Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" When the Father looks at Christ, he sees

in him atonement accomplished, satisfaction presented, sin annihilated, the elect redeemed, the covenant ratified, the everlasting purpose settled on eternal foundations. O beloved, since Christ has magnified God's law, and made it honourable, and since he has poured out his soul unto death, he may well possess the power to say, “Father, I will.”

Remember, too, that *Jesus still possesses this power*, and possesses it for you and for me. O my dear hearers, you may well go to Christ, and accept him as your Mediator and Intercessor, since all this power to say, “Father, I will,” is laid up in him on purpose for poor believing sinners, who come and take him to be their Saviour! You say that you cannot pray. Well, he can; ask him to plead for you; and I thank God that, sometimes, when we do not ask him to plead for us, he does it all the same, as he did for Peter, when Satan had desired to have him, but Christ had prayed for him. Peter did not know his danger, but the Saviour did, and he pleaded for him at once. What a blessing it is to think of Christ, clothed with divine authority and power, using it all for us! Well does Toplady sing,—

“With cries and tears he offer'd up
His humble suit below;
But with authority he asks,
Enthroned in glory now.

“For all that come to God by him,
Salvation he demands;
Points to their names upon his breast,
And spreads his wounded hands.

“His covenant and sacrifice
Give sanction to his claim;
‘Father, I will that all my saints
Be with me where I am.’”

Further, *that power of Christ will land every believer in heaven*. Notice how Christ turns all his pleading with God that way; he says, “Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” The devil says that we shall never get to heaven; but we remember that declaration of Moses, “thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee,” and the arch-enemy will be found to be the arch-liar, for the Lord's Prayer will be heard, and as he pleads that those whom the Father gave him should be brought up to be with him where he is, you may depend upon it that they will all arrive safely in heaven; and you, if you are among those who are given to Christ,—and you may know that by your faith in him,—shall be among that blessed company.

I shall have finished with this first point when I have said this, *that power which Christ had may, in a measure, be gained by all his people*. I dare not say, and I would not say, that any one of us will ever be able to utter our Saviour's words, “Father, I will;” but I do say this, if you abide in Christ, and his words abide in you, you may attain to such power in prayer, that you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. This is not a promise to all of you; no,

not even to all of you who are God's people; but only to those of you who live wholly unto God, and serve him with all your heart. You can, by habitual intercourse with God, attain to such power with the Most High that men shall say of you what they used to say of Luther, "There goes a man who can ask what he likes of God, and have it." You may attain to that glorious altitude. Oh, I would that every one of us would seek to reach this height of power and blessing! It is not the feeble Christian, it is not the worldly Christian, who has just enough grace to make him miserable, the man who has only about enough grace to keep him from being absolutely immoral; that is not the man who will prevail with God. You paddlers in Christianity, who scarcely wet your toes; you who never go in beyond your ankles, or your knees; God will never give you this privilege unless you go in for it. Get where the waters are deep enough to swim in, and plunge in. Be perfectly consecrated to God; yield your whole lives to his glory without reserve; then may you obtain something of your Master's power in prayer when he said, "Father, I will."

II. Now I ask you kindly to accompany me, in the second place, to notice JESUS IN THE POWER OF HIS SUBMISSION. Our second text is all submission: "Not as I will."

This utterance, "Not as I will," proved that *the shrinkings of Christ's nature from that dreadful cup were all overcome*. I do not believe that Christ was afraid to die; do you believe that? Oh, no; many of his servants have laughed at death; I am sure that he was not afraid to die; what was it, then, that made that cup so awfully terrible? Jesus was to be made sin for us, he was to come under the curse for us, he was to feel the Father's wrath on account of human guilt; and his whole nature, not alone his flesh, but his whole being, shrank from that fearful ordeal. It was not actual defilement that was to come upon him; but it looked like it; and, as man, he could not tell what that cup of wrath must contain.

"Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul,
Drinks deep of wormwood's bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood."

After dwelling in the love of God from all eternity, he was in a few hours to bear the punishment of man's sin; yet he must bear it, and therefore he said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Do you wonder that he prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"? Is Christ to be blamed for these shrinkings of nature? My dear friends, if it had been a pleasure to him, and he had had no shrinkings, where would have been his holy courage? If it had not been a horrible and dreadful thing to him, where would have been his submission, where would have been the virtue that made atonement of it? If it had been a thing that he could not, or must not, shrink from, where would have been the pain, the wormwood, and the gall of it? The cup must be, in the nature of things, something from which he that beareth it must shrink, or else it could not have been

sufficient for the redemption of his people, and the vindication of the broken law of God. It was necessary, then, that Christ should, by such a prayer as this, prove that he had overcome all the shrinkings of his nature.

“Not as I will,” is also an evidence of *Christ's complete submission to the will of his Father*. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” There is no resistance, no struggling, he gives himself up completely. “There,” he seems to say to the Lord, “do what thou wilt with me; I yield myself absolutely to thy will.” There was on Christ's part no reserve, no wish even to make any reserve; I go further, and say that *Jesus willed as God willed*, and even prayed that the will of God, from which his human nature at first shrank, might be fulfilled. “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

O brothers and sisters,—for you both need this grace,—pray God to help you to learn how to *copy your Lord in this submission!* Have you submitted to the Lord's will? Are you submitting now? Are not some of you like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke? There is a text, you know, in the one hundred and thirty-first Psalm, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” I have sometimes thought that, for some of the Lord's children, the passage would have to be read, “My soul is even as a *weaning* child,” and there are many of God's people who are very long in the weaning. You cannot get satisfaction, and quiet, and content, can you? Can you give yourself up entirely to God, that he may do whatever he likes with you? Have you some fear of a tumour, or a cancer? Is there before you the prospect of a painful and dangerous operation? Is business going badly with you, so that you will probably lose everything? Is a dear child sickening? Is the mother likely to be taken away? Will you have to lose your position and reputation if you are faithful to the Lord? Will you be exposed to cruel slanders? Will you probably be cast out of your situation if you do what is right? Come now, whatever you dread or expect, can you give yourself up wholly to God, and say, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good”? Your Lord and Master did so; he said, “Not as I will.” Oh, that he might teach you this divine art of absolute resignation to the purpose and ordinance of God, till you also should be able to say, “Not as I will”! Thus you will sing,—

“I bow me to thy will, O God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live I'll seek
To please thee more and more.”

III. I have finished my discourse when I have just twisted these two sayings together a little; so, thirdly, let us COMBINE THE TWO PRAYERS: “I will;” yet, “Not as I will.”

First, let me say, *Number One will help you very much to Number Two*. If you learn to pray with Christ, with the holy boldness that almost says, “Father, I will,” you are the man who will know how to say, “Not as I will.” Is it not strange that it should be so? It looks like a contradiction; but I am sure that it is not so. The man who can have his will with God is the very man who does not want his own way

with God. He who may have what he likes, is the man who wishes to have what God likes. You remember the good old woman, who lay near to death, and one said to her, "Do you not expect soon to die?" She answered, "I do not know whether I shall live or die; and what is more, I have no concern which way it is." Then the friend asked, "But if you had your choice whether you should live or die, which would you choose?" She replied, "I would rather that the Lord's will should be done." "But suppose the Lord's will were to leave it entirely to you to choose whichever you liked?" "Then," she said, "I would kneel down, and pray the Lord to choose for me." And I do think that is the best way to live; not to have any choice at all, but to ask the Lord to choose for you. You can always have your way, you know, when your way is God's way. The sure way to carry out self-will is when self-will is nothing else but God's will. Oh, that the Lord would teach us this mighty power with him in prayer! It will not be given without much close fellowship with him. Then, when we know that we can have what we will of him, we shall be in the right state to say, "Not as I will."

The next remark that I would make is, that *Number Two is needful for Number One*; that is to say, until you can say, "Not as I will," you never will be able to say, "Father, I will." I believe that one reason why people cannot prevail in prayer, is because they will not yield to God; and they cannot expect God to yield to them. God does this and that with you, and you quarrel with him; and then you go upstairs, and begin to pray. Go down on your knees, and make your peace with him first; for if you must not come to the altar till you have become reconciled unto your brother, how can you come to the throne of grace till you have given up your quarrel with God? But some people are never at peace with God. I have heard of a good friend who lost a child, and he was wearing mourning several years afterwards, and he was always fretting about the dear child, till a Quakeress said to him, "What! hast thou not forgiven God yet?" and there are some people who have not yet forgiven God for taking their loved ones. They ought always to have blessed him, for he never takes away any but those whom he lent to us, and we should bless his name as much for taking them again as for lending them to us. Dear friends, you must submit to the will of God, or else you cannot have power with him in prayer. "Well," say you, "you will not let me have my own way at all." Certainly, I will not let you have your own way; but when you just say, "There, Lord, I have no quarrel with thee now; do what thou wilt with me," then he will say, "Rise, my child, ask what thou wilt, and I will give it thee; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Notice, also, dear friends, that *Jesus will help us to have Number One and Number Two*. He gives himself over to us to teach us the power of prevailing prayer; but he also gives himself over to teach us the art of blessed submission in prayer; and it is his will that these two should not be separated. "Father, I will," is Christ's word on our behalf; and "Not as I will," is equally Christ's word on our behalf. When you cannot pray either of these prayers as you would, fall back upon Christ's prayer, and claim it as your own.

Lastly, I think that *true sonship will embody both Number One and Number Two*. It is the true child of God, who knows that he is his Father's child, who says, “ Father, I will.” He is often very bold where another would be presumptuous. Oh, I have heard full often of somebody's prayers,—I will not say who the somebody is,—he seemed so familiar with God in his prayer. Oh, yes; I know! You love those very stately prayers, in which the bounds are set about the mount, and no man may dare to come near. You make the throne of grace to be like Sinai was of old, of which the Lord said, “ Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live.” “ Oh, but,” you say, “ so-and-so is so familiar at the mercy-seat!” Yes, I know; and you think that is a pity, do you not? Perhaps you are acquainted with a judge; look at him on the bench wearing his wig and robe of office; but you will not dare to speak to him there unless you address him as “ My lord,” and behave very respectfully to him. By-and-by he goes home, and he has a little boy there, Master Johnny. Why, the child has seized hold of his father's whiskers, there he is up on his father's back! “ Why, Johnny, you are disrespectful!” “ Oh, but he is my father!” says the boy; and his father says, “ Yes, Johnny, that I am; and I do not want you to say, ‘ My lord,’ and talk to me as they do in the court.” So, there are certain liberties which God's children may take with him, which he counts no liberties at all; but he loves so to be treated by them. He will let each one of them say, “ Father, I will,” because they are his children.

Then, mark you, you are not God's child unless you can also say, “ Father, not as I will.” The true child bends before his father's will. “ Yes,” says he, “ I would like so-and-so.” His father forbids it. “ Then I do not want it, and I will not touch it;” or he says, “ I do not like to take that medicine, but my father says I am to take it,” and he takes the cup, and he drinks the whole of its contents. The true child says, “ Not as I will,” although, after his measure, he also says, “ Father, I will.”

I have only been talking to you who are the Lord's people. I hope you have learned something from this subject; I know you have if the Lord has taught you to pray after the fashion of these two prayers, as you humbly yet believingly may, copying your Lord.

But oh, what shall I say to those of you who are not the Lord's people? If you do not know how to pray at all, may the Lord teach you! If you do not yet know your needs, may the Lord instruct you! But let me tell you that, if ever there shall come a time when you feel your need of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus will be willing to receive you. If ever you should yearn after him, be you sure that he is also yearning after you. Even now,—

“ Kindled his relentings are,”

and if you will but breathe the penitent's prayer, “ God be merciful to me, a sinner,” and turn your eye Christ-ward, and cross-ward, there is salvation for you even now. God grant that you may have it, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVII. 15—26; AND MATTHEW XXVI. 36—46.

We will read this evening a portion of two prayers offered by our Divine Lord and Master on that night in which he was betrayed. The first is that memorable intercessory prayer of his recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John.

John xvii. Verse 15. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

Christ did not pray that his disciples should be taken out of the world. It is very seldom that we ought to present such a petition. If that had been a proper prayer for us to offer, it would have been authorized by the Master. There are times when, in great pain of body, or in deep depression of spirit, the believer, like Elijah under the juniper tree, requests for himself that he may die. If you ever do pray such a prayer, utter it very softly, for the Master does not authorize it, and that is a matter that must be left to the Lord of life and death. Jesus says here, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Sin is the real evil of the world; the danger of our being entangled in worldly customs, or dropping into the evil ways of an ungodly generation. Christ does pray that we may be kept from the evil that is in the world; and we also may and must pray that the Lord will keep us from the evil by which we are surrounded, and especially from the evil one who seeks our destruction.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

"They are of another race: they are swayed by other motives; they have another life; they have another destiny; 'They are not of the world.'" Is that true of you, dear hearer? We are reading out of God's Book, remember. This is the description of Christ's people; does it describe you? "They are not of the world:" they are not worldly, they are other-worldly: their thoughts and hearts are set upon the world to come.

17. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

What! Do they need to be sanctified? They are not of the world, and are kept from the evil in the world; do they need to be sanctified? Yes, we shall always need sanctifying until we reach our heavenly home, where sin cannot enter. Every day we need the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to lead us unto holiness.

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." It is only the truth of God that can beget holiness; false doctrine is never the medium of sanctification. You can tell which are false doctrines, and which are the true, by our Lord's own test: "By their fruits ye shall know them." The same men who reject the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned style of living; loose living generally goes with loose doctrine. There never was an age in which the doctrines of grace were despised but, sooner or later, licentiousness prevailed. On the other hand, when we had Puritan teaching, we had also pure and holy living. This prayer is still needed for all Christ's disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

18. *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

This is the original Missionary Society, and the model for all others; Christ sent, missioned, of the Father, and every saint missioned of Christ. Are you carrying out your mission, O ye people of God? How dare you call yourselves by that name if you have no mission to anybody? If you are living here for yourself alone, how can you belong to Christ, who never lived a moment for himself, but always lived wholly for others?

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify myself,*
 "I set myself apart, as one who is consecrated, dedicated, devoted to a grand design."

19. *That they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

This is our Lord's prayer for his disciples. In the ninth verse we read, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."

Now our Lord Jesus prays for those who are to be his people. I wonder whether there are any of them here to-night.

20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

There is a great company of people who are not at present believers, but who shall yet believe on Christ through the testimony of those who are already believers on him. O God, call out many such through our word!

21. *That they all may be one;*

This is Christ's prayer for all those who shall believe on him; that they may be converted, and brought into the one Church together with those who are already there: "that they all may be one."

21. *As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

Christ would have all his people joined in communion with himself, and with his Father; and when that is the case, then will men know that Christ came into the world for a definite purpose: "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

22, 23. *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;*

Christ is the incarnation of God, and the Church should be the incarnation of Christ. Oh, when shall this great prayer be answered?

23—26. *And that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

A very short time after our Divine Lord offered this intercessory supplication, he prayed a very different prayer, in a strangely-altered style. You will find it in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six.

Remember that there was a very short interval between the utterance of the majestic prayer I have been reading, and the presentation of the cries and tears of which we are now to read.

Matthew xxvi. Verses 36—40. *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?*

He felt the need of human sympathy in that awful hour; yet he trod the winepress alone.

41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Admire the tenderness of Jesus in making this apology for his disciples: What he said about them was true: but it is not everybody who would have uttered that gentle truth at such a trying time. Dear friends, make excuses for one another whenever you can; never make them for yourselves, but often make them for others; and especially, when some treat you as you think very untenderly, be the more tender towards them.

42—44. *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.*

You cannot use much variety of language when your heart is very heavy; you will usually dwell upon just a few words at such a time. Do not blame yourself for doing so; it is natural, and it is right. Even your Lord, the Master of language, "prayed the third time, saying the same words."

45, 46. *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*

May the Master never have to say this concerning any one of us for his dear name's sake! Amen.

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, early in the year 1859.

“Not as I will, but as thou wilt.”—Matthew xxvi. 39.

THE apostle Paul, writing concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, says, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” He who, as God, knew all things, had to learn obedience in the time of his humiliation. He, who is in himself Wisdom Incarnate, did himself condescend to enter the school of suffering, there to learn that important lesson of the Christian life, obedience to the will of God; and here, in Gethsemane's garden, you can see the Divine Scholar going forth to practise his lesson. He had been all his lifetime learning it, and now he has to learn it for the last time in his agony and bloody sweat, and in his terrible death upon the cross. Now is he to discover the utmost depths of suffering, and to attain to the height of the knowledge of obedience. See how well he has learned his lesson; note how complete and ripe a scholar he is. He has attained to the very highest class in that school; and, in the immediate prospect of death, can say to his Father, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

The object of this discourse is to commend to you the blessed example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to urge you to be made like unto your glorious Head, and yourselves to learn, by all the daily providences with which God is pleased to surround you, this lesson of resignation to the will of God, and of making an entire surrender to him.

I have been struck, lately, in reading works by some writers who belong to the Romish Church, with the marvellous love which they have towards the Lord Jesus Christ. I did think, at one time, that it could not be possible for any to be saved in that church; but, often, after I have risen from reading the books of those holy men, and have felt myself to be quite a dwarf by their side, I have said, “Yes, despite their errors, these men must have been taught of the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding all the evils of which they have drunk so deeply, I am quite certain that they must have had fellowship with Jesus, or else they could not have written as they did.”

Such writers are few and far between; but, still, there is a remnant according to the election of grace even in the midst of that apostate church. Looking at a book by one of them, the other day, I met with this remarkable expression, "Shall that body, which has a thorn-crowned Head, have delicate, pain-fearing members? God forbid!" That remark went straight to my heart at once. I thought how often the children of God shun pain, reproach, and rebuke, and think it to be a strange thing when some fiery trial happens to them. If they would but recollect that their Head had to sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and that their Head was crowned with thorns, it would not seem strange to them that the members of his mystical body also have to suffer. If Christ had been some delicate person, if our glorious Head had been reposing upon the soft pillow of ease, then might we, who are the members of his Church, have expected to go through this world with joy and comfort; but if he must be bathed in his own blood, if the thorns must pierce his temples, if his lips must be parched, and if his mouth must be dried up like a furnace, shall we escape suffering and agony? Is Christ to have a head of brass and hands of gold? Is his head to be as if it glowed in the furnace, and are not we to glow in the furnace, too? Must he pass through seas of suffering, and shall we—

"Be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease"?

Ah, no! we must be conformed unto our Lord in his humiliation if we would be made like him also in his glory.

So, brethren and sisters, I have to discourse to you upon this lesson, which some of us have begun to learn, but of which as yet we know so little,—this lesson of saying, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." First, let me *explain the meaning of this prayer*; then, *urge you, by certain reasons, to make this your constant cry*; next, *show what will be the happy effect of its being the paramount desire of your spirits*; and we will conclude with a practical enquiry,—*what can bring us to this blessed condition?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS PRAYER? "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

I shall not address myself to those Christians who are but as dwarfs, who know little about the things of the kingdom. I will speak rather to those who do business in the deep waters of communion, who know what it is to pillow their heads upon the bosom of Jesus, to walk with God as Enoch did, and to talk with him as Abraham did. My dear brethren, only such as you can understand this prayer in all its length and breadth. Your brother, who as yet scarcely knows the meaning of the word communion, may pray thus in some feeble measure; yet it is not to be expected that he should discern all the spiritual teaching that there is in these words of our Lord; but to you who are Christ-taught, you who have become ripe scholars in the school of Christ, to you I may speak as unto wise men,—judge ye what I say.

If you and I mean this prayer, and do not use it as a mere form of words, but mean it in all its fulness, we must be prepared for

this kind of experience. Sometimes, when we are in the midst of the most active service, when we are diligently serving God both with our hands and our heart, and when success is crowning all our labours, *the Lord will lay us aside*, take us right away from the vineyard, and thrust us into the furnace. Just at the very time when the church seems to need us most, and when the world's necessities are most of all appealing to us, and when our hearts are full of love towards Christ and towards our fellow-creatures, it will often happen that, just then, God will strike us down with sickness, or remove us from our sphere of activity. But if we really mean this prayer, we must be prepared to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is not easy, for does not the Holy Spirit himself teach us to long after active service for our Saviour? Does he not, when he gives us love towards our fellow-men, constrain us, as it were, to make their salvation our meat and our drink? When he is actively at work within our hearts, do we not feel as if we could not live without serving God? Do we not then feel that, to labour for the Lord is our highest rest, and that toil for Jesus is our sweetest pleasure? Does it not then seem most trying to our ardent spirit to be compelled to drink the cup of sickness, and to be incapable of doing anything actively for God? The preacher is seeing men converted and his ministry successful; but, on a sudden, he is compelled to cease from preaching; or the Sunday-school teacher has, by the grace of God, been the means of bringing his class into an interesting and hopeful condition; yet, just when the class needs his presence most, he is smitten down, so that he cannot go on with his work. Ah! then it is that the spirit finds it hard to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." But if we adopt this prayer, this is what it means; that we should be prepared to suffer instead of to serve, and should be as willing to lie in the trenches as to scale the walls, and as willing to be laid aside in the King's hospital as to be fighting in the midst of the rank and file of the King's army. This is hard to flesh and blood, but we must do it if we present this petition.

If we really mean this prayer, there will be a second trial for us. Sometimes, *God will demand of us that we labour in unpropitious fields*; he will set his children to plough the rock, and to cast their bread upon the waters. He will send his Ezekiel to prophesy in a valley full of dry bones, and his Jonah to carry his message to Nineveh. He will give his servants strange work to do,—work which seems as if it never could be successful, or bring honour either to God or to themselves. I doubt not that there are some ministers, who toil and labour with all their might, yet who see but little fruit. Far away in the dark places of heathendom, there are men who have been toiling for years with scarcely a convert to cheer them; and here, too, in England, there are men who are preaching, in all sincerity and faithfulness, the Word of the Lord, yet they do not see souls converted. They know that they are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, both in them that perish, and in them that are saved. Our hearts are, I trust, so full of the Spirit prompting us to cry, like Rachel, "Give me children, or I die;" that we cannot

rest content without seeing the success of our labours. Yet the Master, in effect, says to us, "No, I tell you to continue to toil for me, though I give you no fruit for your labour; you are to keep on ploughing this rock, simply because I tell you to do it." Ah! then, brethren, it is hard to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." But we must say it; we must feel that we are ready to forego even the joy of harvest, and the glory of success, if God wills it.

At other times, *God will remove his people, from positions of honourable service, to other offices that are far inferior in the minds of men.* I think that I should feel it hard if I had to be banished from my large congregation, and from my thousands of hearers, to a small village where I could only preach the gospel to a little company of people; yet I am sure that, if I entered fully into the spirit of our Lord's words,—*"Not as I will, but as thou wilt,"*—I should be quite as ready to be there as to be here. I have heard that, among the Jesuits, such is the extraordinary obedience which they are compelled to pay to their superiors, that, on one occasion, there was a president of one of their colleges, who had written some of the most learned books in any language, a man of the highest talents, and the superior of the order took a freak into his head, for some reason, to send him straight away from the country where he was to Bath, to stand there in the street for a year, and sweep the crossing; and the man did it. He was compelled to do it; his vow obliged him to do anything that he was told to do. Now, in a spiritual sense, this is hard to perform; but, nevertheless, it is a Christian's duty. We remember the saying of a good man that the angels in heaven are so completely given up to obedience to God that, if there should be two works to do, ruling an empire and sweeping a crossing, neither of the two angels, who might be selected to go on these two errands, would have any choice in the matter, but would just leave it with their Lord to decide which part they were to fulfil. You may, perhaps, be called from the charge of the services in a place of worship, to become one of the humblest members in another church; you may be taken from a place of much honour, and put in the very lowest ranks of the army; are you willing to submit to that kind of treatment? Your flesh and blood say, "Lord, if I may still serve in thine army, let me be a captain; or, at least, let me be a sergeant, or a corporal. If I may help to draw thy chariot, let me be the leading horse, let me run first in the team, let me wear the gay ribbons." But God may say to you, "I have put thee there in the thick of the battle, now I will place thee behind; I have given thee vigour and strength to fight with great success, now I will make thee tarry by the stuff; I have done with thee in the prominent position, now I will use thee somewhere else." But if we can only pray this prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," we shall be ready to serve God anywhere and everywhere, so long as we know that we are doing his will.

But there is another trial which we shall all have to endure in our measure, which will prove whether we understand by this prayer what Christ meant by it. Sometimes, *in the service of Christ, we must be prepared to endure the loss of reputation, of*

honour, and even of character itself. I remember, when I first came to London to preach the Word, I thought that I could bear anything for Christ; but I found myself shamefully slandered, all manner of falsehoods were uttered concerning me, and in agony I fell on my face before God, and cried unto him. I felt as though that was a thing I could not bear; my character was very dear to me, and I could not endure to have such false things said about me. Then this thought came to me, "You must give up all to Christ, you must surrender everything for him, character, reputation, and all that you have; and if it is the Lord's will, you shall be reckoned the vilest of the vile, so long as you can still continue to serve him, and your character is really pure, you need not fear. If it is your Master's will that you shall be trampled and spit upon by all the wicked men in the world, you must simply bear it, and say, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.'" And I remember then how I rose from my knees, and sang to myself that verse,—

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou remember me."

"But how hard it was," you say, "for you to suffer the loss of character, and to have evil things spoken against you falsely for Christ's name's sake!" And what was the reason why it was so hard? Why, it was just because I had not fully learnt how to pray this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ,—and I am afraid that I have not completely learnt it yet. It is a very delightful thing to have even our enemies speaking well of us, to go through this world with such holiness of character that men who pour scorn upon all religion cannot find fault with us; but it is an equally glorious thing for us to be set in the pillory of shame, to be pelted by every passer-by, to be the song of the drunkard, to be the by-word of the swearer, when we do not deserve it, and to endure all this for Christ's sake. This is true heroism; this is the meaning of the prayer of our text.

Again, some of you have at times thought, "Oh, if the Master will only be pleased to open a door for me where I may be the means of doing good! *How glad I should be if I could have either more wealth, or more influence, or more knowledge, or more talents, with which I might serve him better!*" You have prayed about the matter, and thought about it, and you have said, "If I could only get into such-and-such a position, how excellently should I be able to serve God!" You have seen your Master give to some of his servants ten talents, but he has given you only one; you have gone on your knees, and asked him to be good enough to trust you with two, and he has refused it. Or you have had two, and you have asked him to let you have ten; and he has said, "No, I will give you two talents, and no more." But you say, "Is it not a laudable desire that I should seek to do more good?" Certainly; trade with your talents, multiply them if you can. But suppose you have no power of utterance, suppose you have no opportunities of serving God, or even suppose the sphere of your influence is limited, what then? Why, you are to say, "Lord, I hoped it was

thy will that I might have a wider sphere; but if it is not, although I long to serve thee on a larger scale, I will be quite content to glorify thee in my present narrower sphere, for I feel that here is an opportunity for the trial of my faith and resignation, and again I say, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

Christian men, are you prepared heartily to pray this prayer? I fear there is not a single individual amongst us who could pray it in all its fulness of meaning. Perhaps you may go as far as I have already gone; but if God should take you at your word, and say, "My will is that your wife should be smitten with a fatal illness, and, like a fading lily, droop and die before your eyes; that your children should be caught up to my loving bosom in heaven; that your house should be burned with fire; that you should be left penniless, a pauper dependent on the charity of others; it is my will that you should cross the sea; that you should go to distant lands, and endure unheard-of hardships; it is my will that, at last, your bones should lie bleaching on the desert sand in some foreign clime." Are you willing to endure all this for Christ? Remember that you have not attained unto the full meaning of this prayer until you have said "Yes" to all that it means; and, until you can go to the uttermost lengths to which God's providence may go, you have not gone to the full extent of the resignation in this cry of our Lord. Many of the early Christians, I think, did know this prayer by heart; it is wonderful how willing they were to do anything and be anything for Christ. They had got this idea into their heads, that they were not to live to themselves; and they had it also in their hearts; and they believed that, to be martyred, was the highest honour they could possibly wish for. Consequently, if they were brought to the tribunals of the judges, they never ran away from their persecutors; they almost courted death, for they thought it was the highest privilege that they could possibly have if they might be torn in pieces by the lions in the arena, or be decapitated with the sword. Now, if we also could but get that idea into our hearts, with what courage would it gird us, how fully might we then serve God, and how patiently might we endure persecution if we had but learnt the meaning of this prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

II. In the second place, I AM TO TRY AND GIVE YOU SOME REASONS WHY IT WILL BE BEST FOR US ALL TO SEEK TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US, SO THAT WE MAY BE BROUGHT INTO THIS FRAME OF MIND AND HEART.

And the first reason is, because it is simply *a matter of right*. God ought to have his way at all times, and I ought not to have mine whenever it is contrary to his. If ever my will is at cross purposes to the will of the Supreme, it is but right that mine should yield to his. If I could have my own way,—if such a poor, feeble creature as I am could thwart the Omnipotent Creator, it would be wrong for me to do it. What! hath he made me, and shall he not do as he wills with me? Is he like the potter, and am I but as the clay, and shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" No, my Lord, it is but right

that thou shouldest do what thou pleasest with me, for I am thine;—thine, for thou hast made me;—thine, for thou hast bought me with thy blood. If I am a jewel purchased with the precious blood of Jesus, then he may cut me into what shape he pleases, he may polish me as he chooses, he may let me lie in the darkness of the casket, or let me glitter in his hand or in his diadem; in fact, he may do with me just as he wills, for I am his; and so long as I know that he does it, I must say, "Whatever he does is right; my will shall not be in opposition to his will."

But, again, this is not only a matter of right, *it is a matter of wisdom with us*. Depend upon it, dear brethren, if we could have our own will, it would often be the worst thing in the world for us; but to let God have his way with us, even if it were in our power to thwart him, would be an act of wisdom on our part. What do I desire when I wish to have my own will? I desire my own happiness; well, but I shall get it far more easily if I let God have his will, for the will of God is both for his own glory and my happiness; so, however much I may think that my own will would tend to my comfort and happiness, I may rest assured that God's will would be infinitely more profitable to me than my own; and that, although God's will may seem to make it dark and dreary for me at the time, yet from seeming evil he will bring forth good, such as never could have been produced from that supposed good after which my weak and feeble judgment is so apt to run.

But, again, suppose it were possible for us to have our own will, *would it not be an infringement of that loving reliance which Christ may well ask at our hands, that we should trust him?* Are we not saved by trusting our Lord Jesus Christ? Has not faith in Christ been the means of saving me from sin and hell? Then, surely I must not run away from this rule when I come into positions of trial and difficulty. If faith has been superior to sin, through the blood of Christ, it will certainly be superior to trial, through the almighty arm of Christ. Did I not tell him, when I first came to him, that I would trust no one but him? Did I not declare that all my other confidences were burst and broken, and scattered to the winds; and did I not ask that he would permit me to put my trust in him alone; and shall I, after that, play the traitor? Shall I now set up some other object in which to place my trust? Oh, no! my love to Jesus, my gratitude to him for his condescension in accepting my faith, binds me henceforth to trust to him, and to him alone.

We often lose the force of a truth by not making it palpable to our own mind; let us try to make this one so. Imagine the Lord Jesus to be visibly present in this pulpit; suppose that he looks down upon one of you, and says, "My child, thy will and mine do not, just now, agree; thou desirest such-and-such a thing, but I say, 'Nay, thou must not have it;' now, my child, which will is to prevail, mine or thine?" Suppose you were to reply, "Lord, I must have my will," do you not think he would look at you with eyes of infinite sadness and pity, and say to you, "What! did I give up my will for thee, and wilt thou not give up thy will for me? Did I surrender all I had, even my life, for thy sake, and dost thou say,

thou self-willed child, 'I must have these things according to my will, and contrary to thy wish and purpose, O my Saviour?' Surely, you could not talk like that; rather, I think I see you instantly falling on your knees, and saying, "Lord Jesus, forgive me for ever harbouring such evil thoughts; no, my Lord, even if thy will be hard, I will think it pleasant; if it be bitter, I will believe that the bitterest draught is sweet. Let me but see thee dying on the cross for me, let me only know that thou lovest me, and wherever thou shalt put me, I will be in heaven as long as I can feel that it is thy will that is being done with me. I will be perfectly content to be just wherever thou choosest me to be, and to suffer whatever thou choosest for me to endure." Yes, dear friends, it would show a sad want of that love which we owe to Christ, and of that gratitude which he deserves, if we were once to set our wills up in opposition to his. Therefore, again, beloved, for love's sake, for wisdom's sake, for right's sake, I beseech you ask the Holy Spirit to teach you this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to impart to you its blessed meaning.

III. I notice, in the next place, THE EFFECT OF TRULY SAYING AND FEELING, "NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT."

The first effect is, *constant happiness*. If you would find out the cause of most of your sorrows, dig at the root of your self-will; for that is where it lies. When your heart is wholly sanctified unto God, and your will is entirely subdued to him, the bitter becomes sweet, pain is changed to pleasure, and suffering is turned into joy. It is not possible for that man's mind to be disturbed whose will is wholly resigned to the will of God. "Well," says one, "that is a very startling statement;" and another says, "I have really sought to have my will resigned to God's will, yet I am disturbed." Yes, and that is simply because, though you have sought, like all the rest of us, you have not yet attained to full resignation to the will of the Lord. But when once you have attained to it,—I fear you never will in this life,—then shall you be free from everything that shall cause you sorrow or discomposure of mind.

Another blessed effect of this prayer, if it is truly presented, is, that *it will give a man holy courage and bravery*. If my mind is wholly resigned to God's will, what have I to fear in all the world? It is with me then as it was with Polycarp; when the Roman emperor threatened that he would banish him, he said, "Thou canst not, for the whole world is my Father's house, and thou canst not banish me from it." "But I will slay thee," said the emperor. "Nay, thou canst not, for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away all thy treasures." "Nay, thou canst not; for I have nothing that thou knowest of; my treasure is in heaven, and my heart is there also." "But I will drive thee away from men, and thou shalt have no friend left." "Nay, that thou canst not do, for I have a Friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me; I defy thee, for there is nothing that thou canst do unto me." And so can the Christian always say, if once his will agrees with God's will; he may defy all men, and defy hell itself, for he will be able to say, "Nothing can happen to me that is contrary to the will of

God; and if it be his will, it is my will, too; if it pleases God, it pleases me. God has been pleased to give me part of his will, so I am satisfied with whatever he sends."

Man is, after all, only the second cause of our sorrows. A persecutor says, perhaps, to a child of God, "I can afflict thee." "Nay, thou canst not, for thou art dependent on the first Great Cause, and he and I are agreed." Ah! dear friends, there is nothing that makes men such cowards as having wills contrary to the will of God; but when we resign ourselves wholly into the hands of God, what have we to fear? The thing that made Jacob a coward was, that he was not resigned to God's will when Esau came to meet him. God had foretold that the elder of the two sons of Isaac should serve the younger; Jacob's business was to believe that, and to go boldly forward with his wives and children, and not to bow down before Esau, but to say, "The promise is, the elder shall serve the younger; I am not going to bow down to you; it is your place to fall prostrate before me." But poor Jacob said, "Perhaps it is God's will that Esau should conquer me, and smite the mothers and their children; but my will is that it shall not be so." The contest is well pictured at the ford Jabbok; but if Jacob had not disbelieved God's promise, he would never have bowed himself to the earth seven times before his brother Esau. In the holy majesty of his faith, he would have said, "Esau, my brother, thou canst do me no hurt; for thou canst do nothing contrary to the will of God. Thou canst do nothing contrary to his decree, and I will be pleased with whatsoever it is."

So, this resignation to God's will gives, first, joy in the heart, and then it gives fearless courage; and yet another thing follows from it. As soon as anyone truly says, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," this resolve *tends to make every duty light, every trial easy, every tribulation sweet*. We should never feel it to be a hard thing to serve God; yet there are many people, who, if they do a little thing for the Lord, think so much of it; and if there is ever a great thing to be done, you have, first, to plead very hard to get them to do it; and when they do it, very often it is done so badly that you are half sorry you ever asked them to do it. A great many people make very much out of what is really very little. They take one good action which they have performed, and they hammer it out till it becomes as thin as gold leaf, and then they think they may cover a whole week with that one good deed. The seven days shall all be glorified by an action which only takes five minutes to perform; it shall be quite enough, they even think, for all time to come. But the Christian, whose will is conformed to God's will, says, "My Lord, is there anything else for me to do? Then, I will gladly do it. Does it involve want of rest? I will do it. Does it involve loss of time in my business? Does it involve me, sometimes, in toil and fatigue? Lord, it shall be done, if it is thy will; for thy will and mine are in complete agreement. If it is possible, I will do it; and I will count all things but loss that I may win Christ, and be found in him, rejoicing in his righteousness, and not in mine own."

IV. There are many other sweet and blessed effects which this

resignation would produce; but I must close by observing that **THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH THIS SPIRIT CAN BE ATTAINED IS BY THE UNCTION OF THE HOLY ONE**, the outpouring and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

You may try to subdue your own self, but you will never do it alone. You may labour, by self-denial, to keep down your ambition; but you will find that it takes another shape, and grows by that wherewith you thought to poison it. You may seek to concentrate all the love of your soul on Christ, and in the very act you will find self creeping in. I am sometimes astonished,—and yet not astonished when I know the evil of my own heart,—when I look within myself, and find how impure my motive is at the very moment when I thought it was most pure; and I expect it is the same with you, dear friends. You perform a good action,—some almsgiving to the poor, perhaps. You say, “I will do it very quietly.” Someone speaks of it, and you say at once, “I wish you had not spoken of that; I do not like to hear anyone talk of what I have done; it hurts me.” Perhaps it is only your pride that makes you say that it hurts you; for some folk make their modesty to be their pride; it is, in fact, their secret pride that they are doing good, and that people do not know it. They glory in that supposed secrecy; and by its coming out they feel that their modesty is spoilt, and they are afraid that people will say, “Ah, you see that it is known what they do; they do not really do their good deeds in secret.” So that even our modesty may be our pride; and what some people think their pride may happen to be the will of God, and may be real modesty. It is very hard work to give up our own will; but it is possible, and that is one of the lessons we should learn from this text, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Again, if there is anybody of whom you are a little envious,—perhaps a minister who takes a little of the gloss off you by preaching better than you do, or a Sunday-school teacher who is more successful in his work,—make that particular person the object of your most constant prayer, and endeavour as much as lies in you to increase that person's popularity and success. Someone asks, “But you cannot bring human nature up to that point, can you,—to try and exalt one's own rival?” My dear friends, you will never know the full meaning of this prayer till you have tried to do this, and actually sought to honour your rival more than yourself; that is the true spirit of the gospel, “in honour preferring one another.” I have sometimes found it hard work, I must confess; but I have schooled myself down to it. Can this be done? Yes, John the Baptist did it; he said of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” If you had asked John whether he wished to increase, he would have said, “Well, I should like to have more disciples; still, if it is the Lord's will, I am quite content to go down, and that Christ should go up.”

How important, therefore, it is for us to learn how we may attain to this state of acquiescence with our heavenly Father's will! I have given you the reasons for it, but how can it be done? Only by the operation of the Spirit of God. As for flesh and blood, they

will not help you in the least, they will go just the other way; and when you think that, surely, you have got flesh and blood under control, you will find that they have got the upper hand of you just when you thought you were conquering them. Pray the Holy Spirit to abide with you, to dwell in you, to baptize you, to immerse you in his sacred influence, to cover you, to bury you in his sublime power; and so, and only so, when you are completely immersed in the Spirit, and steeped, as it were, in the crimson sea of the Saviour's blood, shall you be made fully to realize the meaning of this great prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "Lord, not self, but Christ; not my own glory, but thy glory; not my aggrandisement, but thine; nay, not even my success, but thy success; not the prosperity of my own church, or my own self, but the prosperity of thy church, the increase of thy glory;—let all that be done as thou wilt, not as I will."

How different this is from everything connected with the world! I have tried to take you up to a very high elevation; and if you have been able to get up there, or even to pant to get up there, how striking has the contrast been between this spirit and the spirit of the worldling! I shall not say anything to those of you who are unconverted, except this. Learn how contrary you are to what God would have you be, and what you must be, ere you can enter the kingdom of heaven. You know that you could not say, "Let God have his will," and you know also that you could not humble yourself to become as a little child. This shows your deep depravity; so, may the Holy Spirit renew you, for you have need of renewing, that you may be made a new creature in Christ Jesus! May he sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and at last present you faultless, before the throne of God, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XV. 1—11.

Verse 1. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

If you want to know where the true Church is, Christ here tells you: "I am the true vine." All who are in Christ are in the true Church. If you want to know who is the Father of the Church, its Keeper and Guardian, Christ here tells you: "My Father is the husbandman." Hence, I feel persuaded that the true vine, the Church, will never die, for it is Christ; and I am also persuaded that it will never be uprooted, for Jesus says, "My Father is the husbandman;" and that fact is a guarantee that he will take care of it.

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

In some sense, men and women may be in Christ by a mere outward profession; but if they have no evidence of a real union to Christ, if they produce no fruit, they will be taken away, some by death, and others by apostacy; but they will be taken away.

2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

From these words, it is clear that many of the afflictions which we have

to endure are not brought upon us because we are unfruitful, but because we are bearing fruit.

3, 4. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

Dear friends, beware of a Christless Christianity. Beware of trying to be Christians without living daily upon Christ. The branch may just as well try to bear fruit apart from the vine as for you to hope to maintain the reality of Christian life without continual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

5, 6. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

The vine must either bear fruit or be good for nothing; and you, believer, must be vitally united to Christ, and bear fruit in consequence of that union, or else you will be like those fruitless vine-branches, of which our Lord said that "men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Do not take that verse as a promise of unlimited answers to prayer, for it is nothing of the kind. Remember the "if" that qualifies it: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you," for a man who is truly in Christ, as the branch is in the vine, and who is feeding upon Christ's words, will be so influenced by the Holy Spirit that he will not ask anything which is contrary to the mind of God. Consequently, his prayers, though in one sense unrestricted, are really restricted by the tenderness of his conscience, and the sensitiveness of his spirit to the influence of the mind of God. There are some Christians who do not get their prayers answered, and who never will as long as they do not comply with this condition, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." If you do not take notice of Christ's words, he will not take notice of your words. He is not going to open his door to every stranger who chooses to give a runaway knock at it, but he will pay attention to his own children who pay attention to him.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

"Ye shall be known to be my disciples." Everybody will perceive that you must be branches of that fruitful vine, Christ Jesus, if ye bear much fruit.

9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

How wondrously Jesus loves those who are truly his! As the Father loved him, so does he love us; that is, without beginning, without measure, without variation, without end.

"Continue ye in my love;" that is, live in it, enjoy it, drink it in, be influenced by it.

10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;*

"You shall live in the realization of my love if you live in obedience to me."

10, 11. *Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

For, when Christ is not pleased with us, we are not likely to have joy in selves. Oh, that we may so live as to please Christ!

CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 2ND, 1899,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Lord's-day Evening, early in the year 1857.

“If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”—John xviii. 8.

WE need but hint at the circumstances under which these words were uttered. Our Saviour was in the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples; a multitude came with the officers commissioned by the high priest to seize him; he went boldly towards them, and asked, “Whom seek ye?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” At his words, “I am he,” “they went backward and fell to the ground,” and then Jesus said to them, “I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”

Now, in a very simple manner, I shall try, first of all, *to draw a few lessons from this occurrence*; and then, secondly, *to bring out a great truth which I think is foreshadowed in this utterance of our Redeemer.*

I. First, let us CONSIDER THE LESSONS OF THE OCCURRENCE ITSELF. Our Saviour said to these people, “If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”

In this incident, our Master proved *his own willingness to die*. This word of his was a mandate so powerful that none of the disciples were seized, much less put to death. There was Peter, who had drawn his sword, and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. We should naturally have expected that he would have been arrested, or smitten to the earth; but so powerful was the command of Christ that not a finger was laid upon his hasty-tempered disciple. Peter and John went afterwards into the judgment-hall,—as it were, into the very teeth of our Lord's enemies;—but, with the exception of a few jeers, they were suffered to go their way. John did even more than that, for he went within the range of the spears of the Roman soldiers, and stood at the foot of Christ's cross, and wept; yet not a finger was laid on him, nor on any one of Christ's disciples,—not for want of will, for, you remember, they seized a young man who left his garment in their hands, and fled naked,—evidently supposing him to have been a disciple of Christ. This shows, then, the power of Christ's mandate that, in that hour of darkness, not so much as one

of his disciples was maltreated, but all were suffered to go their way. If Christ, then, by his simple word, delivered his disciples, how much more could he have delivered himself? And in his not doing so, you cannot fail to see how willing he was to die. One word threw them to the ground; another word would have hurled them into the arms of death; but our Saviour would not speak the word which might have saved himself, for he came to save others, not himself.

There is something very courageous in the Saviour's saying, "If ye seek me." You know that, when Adam sinned, God had to seek the culprit; but, in this case, when Christ stood as the Surety for his people, instead of being sought, he seemed to seek his executioners. "If ye seek me," said he; and he put in an "if"—as though it were not so much their seeking him as his seeking them;—for he had come into their very midst to die. Our blessed Lord was well acquainted with the circumstances of his own death. He sat at the table, at the institution of the Lord's supper, on that memorable evening; why could he not wait and be seized there? But no; dauntless, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" steps out, and boldly faces his enemy. He does not wait to be attacked; but goes forth to meet death, to give himself up for us. Scarcely any martyr has done such a deed as this. God has helped them to die, when they have been delivered into the hands of their enemies; but our Saviour goes to his enemies, and says, "Here I am: if ye seek me, I have come to give myself up; I will put you to no trouble in searching for me; there is no necessity to hunt through the length and breadth of Jerusalem to find me out, here I am; if ye seek me, I am ready to die; take me, I have no opposition to make. 'If ye seek me,' all I have to say is, 'Let these go their way;' as for myself, I am willing enough to die!"

Learn, then, Christian, the readiness of thy Master to suffer for thee. He was no unwilling Saviour. Thou hast sometimes borrowed money of a friend; and when thou hast taken it of him, it was a grief to thee to accept it, for he looked upon thee as a beggar, or even as a robber who had demanded spoil of him. But when thou takest Christ's favours, there is this sweet consideration with them, that they are all given willingly. The blood that thou drinkest, and the flesh that thou eatest, spiritually, is no dole of a strained benevolence, but the voluntary, munificent gift from the heart of Jesus to thee and to thy brethren. Rejoice, then, in the willingness of Christ to suffer for thee.

In the second place, upon the very face of our text, we read *the care of Christ towards his people*. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." Oh! the agony of the Saviour's heart at that moment. A friend in trouble is frequently forgetful; expect not a man in great grief to remember you; the heart is then so full of its own bitterness, it hath no time to think of others. I would pardon any man for not noticing me in the street, if he were ill; I would easily forgive anyone for forgetting anything when loaded with pain and sorrow; and surely, beloved, we might have thought it not hard of Jesus if he had forgotten his disciples in his hour of grief. But mark how kind his heart is: "'If ye seek me,'—I say nothing about how ye should treat me,—but 'let these'—these disciples were the only ones he cared

about; he cared not for himself;—"let *these* go their way." Like the mother in the snow-storm, who takes off her own clothes to wrap around her cold shivering babe; what cares she though the blast should find out her inmost soul, and though her body be frozen like ice, if her babe but lives? Her first thought, after she is restored to consciousness, when she has been well-nigh benumbed to death, but chafed to life by kindness, is concerning that babe. It was even so with Jesus: "Let these go their way."

"When justice, by our sins provoked,
Drew forth its dreadful sword,
He gave his soul up to the stroke
Without a murmuring word.

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew.

"Now though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor lets his saints forget."

They are all recollected, all borne upon his heart, and still cared for. Therefore thou art cared for, thou lamb of the flock; thou art cared for, poor Ready-to-halt; thou art remembered, Miss Despondency; thou art regarded with the eyes of love, timid Mr. Fearing; though thou stumblest at every stone, yet thy Saviour's love faileth not; he remembereth thee, for he cared for his disciples in his hour of greatest sorrow.

In the next place, learn from this incident *our Saviour's wisdom*. When he said, "Let these go their way," there was wisdom in it. How? Because they were not prepared to suffer, and it would have been unwise to have allowed them to suffer then, if they had been prepared; for if they had suffered then, it would have been thought that at least they shared the honour of our redemption; therefore Christ would have none but thieves upon the mount of doom, lest any should suppose that he had a helper. He did tread the winepress alone, and of the people there were none with him. Besides, these disciples were but infants in grace; they had not received the plentitude of the Spirit; they were not fit to suffer. Therefore Christ said, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." These raw recruits must not yet bear the brunt of the battle; let them tarry until, by a longer experience, and by greater grace, they shall be made brave to die, and shall each of them in his turn wear the crown of martyrdom; but not now. Christ spared his people at that moment, since it would have been unwise to have suffered them to die then.

Learn also, Christians, from your Master's example, *the duty of putting yourselves in the way of suffering when you can save your brethren*. Oh! there is something glorious in the spirit Christ manifested in placing himself first. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." That is the spirit all Christians ought to catch,—the spirit of heroic self-sacrifice for the disciples' sake. The mere professor says, "Let me go my

way, seek another to be put to death;" but if we were what we should be, we should each one say, "If ye seek *me*, let *these* go their way." How many of us would be ready to escape martyrdom, and allow our brethren to be burned! But that would not be the spirit of our Master. How frequently you are ready to allow opprobrium and shame to fall upon the church if you can but be yourself screened! How very frequently you will allow a brother to perform a duty, at much inconvenience, which you could do without any trouble to yourself! Now, if you were like your Master, you would say, "'Let these go their way;' if there is sufficient ground for it, let me suffer; if there be a painful duty, let me do it; let others escape, let them go free; lo, I will give myself a willing substitute for them in this matter." Oh! we want everywhere more of this spirit, to be able to say to the poor saint, "Poverty is seeking thee, I will in some degree bear the inconvenience that thou mayest be screened. Thou art sick, I will watch thee; thou art naked, I will clothe thee; thou art hungry, I will feed thee; I will stand in thy stead as far as I am able, that thou mayest go thy way."

These seem to me to be the lessons to be learned from our Saviour's words, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

II. Now I come to notice, secondly, THE GREAT DOCTRINE WHICH THIS INCIDENT SEEMS TO FORESHADOW.

Will you please to observe the next verse to the text? "That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." If I had quoted this passage in such a connection, you would have told me it was a misquotation; you would have said, "Why, my dear sir, that has nothing to do with the disciples going their way or not!" Ah! but you would be quite in error if you talked like that; God's Spirit knows how to quote, if we do not. Very often, we refer our hearers to a text which we think is exactly adapted and pertinent to the point before us, when it has really nothing to do with the matter; and, often, the Holy Spirit quotes a text which we think unsuitable; but, on closer examination, we find that the very gist of it bears directly upon the subject. This was the beginning of Christ's deliverances, which he would through eternity vouchsafe to all his children. Inasmuch as he then said, "Let these go their way," *it was the foreshadowing, the picturing, of the great deed of substitution* whereby Christ would be able to say, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." This point will appear clearly if we look at how Christ treats his people in Providence and at the bar of Justice.

It has always seemed to me as if *Christ had borne the brunt of Providence for his people*, so that now all things work together for their good. When Christ came into the world, he did, in spirit, say something like this, "Ye wild beasts of the field, ye are against my people; come, now, be against me; and, then, let these go their way." This was according to the ancient prophecy: "I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." Christ seemed to say, "Stones, ye are enemies to my flock; now take me for their Substitute, and be at enmity against me; and then it shall be written, 'The stones of the

field shall be in league with them.'” Christ, as it were, said to Providence, “Thy black and bitter face shall look on me; thy quiver, full of fiery darts, shall be emptied, and they shall all find their target here in my bosom; thy dread aspect shall be seen by me;” but, “Let these go their way.”

Providence has inflicted its evils on Christ, and has now only good for God's people. “What! sir, only good?” you say, “why, I am poor, I am sick!” Yes. but it is only good; for that is good which worketh good. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Christ saith even to kings, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” “Let these go their way.” The kings of the earth have been seeking Christ's Church, to destroy and to devour it; so Christ lets them find him, and put him to death; and before he dies, he turns round to the kings, and says, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” He speaks to trouble, to trial, to grief, to accident, and to peril, and he says: “Ye have sought me; now let my people go their way.” We should never have known the sweetness of the psalm,—

“He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode,”—

if Christ had not died. The only way that you and I can have a refuge is by Christ bearing the brunt of our trouble. How does a shield save me? It saves me by bearing the blows itself. The shield doth, as it were, say to the swords of the enemy, “If ye seek me, let this warrior go his way.” So Christ, our Shield and God's Anointed, beareth the brunt of Providence, the evil and the woe thereof; and he saith now to the mysterious dispensations of God, concerning all the children of the Lord, “‘Let these go their way.’ Never, never work ill to them, but let them have only good.”

The other thought is, *Christ hath said this of his people even to Justice.* Before the throne of God, fiery Justice once drew his sword, and went out after sinners, to find full many, and to cast them into the pit. His sword thirsted for the blood of all that had sinned; but there stood a chosen multitude, reserved by love and chosen by grace; and Justice said, “They are sinners; I will have them, I will sheathe this sword in their hearts, for they are sinners, and they must perish.” Then Christ came forward, and asked him, “Whom seekest thou?” “Sinners,” answered Justice. Then said Jesus, “They are not sinners; they were sinners once, but they are righteous now, clothed in my righteousness; if thou seekest the sinner, here am I.” “What!” said Justice, “art thou the sinner?” “Nay, not the sinner, but I am the sinner's Substitute; all the sinner's guilt was imputed to me; all his unrighteousness is mine, and all my righteousness is his; I, the Saviour, am the sinner's Substitute; take me.” And Justice accepted the substitution; took the Saviour, crucified him, nailed him to that cross whose agonies we commemorate at the communion table. In that hour Jesus cried, “If ye seek me, let these go their way.” Who are they that are to go their way? Why, the very men whose former way was one of iniquity, and whose end would have been destruction, if the curse had not been made to fall upon the head of Jesus!

“Let these go their way.” Oh, that wonderful sentence! I never knew its sweetness till I found the Lord; but I did know something of its power. Do you ask, “How was that?” Why, long before you know the Lord, you have some of the power of the blood of Christ resting upon you. “How so?” do you enquire. Why, do you not know it to be a fact that,—

“Determined to save, he watched o’er our path,
When, Satan’s blind slaves, we sported with death”?

And so, some of the benefits of Christ’s death were ours before we knew him, and before we loved him. The reason why I was not damned before I knew the Saviour was that he had said, “Let him go his way; I have died for him.” You would have been in hell these twenty years, saint, for you were then unregenerate; but Christ said, “Let him go his way; if ye seek me, he shall go his way, sinner though he be;” and now, when gloomy fears arise, and dark thoughts roll over our mind, let this be our comfort. Sinners we are still, guilty and vile; but the same voice says, “Let these go their way.” It is the “let” of command; and who can hinder when God letteth in this sense? “Let these go their way.” You are going up Bunyan’s Hill Difficulty, and there are lions at the top. Christians, remember this message, “Let these go their way.” You will, perhaps, get into Giant Despair’s dungeon; here is a key that will fit the lock: “Let these go their way.” You will be tumbling about in the Slough of Despond; here is a stone to put your foot on to help you to get out: “Let these go their way.” What for? Because they pray? No. Because they serve God? No; the mandate was given before they did either the one or the other. “Let these go their way,” because Christ died in their stead.

The day is coming, and shall soon be here, when you and I shall stretch our wings, and fly away to the land that is very far off. I think I might picture in my imagination the soul when it has left the body. The believer speeds his way up to his native city, Jerusalem, “the mother of us all.” But at the gate one standeth; and he saith, “Hast thou a right to admission here? It is written, ‘He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high.’ Art thou such an one?” “Ah!” saith the soul, “I hope by grace I have been made so; but I cannot claim to have always been so, for ‘I the chief of sinners am.’” “Then how camest thou here? This gate gives no admission to those who are sinners.” While the angel is thus parleying, I hear a voice crying, “Let these go their way;” and, forthwith, the gates of heaven are opened, and every soul for whom Christ died doth enter into Paradise.

Come, saint, close up this simple meditation by looking yonder. See Christ, with justice, vengeance, wrath, all seeking him. Lo, they have found him; they have slain him; he is buried; he hath risen again. Oh! see them seeking him; and as you sit down at his table, think, “When they sought him, they let me go my way.” And what

a sweet way it is! I am allowed to come to his table of communion. Why? Because they sought *him*. I am invited to hold fellowship with Jesus. Why? Because they sought *him*. I am permitted to have a good hope through grace; and, more than that, "I know that when this earthly house of my tabernacle is dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Why am I to go that way? Why? Because they sought *him*, and found *him*. Else, where had I been now? My place might have been on the alehouse bench, or, perhaps, in the seat of the scorner; and what would have been my prospect? Why, that, at the last, I should be in hell amongst the fiends and the lost spirits of the pit; but now I tread the paths of righteousness and the ways of grace. Oh, let me remember why I do so; it is because they sought thee, O thou precious Lord of mine! They sought thee, my dear Redeemer and my God; they sought thy heart, and broke it; they sought thy head, and crowned it with thorns; they sought thy hands, and nailed them to the tree; they sought thy feet, and pierced them; they sought thy body, they slew and buried it. And now, though the roaring lion may seek me never so much, he cannot devour me; never can I be rent in pieces, never can I be destroyed, for I carry with me this sweet passport of the King of heaven, "Let these go their way." O child of God, take this with thee for thy safe conduct everywhere! When men travel abroad, they carry with them a permit to go to this town and the other. Take this little sentence, brother or sister in Jesus, and when unbelief stops thee, draw it out, and say, "He hath said, 'Let these go their way.'" And when Satan stops thee, hold out to him this divine mandate, "Let these go their way." And when death shall stop thee, take out this sweet permit from thy Master, "Let these go their way." And when the throne of judgment shall be set, and thou standest before it, plead this sentence, plead it even before thy Maker, "My Master said, 'Let these go their way.'" Oh, cheering words! I could weep them all out; but I will say no more. I hope many of you will enjoy the sweetness of them while we gather around the Lord's table, in obedience to his gracious command, "This do in remembrance of me."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVII.; AND XVIII. 1—9.

Chapter xvii. Verse 1. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

Jesus is going forth to die, and he knows it; yet he prays to his Father, "Glorify thy Son." There was no way of his coming to that glory except by passing through tears, and blood, and agony, and death. He only asks that he may be glorified in what he is about to do, and to suffer, and he is ready for it all: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

In that saying of our Lord we have an explanation of what he did by his redemption. There was a universal aspect of it: "Thou hast given

him power over all flesh." There was a special design in it: "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Sometimes, two views of the same thing may appear to contradict each other; but when we are taught of God, we soon discover that they do not really do so, and that a grand truth may be contained in the two descriptions of it. Christ had, by virtue of his death, power over all flesh; but it was for a distinct purpose: "that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

By this, then, dear friends, we can know whether we have eternal life or not. Do we know the Father? Do we know Jesus Christ as the Messiah—the Sent One? Are we resting in that blessed knowledge? If so, he has given to us eternal life.

4, 5. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

In deep humility, Jesus had laid that glory aside for a while. He had tabernacled in human flesh; and when he spoke these words, the time was approaching when,—

"All his work and warfare done,"—

he should go back to his pristine glory with something more added to it.

6. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:*

They had not all of them clearly seen that manifestation. Jesus had to ask the question, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Still, that was not the fault of the manifestation; Christ had manifested the name—that is, the character—of God unto those who had been given to him out of the world.

6. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

We might have expected that the verse would end, "and I have kept them." But their keeping God's Word is the evidence that Christ has kept them. Whenever a soul loves the Word of God, delights in the teaching of Christ, glories in those things which the world calls dogmas,—as if they were so much dog's meat,—when you and I can feed upon these things,—when every utterance of Christ is dear and precious to us,—that is good evidence of our being called out of the world, and separated unto Christ; it is one of the marks of divine grace which Jesus works in those whom the Father has given him: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy Word."

7. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*

The Father gives Christ the truth which Christ gives to us. The Father gives Christ the souls which Jesus keeps until the day of his power. There is mutual communion between God the Father and his blessed Son; let us never say a word that might look as if we did not understand the oneness—the everlasting and infinite oneness—which there is between the sacred persons of the Divine Unity.

8. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;*

You know how men talk against "verbal inspiration." Yet Christ says, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." Many are trifling with the teaching of God's Word, as if it were of no importance at all. Not so did Christ: "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me."

8. *And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

Firmly do we believe this, and in our heart of hearts we do accept every part of the teaching of Christ, no matter what it is. I hear people say, sometimes, "Oh, but that is not essential!" There is a great deal of mischief hatched out of that egg. O friends, it is essential that Christ's disciples should treasure whatever he has said! Never trifle with that part of the Word of God which seems to be less essential to salvation than another portion; for if it is not essential to salvation, it may be essential to your comfort, or your holiness, or your strength, or your usefulness; and if it be essential to God's glory, let us never trample it in the mire, or in any way dishonour it. Who am I that I should say, "This which God has spoken is important, but that other is not"? It does not do for us to presume to judge the Word of God; we should rather let the Word of God judge us.

9. *I pray for them:—*

Blessed word! Christ prays for his own people: "I pray for them:—"

9. *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me;—*

In that last hour, just before his Passion, his thoughts were separating the precious from the vile; and his prayer ascended for his own people: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me;—"

9, 10. *For they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*

It is a wonderful thing that Christ should be glorified in his people. Can it be that he shall be glorified in me? Dear child of God, you sometimes sit in the corner, and think to yourself, "How insignificant I am! The church on earth would not miss me if I were taken away; and the choirs of heaven cannot need me." Oh, but your Lord is glorified in you! If you are one of his chosen and redeemed people, in your very weakness and need he finds opportunity to glorify his strength and his fulness. He knows the truth about this matter, and he says, "I am glorified in them."

11. *And now I am no more in the world,—*

He was going away; he has gone now.

11. *But these are in the world,—*

We know we are; do we not, brethren? We have a thousand things—some of them very painful and humiliating to us,—to remind us that we are still in the world.

11. *And I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

Oh, what blessed keeping is that,—to be kept in spiritual oneness! I do not expect to see the people of God in visible oneness; but as there was a secret, invisible union, most real and most true, between the Father and the Son, so there is, at this time, a secret union in the hearts of all believers, most deep, most real, most true. I may never have seen that good friend before; but as soon as ever we begin to talk of Jesus and his love, if we are the living children of the living God, the bond of unity is felt at once by both of us. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

What a blessed Shepherd is this who never lost a sheep! Judas crept in among the flock, but he never was truly one of the flock. He was never

a son of God, he was "the son of perdition" all along. Christ has kept all his sheep, and all his lambs; and he will do the same, dear friends, even to the end.

13. *And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

What an unselfish Saviour! His heart is ready to break with his impending sufferings, and yet he prays for us, that we may be filled with his joy. I suppose that it is true that the Man of sorrows was the happiest man who ever lived. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame;" and, notwithstanding his boundless and bottomless grief, yet there was within him such communion with God, and love to men, and the certainty of his ultimate triumph, that kept him still joyous above the seas of tribulation. He prays that that same joy may be fulfilled in us; may God graciously grant it to all of us who believe in Jesus!

14, 15. *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

There is a reason for God's elect being allowed to remain in the world. They are never left, like wheat in the field, to perish through the damp and cold, or to be devoured by the birds of the air. Oh, no! We are left for God's glory, that men may see what the grace of God can do in poor frail bodies; for the service of Christ's Church, that we may be here for a while to carry on the cause of God, to be the means of comforting the little ones, and to seek the conversion of sinners. We are to be like salt to prevent putrefaction. We are God's preventive men, to prevent as much of the evil as we can; and we are to fight with the evil that cannot be prevented, and to seek to overthrow it in Christ's name.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Many, nowadays, say that we ought to blend the church with the congregation, and that it is a great pity to have any division between them. A great many good people are outside the church; therefore try to make the church as much like the world as ever you can! That is a silly trick of the devil which the wise servants of God will answer by saying, "To whom we give place for subjection, no, not for an hour." There must ever be a broad line of demarcation between the Church of Christ and the world, and it will be an evil day when that line is abolished. The sons of God took to themselves wives of the daughters of men, but that kind of union brought mischief with it, and it will ever do so.

17. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

We cannot afford to give up God's inspired Word, because it is a means of our sanctification; and if this be taken away, it is not such-and-such a dogma, as they call it, put into the background, but it is truth that would sanctify us which is discarded, it is God's own Word that is flung to the dogs; and that must never be.

18, 19. *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

"I set myself apart unto holiness, that they also might be set apart unto holy uses through the truth."

20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

Our Lord knew that the little circle around him would grow into a

multitude that no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; so he prayed for all whom his Father had given him,—

21, 22. *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*

The Church will never know her true glory till she knows her perfect oneness; the One Church will be the glorious Church.

23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

That is a grand expression: "Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." What! with the same love? It is even so;—a love without beginning, a love without change, a love without bounds, a love without end: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

24—26. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

This blessed prayer was heard by the Father; all of it must be fulfilled, and untold blessings do and shall come to us through this intercession of our Lord, blessed be his holy name!

Chapter xviii. Verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*

Our Lord could not cross that "brook Cedron" without being reminded of the time when David went that way in the hour of his sorrow, though he knew that he had to face a far greater trial than that of David. The very brook would remind him of his approaching sacrifice, for through it flowed the blood and refuse from the temple.

2. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

The place of our Lord's frequent retirement for private prayer was well known to Judas, who had often gone there with his Lord and his fellow-disciples.

3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

How completely the traitor must have been in the power of Satan, and how hardened and callous he must have grown, that he could lead "thither" the men who were going to arrest the Saviour! Truly it was by wicked hands that Christ was taken, and crucified, and slain; yet, unconsciously, these evil men were carrying out "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." How strangely were they equipped for their deed of darkness! "With lanterns and torches and weapons." They were coming to the Light of the world bearing "lanterns and torches"; and armed with "weapons" that they might use against "the Lamb of God"! If he had wished to deliver himself, all their "weapons" would have been in vain, and their "lanterns and torches" would not have revealed him, even with the help of the full moon, which was probably shining at the time.

4, 5. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

Notice, dear friends, that the word "he" is in italics, showing that it is not in the original. Our Lord here twice used the name of Jehovah,—I AM,—as he did on certain other memorable occasions. It was most fitting that, as he was going out to die, he should declare that it was no mere man who was about to suffer on the cross, but that, while he was truly man, he was also "very God of very God."

6. *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

The simple utterance of his name drove them from him, and smote them to the earth; what would have happened if he had put forth his almighty power?

7—9. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 8TH, 1894,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 15th, 1888.

“Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”—John xviii. 8, 9.

THE two remarkable miracles which our Lord wrought in the Garden of Gethsemane ought not to be lightly passed over. The first was the falling to the ground of the soldiers and the servants of the priests. Jesus did but speak to them, and there was such power and majesty about his presence and his voice that “they went backward, and fell to the ground.” They were quite unable to seize him. Here was a display in some measure of Christ’s divine power. These men would have fallen into the grave, and into hell itself, if Jesus had put forth the full force of his strength. He only spake a word, and down they fell; they had no power whatever against him. Beloved, take comfort from this miracle. When the enemies and foes of Christ come against him, he can easily overthrow them. Many times have there been crises in the Church’s history when it seemed as if the truth would be destroyed. Then has come the opportunity for divine interposition. A word from Christ has vanquished his enemies. They that were waiting, like lions ready to leap upon their prey, have been disappointed. Jesus has but spoken, and they have fallen backward to the ground. Wherefore, take heart, and be not dismayed even in the darkest hour. Let Christ only utter a word, and the victory is certain to be with him.

The other miracle was this, that seeing the company that came together to take him, he should be able at pleasure to screen his disciples so that no one of them was injured. The ear of the high priest’s servant was cut off; it was the opposite party that received the wound, but no ear of Peter or finger of John was smitten. The apostles escaped altogether unharmed; they were not able to protect themselves, being a very slender number as compared with the posse that

had come forth from the high priest, yet their Master preserved them; from which learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to take care of his own. When they seem to be like so many lambs in the midst of wolves, he can keep them so that no wolf can devour them. He has done it, and he will continue to do it. "Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He will preserve you by his own miraculous power, and you need not be dismayed at any force that is arrayed against you. Think, then, of those two miracles. You may need to remember them; there may come a time when it shall be a great joy to you to think of Christ, all ruddy from the bloody sweat, yet driving back his adversaries with a word, and rescuing the little handful of his disciples from anything like harm.

But in my text I notice something which seems to me very remarkable. "If therefore," said Jesus, "ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled." After such an expression you naturally expect some Old Testament text, something said by David in the Psalms, or by one of the prophets, Isaiah, or Ezekiel, but it is not so; it is, "that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." It is but an hour or two since Jesus uttered this sentence, but it is already among the inspired Scriptures, and it begins to take effect and to be fulfilled at once. It is not the age of God's word, but the verity of it, that constitutes its power. What Christ had said that very night in prayer was as true and as much the word of a King as that which God had spoken by his Spirit through holy men ages before.

Beloved, learn this lesson. The word of Christ is to be depended upon; you may hang your whole destiny upon it. What Christ has said is full of truth. He is Yea and Amen, and so are all his words; they stand fast for ever and ever, like his own eternal Godhead. Wherefore, since this word of Christ, which had only just been spoken, must be fulfilled, believe that every word of his will be carried out to the utmost. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not one word which was spoken by our Saviour shall ever fail, it shall not fail even the least of you in your worst hour of peril. I read this truth in the text with very great delight. We might have expected to find an Old Testament Scripture quoted here; but the New Testament Scripture is put upon the same level as the Old, and coming from the lips of Christ we are pleased to see it so soon fulfilled.

The soldiers and officers from the chief priests had come forth that night especially to arrest Christ. Peter, James, John, Bartholomew, Thomas, and the rest of the apostles, are all there; but Judas has come to betray, not the servants, but their Master; and they who are with the traitor have come to take, not the disciples, but their Lord. To me, there is something encouraging about this fact, although it is a dismal one. The fight of the great adversary is not so much against us as against our Master. Satan's emissaries are very furious sometimes with the faithful defenders of the truth, but their fury is not so much against them as against the truth and against the Christ who is the centre of that truth. In olden times, they hated Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingle, and the rest of the Reformers, but the main

point of attack was the doctrine of justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and at this day the great fight is around the Cross. Did Jesus die as his people's Substitute? That is the question; and there are some, I grieve to say it, to whom that text is applicable, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" This is the chief aim of the enemy's assaults; to get rid of Christ, to get rid of the atonement, to get rid of his suffering in the room and place and stead of men. They say they can embrace the rest of the gospel; but what "rest" is there? What is there left? A bloodless, Christless gospel is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; it neither honours God nor converts the sons of men.

This is our consolation, that the attack is, after all, against the Master himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ is still the great butt for the archer's arrows. Though his enemies do not always let his disciples go their way, yet they do seek *him*; it is against him that they rave most of all. As it is the quarrel of God's covenant, he will fight it out to the end; and so far as your part in the battle is concerned, as it is for his truth, and his eternal power and Godhead, and his great sacrifice, you may safely go through with it, for he who fights for this cause shall surely have God with him.

Now let us come to our text, and try to learn some lessons from it. I notice here, first, *Christ's dying care for his disciples*. Then, next, I see that *his care extends to their bodies*; and, thirdly, I observe that *his care offers himself instead of them*. He thrusts himself upon the edge of the adversaries' sword, and says, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

I. First, then, I call upon you to notice in our text CHRIST'S DYING CARE FOR HIS DISCIPLES. Let me correct what I have said, and put it, THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST; for you see he is occupied first of all with his disciples' safety. The soldiers have come to seize him, but he does not seek to escape. They bind him, but he does not burst his bonds. They will take him to prison, and to death; but he has not a word to say in his own defence, he utters no curse against his persecutors. His one thought is for his disciples, his ruling passion is strong in death, his love still masters him.

This was the more wonderful because he was *in the first brunt of the danger*. He had been betrayed by Judas, and the high priest's servants were gathering about him to capture him; yet he was calm and quiet, and his one thought was concerning the eleven who were with him. Usually, we become quieter when we get used to a trouble; it is in the first flutter of it that we are disconcerted, and thrown off our balance. I suppose it is so with you; I know it is so with me. We learn, after a little while, to look calmly around us; we gird up the loins of our mind, and we begin to think as we should think; but at first we are like birds driven out to sea by a rough wind, that have not learnt yet to manage their wings in the gale. It was not so with our Saviour. In that first moment of attack he still thought of his

disciples. Oh, the splendour of that love which could not be disturbed! Many waters could not quench it even at their first breaking out; nor could the floods drown it when they were swollen to their height! Beloved, Jesus never forgets you who are his own. Never does anything happen in this world or in heaven that leads him to forget you. He has graven your names upon the palms of his hands, they are written upon his heart; so be it the first brunt of your battle or of his own, he still thinks of you, and cares for you.

But it is more remarkable still that Jesus thought of his disciples *in the faintness of his agony*. All crimson from the bloody sweat, he rose from under the olive trees, and came forward, and stood there in the torchlight before his persecutors; but the light that fell upon his brow revealed no care for anything but the safety of his followers. His whole soul had gone out to them. That crimson sweat meant a heart flowing out at every pore with love for those whom his Father had given him, and whom he had so long preserved. I doubt not that he was faint with the dreadful agony. He must have been brought to the very lowest point of endurance by it, yet he still thought of his disciples. Beloved, when you and I are sick and faint, other people do not expect us to think of them. We grow a little selfish when we are weak and ill; we want water to moisten our lips, we expect our friends to watch over us, and wipe the sweat from our brow. It was not so with our Master; he came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and he does so by saying to the rabble throng, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

And mark, dear friends, that our Lord Jesus was not only in the brunt of danger, and in the faintness of his agony, but he was *in full prospect of a cruel death*. He knew all that was to be done to him. When you and I have to suffer, we do not know what is before us; it is a happy circumstance that we do not. But Jesus knew that they would buffet him, that they would blindfold him, that they would spit in his face, that they would scourge him, he knew that the crown of thorns would tear his temples, he knew that he would be led forth like a malefactor, bearing the gibbet on his shoulder. He knew that they would nail his feet and hands to the cruel cross, he knew that he would cry, "I thirst," he knew that his Father must forsake him on account of the sin of man that would be laid upon him. He knew all that; these huge Atlantic billows of grief cast their spray in his face already, his lips were salt with the brine of his coming grief; but he did not think of that, his one thought was for his beloved, those whom his Father had given him. Till he dies, he will keep his eye on his sheep, and he will grasp his Shepherd's crook with which to drive the foe from them. Oh, the all-absorbing, self-consuming love of Christ! Verily, it was like coals of juniper, which have a most vehement flame. Do you know that love, beloved? If so, let your hearts reciprocate it, loving him in return with all the strength of your life, and all the wealth of your being. Even then you can never love him as he has loved you.

I must add that it was all the more remarkable that Jesus should continue to think of his disciples at such a time when *he knew what they were*. They had been asleep, even while he was in the bloody

sweat. Even the three whom he had chosen as his body-guard, and stationed within a stone's cast of his terrible agony, had slept. Jesus knew also that the eleven would all forsake him and flee, and that one of them would even deny him; yet he thought of them. O Lord, how canst thou think of such sinful creatures as we are? I feel glad that these apostles were not perfect. We must not rejoice in anything that is evil; but still it is some comfort to me that though they were such poor creatures as they were, Jesus cared for them, for now I can believe that he loves me. Though I sleep when I ought to wake and watch with him, yet he loves me. Although, under the brunt of a strong temptation, I may flee, still he loves me; ay, and even if I should deny him, yet I can understand that, as he loved Peter, he may still love me. O faulty saints, you who do love him, and yet often fail him, you who do trust him, and yet are oftentimes dismayed, gather strength, I pray you, from this wonderful love of Jesus! Is not the love of Christ a mass of miracles, all wonders packed together? It is not a subject for surprise that he should love, but that he should love such worms as we are, that he should love us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, that he should love us into life, should love us despite our faults, should love us to perfection, and should love us till he brings us to share his glory. Rejoice, then, in this wondrous care of Christ,—the dying Christ with a living care for his disciples.

II. But now, secondly, HIS CARE EXTENDS TO THEIR BODIES.

I will not be long upon this point, but I want you to note some of the sweetness there is in it. When I was reading to you just now, you must have noticed that our Lord said, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." Surely he meant that he kept them from wandering into sin, did he not? Did he not mean that he kept them unto eternal salvation? Undoubtedly he did; but the greater includes the less. He who keeps a man, keeps the whole man, spirit, soul, and body. So our Lord Jesus here interprets his own prayer, which dealt with the souls of his people. He mainly interprets it as to their bodies, for he bade those who came to seize him to let his disciples go, saying, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

You say to me, "That is a small interpretation of a great utterance." I know it is, and that is the comfort of it, that, if there be small meanings to the promises, you may quote them, and pray for them, as well as believe in and pray for the greater and immeasurable meaning of the promises. I like to believe that he who loves me as an immortal spirit, loves me as a mortal man. He who loves me as I shall be before his throne in glory, loved me as I was when I hung upon my mother's breast, and loves me as I now am, with many a weakness and infirmity clinging to me. He who takes care of the soul, takes care of the body, too.

Notice that *this care of our Lord was effectual*. Is it not singular that none of those soldiers and servants of the high priest touched one of the eleven? Is it not remarkable that Malchus, having lost his right ear, did not feel it his duty to thrust at Peter? But the Saviour interposes, and just touches the wounded ear, and it is healed, and Peter is suffered to go. That act of Peter was enough to bring on a

battle royal all round, and we know that the whole eleven had only two swords between them. They could have made only a very feeble stand against a band of armed men; yet not one of them was injured. How well does Jesus protect his own!

What is more remarkable, the apostles were not harmed at the time of Christ's death. It would not at all have surprised me if the mob that cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," had also said, "Here are some of his disciples, let us put them also to death; let us increase the agonies of the dying Nazarene by the slaughter of his disciples before his eyes." Yet not a dog moved his tongue against them. And when it was reported that Christ had risen from the dead, why did not his enemies pounce upon Mary Magdalene, and the rest of the women? Forty days was Jesus on the earth, and I do not find that in all that time there was any hindrance to the coming or going anywhere of any one of his disciples. After the Holy Ghost had been poured out, there came a time of persecution; but until then it was not in the Saviour's mind that the Jews should touch one of his disciples, and they could not do it. The devil cannot go any farther than his chain permits, and the worst enemies of Christ can do no more than Christ allows. What an effectual care was this of the Master, which held the broad shield of his divine protection not only over the eleven, but also over all the rest of the faithful! He was at his lowest when they took him, and bound him, and led him away, but even then, with his sovereign word, he protected his people from all harm, as to their bodies as well as their souls.

Notice also that *it was needful that they should have special protection*. Jesus meant them all to remain alive to see him after his death, that they might be witnesses of his resurrection. They were a little handful of seed-corn, and he would not have one grain wasted, because it was by that precious wheat that his Church was to be fed, and the world was to be sown with spiritual life.

Besides, they were not ready yet to bear persecution. Afterwards they bore it manfully, joyfully; but just now they were poor feeble children, until the Spirit of God was poured out. Brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ can shelter us from sickness, and from every kind of bodily affliction, until we are fit to bear it; and he can also preserve us from death till our work is done. It is a good saying, though it is not a Scriptural one, "We are immortal till our work is done." If God has given thee aught to do, get thee to the doing of it; the time is short, but dream not that thou shalt be cut off too soon. Thou hast a work for thy time, and thou shalt have time for thy work. Believe it, and thou mayest go between the jaws of behemoth without a fear, while God has work for thee to accomplish for him; wherefore, be not afraid, for Jesus says, "Let these go their way."

Once more, *the care which the Lord took of his people was much better than their own care*. See, Peter is going to take care of his Master, and he makes a poor mess of it; but when his Master took care of him, that was a very different affair. Peter is going to fight for his brethren; out comes the sword, off goes the ear of Malchus, and Peter probably regretted that he had not cut off his head. But what good did Peter do? He only increased the danger they were in, and made the men

feel the more furious against them. But Christ's word was ample; here was sufficient defence for all the apostles, "Let these go their way," and go their way they did. Brothers and sisters, we should do a deal better in many things if we did not do anything at all. There is many a man who is drowning, and makes his drowning sure by his struggling. I am told that, if he could but lie still on his back, he would float; and I believe that, in many a trouble, we make the trouble ten times worse by our kicking and plunging. "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Especially do so if it is a matter of scandal. If anybody speaks evil of you, do not answer him. I have had a great deal of experience of this kind,—perhaps as much as anybody,—and I have always found that, if I got a spot of mud anywhere on my coat, and I proceeded to brush it off, it was much worse than before. Let it alone till it is dry; then it will come off easily. Perhaps even then you had better leave somebody else to do your clothes-brushing and your boot-cleaning; you cannot do it nearly so well yourself as somebody else can do it for you. I say again, we should do better often if we did nothing. These eleven apostles did best when Peter had put up that ugly old sword of his, and left off fighting, and at his Master's word went away safe and sound from the armed men who had arrested his Lord.

Beloved, you are all right if you are in Jesus Christ's hands; right for your body, right for your estate, right for your character, right for little things as well as for great, if you just leave all in those dear hands that never fail, because they act for the dear heart that never ceases to beat with infinite affection towards all those whom the Father has given to him.

III. I have continued longer than I intended, so I am coming now to the third and last point, which is this, CHRIST'S CARE LED HIM TO OFFER HIMSELF INSTEAD OF HIS PEOPLE.

Jesus said, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." This was as much as to say, "*You cannot hurt both myself and my people.*" This is a great truth, though I put it very simply to you. When the judgments of God are abroad, it is not possible that they should fall on both Christ and his people. Was Jesus Christ the Substitute for his people? Grant that; then, if the punishment of sin fell on Christ, it cannot fall on those for whom Christ died. It is not according to natural justice, much less divine justice, first that the Substitute should suffer, and then the person for whom he stood as Substitute should also suffer. That cannot be. Why have a Substitute at all, unless that Substitute by his suffering clears those for whom he was substituted? I will give you a very simple illustration; you will find it in the Book of Deuteronomy. There is the old divine ordinance that, when a man found a bird's nest, and there were young birds in the nest, if he took the young, he must let the mother-bird go free, he must not take both; that was contrary to the divine law. So, Christ may die, or his people may die; but not both of them. Justice will not have it that they shall both suffer, and the Lord Jesus Christ gives a tongue to that great law when he says, "If ye seek me, here I am, but let these go their way; for you cannot take us both." That were contrary to the sacred law, and to the divine equity which

lies at the bottom of everything that is true. Did Christ, my Ransom, die for me? Then I shall not die. Did he pay my debt? Then it is paid, and I shall not be called upon to pay it.

“If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.”

Did Jesus suffer in my stead without the city-gate? Then, turn thou, my soul, unto thy rest, since he died for thee. Justice could not claim both the Surety and those for whom he stood as Substitute; but, beloved, *it was the Master who died*. They did seek him, they did take him, they did crucify him; he did bear it all as his people's Substitute. “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Do not be deceived about this matter, but grip it as a fact most sure that the Lord Jesus Christ did bear his people's sins in his own body on the tree. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Men and brethren, I am not making this up, and telling you words of my own. These are the precious truths of Holy Writ, divinely inspired. Oh, that all would believe them!

Christ has suffered in the stead of his people. What then? As I have said to you before, both cannot suffer; therefore, as Jesus suffered, *you who are his people are clear*. Perhaps you will go down to the grave; unless the Lord should speedily come, we shall die; but, since Jesus died, death cannot hold us. The resurrection trumpet will ring out its silver note, and this will be the message to the dull cold ear of death, “Since I died, let these go their way,” and every sepulchre shall open wide, the caverns of death shall no longer enclose the bodies of the saints, but from beds of dust and silent clay, the whole of Christ's redeemed shall rise. Because he lives, they shall live also. Death sought him, and therefore death must let these who belong to him go their way; and as for justice, there comes the dread tremendous day, the day for which all other days were made, the day of judgment, and of condemnation of ungodly men. Shall I stand shivering before that eternal judgment-seat? Nay, not so. Shall I feel the earth quake beneath me, and see heaven splitting above me, and the stars falling like withered leaves in autumn? Doubtless it will be so. Will the avenging angel come, with his dread sword of fire, and sweep us poor sinful ones away? He will, unless we are in Christ; but if we are among the blood-redeemed ones, he must stay his fiery vengeance, for there shall come a voice from the risen and reigning Saviour, “Thou hast smitten me, therefore let these go their way,” and because he died for us, we shall go our way. Which way? Up yonder shining staircase, made of light; up where the angels come and go, we shall make our way, like children who run upstairs at home, up into the world of light, and to the home of glory, where our Saviour's face is the sun, and his presence makes heaven. Yes, and this shall be our permit for ascending there, Jesus hath loved us, and hath died to redeem us from our sins.

With this I close, dear hearers. When I come into this pulpit, and especially during the last two or three Sunday nights, when I have felt my head swim at the sight of you, I seem like one standing on a high cliff, half afraid to remain there, and I think to myself, "Shall I long preach to these people?" Well, well, whether I do or do not, I would press home this question upon your consciences, as I shall meet you in that great day, *have you a share in Jesus Christ's love and care?* Did he bear your sins in his own body on the tree? Do you believe in him? That is, do you trust him? Have you put your soul into his hands, that he may save it? If so, you are justified by him, you are saved in him.

Say, dear friend, next; do you obey him? Is he your Master and Lord? Is his will the supreme law of your life? Or do you wish it to be so, and pray to make it so? Then again you may go your way, for Christ has stood in your stead. Do you suffer with him? Are you willing to suffer for him? There are some who will go with Christ if he will put on his silver slippers, and his purple mantle, and his jewelled crown. How good they are! How bravely will they say, "I am a Christian," when everybody will throw primroses on their path! Ay, but when people sneer, and call you an old Puritan, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or some other pretty name, and when those who preach to you are much abused, and ill things are said of them, can you take the side of a despised Christ? Can you stand at his cross? Can you own him when the blood is dripping from his wounds, when everybody thrusts out his tongue at him, and has ill words for the Crucified One? Can you say, "I love him still"? Remember the good Scotch woman, when Claverhouse had murdered her godly husband. "Ah!" he said, "What think you of your bonny husband now?" and she answered, "I always thought my man was very beautiful; but I never saw him look as he does now that he has died for his Master." Can you say the same of Christ? He was ever precious to me; I love him in every shape and form, but when I see him put on his crimson robe, and bleed at every pore for me, when the rubies are in his hands, and on his feet, and I see him still despised and rejected of men, I love him more than ever; and I love his cross, and take it up; I love his shame, and his reproach, and count it "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." If it be so with you, if you are with him in his shame, I will warrant that you shall be with him in his glory. I count it to be a mean position to be only with a reigning Christ on earth, and to go with him only in fair weather. Oh, but this is the pledge and proof of love, if you are with him when the snow-flakes blow into your face, and the storm comes hurtling against you, and yet you can follow bravely where he leads the way! God make you such followers of the Crucified! May your feet know what it is to be pricked with thorns, or your head will never know what it is to feel the weight of the glory diadem! May you be willing to be despised and rejected; for if not, you have thrown away your crown! God bless you, dear friends, and blessed be his name for helping me again to speak to you to-night! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVII. 1—12, AND XVIII. 1—14.

1. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ;*

This is in a very special sense our Lord's prayer. What a word that is from the lips of Jesus, "Father"! This was the night of his deepest sorrow and his heaviest woe; but he begins his prayer with this tender expression, "Father, the hour is come;" the hour of darkness, the hour of his passion and death, had now arrived.

1. *Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee :*

Did Jesus look upon his suffering as his glory? He does not merely pray, "Sustain thy Son," but, "Glorify thy Son." In truth, our Lord's lowest stoop was his highest glory. He was never more resplendent than when he hung upon the cross, that was his true spiritual throne; so he prayed, "Glorify thy Son,"—"Enable him to bear the agony, and to pass through it to the glory."

"That thy Son also may glorify thee." The death of Christ was a great glorifying of God. We see his love and his justice rendered more glorious in the death of Christ than they would have been by any other method.

2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

In this verse you get the doctrines of general and particular redemption blended. By his death, Christ obtained power over all flesh; his death had some relation to every man, but the special object of it was the salvation of the elect. The purpose of the shower is to water one particular field; but the rain falls everywhere, so plenteous is the bounty of God. The object of Christ's atonement is to purchase eternal life for those who were given to him by his Father; but he has also obtained power over all flesh.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

To know God, is eternal life. If you know God, if you know Jesus Christ whom he has sent, you are spiritually quickened. That knowledge has brought to you, nay, it is, in itself, the new life: "This is life eternal,"—not life for a few years, but life eternal. Mark the final perseverance of the saints, how they shall hold on and hold out for ever.

4. *I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

Jesus regards his work as already done; although he had yet to die, to pay the ransom price for his people, yet by a leap of holy faith he says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

5. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Jesus had laid aside his glory for our sakes; now he asks that, his work being regarded as done, his glory may be given to him again.

6. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me : and they have kept thy word.*

God's people belong to him, he gives them to his Son, Christ gives them his word, and they keep it: "They have kept thy word." Do we keep God's word? Do we hold to it? Do we make it the guide of our whole life? Do we seek to obey it? This is the token of God's chosen people.

7—12. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

Christ always has kept his people, he still keeps his people, and he will keep his people for ever. The sheep shall be delivered into the hand of the Father in full number, there shall not be one of them missing in that day when they shall pass under the rod of the great Shepherd.

We cannot read all this prayer of our Lord to-night; we must now go, in the language of the next chapter, with the Master into the garden of his grief.

Chapter xviii. Verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron,*

A dark, foul brook, through which flowed the blood and refuse from the temple. King David crossed that brook one night in bitter sorrow; and now the Saviour crossed it when it was near to midnight: "He went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron."

1, 2. *Where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

Our Lord went there to pray, and Judas knew that this was his custom. Are we such men of prayer that others know where we pray? Have you some familiar place where you go to meet your Lord? I am afraid that many know where we trade, and many know where we preach; but perhaps, few know where we pray. God grant that we may be often at the mercy-seat! We should be better men and women if we were more frequently at the throne of grace.

3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

"Lanterns" to give light to the Sun; "torches" to find out the light of the world; "weapons" with which to fight with the Lamb of God, the unarmed Sufferer. Strange treatment this for him who came to save and bless!

4, 5. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.*

Or, "I am." It is remarkable that Jesus should, in his betrayal, twice use this expression, thus uttering the very name of Jehovah.

5. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

What a hardened wretch he must have been to be able to stand with them! One would have thought that, having betrayed his Master, he would have hidden himself away for shame; but no, "Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them." His heart must have been steeled.

6. *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

Christ's almighty power cast them down at once. He needed not to lift his hand or even his finger; he only said, "I am," and "they went backward, and fell to the ground."

7. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.*

Do they return again to the fray? Having once felt Christ's divine power, do they summon courage enough to attack him again? Yes, for there is no limit to the malice and impudence of the human heart.

8—10. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter—*

Always ready to boil over, ever full of zeal and rash impetuosity, Peter—

10. *Having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

Peter struck at his head; he was not content with trying to wound, he meant to kill Malchus, and he did "cut off his right ear."

11—14. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

Saying a great deal more than he thought he was saying, for he uttered a great gospel truth when he said, "It was expedient that one man should die for the people."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—382, 401, 293.

THE CAPTIVE SAVIOUR FREEING HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 25TH, 1866, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”—John xviii. 8, 9.

THE whole story of our Lord's passion is exceedingly rich in meaning. One is tempted to linger over every separate sentence of the narratives given by the evangelists. It were possible to preach several series of sermons upon the whole story, and there is not a single incident, though it may seem to be but accidental, which might not furnish a wealth of holy thought to the careful student. In looking through this chapter one was greatly tempted to speak awhile upon the Master's selecting the place of his prayer as the place of his agony and betrayal: the holy prudence and forethought by which he had as it were cast up his entrenchments, and made his defences upon the very spot where he knew he should meet the shock of the evening's first onslaught; a lesson to us, Christians, not to venture out into the day's battle without girding on our armour, nor make a voyage upon the sea of life without having seen to it that the vessel is well supplied against every possible danger which may be encountered upon the storm-tossed sea. Jesus prays before he fights, and so must we if we would overcome. One was tempted also to dwell upon that remarkable expression, “Judas also which betrayed him knew the place;” to show the futility of knowledge apart from sincerity, nay, the injuriousness of knowledge if it be not attended with corresponding grace. Had the traitor not known he could not have betrayed, and had he not been an intimate friend he could not have been so base a wretch. Strange, but strangely true is it, that the ability to become the child of perdition by betraying his Master was found in the fact of his having been the near acquaintance of the Saviour. He could never have been so sevenfold an inheritor of hell if he had not been so largely a receiver of the privilege of companionship with Christ. Direful truth, that to be educated to take the highest degree in hell it is almost necessary to enter hypocritically into the school of Christ. Terrible reflection, which should well check any of us who make high professions without a corresponding weight of sincerity. But as time does not allow us like the bee to gather honey from every flower we shall dwell upon the text. *In this passage there is much instruction, and we shall endeavour to draw*

it forth; and then, *we shall take the liberty to spiritualize it*, to set the words in another sense in order that we may still be promoting our great object of setting forth our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. When we observe the words of the text, we notice upon the very surface a sure proof of **THE WILLINGNESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST TO GIVE HIMSELF TO SUFFER FOR OUR SINS**. The voluntary character of Christ's suffering makes it beam with a matchless splendour of love. He needed not to have died. If it had been his good pleasure he might have tarried gloriously amongst the songs of angels. He came not to earth to win a crown, because he had none, for all honour and glory are his by right. It was not to earn a dominion, or because he was not Lord of principalities and powers, that he descended from the skies: "Who though he was rich yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." It was a disinterested mission upon which the Redeemer came to the abodes of sinful men. He had nothing to gain, rather he had everything to lose; and yet, let me say to correct myself, by that losing he did gain, for now, as our Mediator, he is clothed with a special glory of unrivalled grace, unequalled by any other manifestation of the divine perfections.

The proofs that the Master went voluntarily to his death are very abundant. He rose from supper when he knew that Judas had gone out to betray him, and he did not seek a hiding-place in the corners of Jerusalem, or retire to the calm retreat of Bethany. If he had chosen to parry his betrayer's thrust that night and to wait until the day, the fickle multitude would have gathered around him, and protected him from his foes, for they would soon have been won to his side, if he would have consented to become their king. Instead of retreating even for a moment, Jesus, attended by his disciples, boldly advanced to the spot where Judas had planned to betray him; he went as calmly as though he had made an appointment to meet a friend there, and would not be behindhand when he arrived. He entered upon his terrible sufferings with his whole heart, with the full concurrence of his whole being, having a baptism to be baptized with, and being straitened until it was accomplished. What true courage is there in those words, "Arise, let us go hence"! when he knew that he was going to the cross. When the band came to take him, it appears that they did not know him. He said to them twice, "Whom seek ye?" He had to reveal himself, or the lanterns and the torches would not have discovered him. He was not after all taken by Judas' kiss; the kiss was given, but in the confusion they may have missed the token. Jesus had to ask, "Whom seek ye?" and to announce himself plainly twice with the words, "I am he." He yielded himself to his blood-thirsty foes, and went willingly with his tormentors. You are clear that he went willingly, for since a single word made the captors fall to the ground, what could he not have done? Another word and they would have descended into the tomb; another, and they would have been hurled into hell. He put forth just that little finger of his potency in order to let them feel what he could have done if he had chosen to lay bare the arm of his strength, and to utter but one word of wrath against them. You are sure that he went cheerfully, for how should he have gone at all if not with his own consent? There was no power on earth that could

possibly have bound the Lord Jesus, had he been unwilling. He who said, "Let these go their way," and by that word secured the safety of all his disciples, it is certain could have said the same of himself, and so have gone his way whither he would. Men might as well speak of loading the sun with chains, or holding the lightning flash in bondage, or like the foolish king of old, fettering the wild uproarious sea, as to suppose that they could constrain the Lord of Life and Glory, and lead him a captive against his will. He was led, and led bound too, but he could have snapped those bonds as Samson did the Philistines' bonds of old. There were other cords that bound him, invisible to carnal sense; the bonds of covenant engagements, the bonds of his own oath and promise, the bonds of his love to you and to me, my brethren, the mighty bonds of his marriage union to our souls, which constrained him, without a word, to yield himself as a lamb to the slaughter. The willingness of Jesus! let us see it clearly, and let us reverently adore him for it. Blessed Master! thou goest of thyself to die for us. No compulsion but that of thine own heart! Nothing brought thee to the tomb but thine almighty love to us.

I do not intend to dwell upon this thought, but having brought it before you, the practical use of it is just this:—Let us take care that our service of Christ shall ever be most manifestly a cheerful and a willing one. Let us never come, for instance, up to the place of worship unwillingly, merely because of custom, or because it is the right thing to do, which we would gladly avoid doing if we dare. Let us never contribute of our substance to the Master's cause with a grudging hand, as though a tax-gatherer were wringing from us what we could ill afford. Let us never enter upon Christian exercises as a slave would enter upon his labour, hearing the crack of the whip behind him; but let love put wings to our feet, and inspire our souls with a sacred alacrity, that as the seraphs fly upon the high behests of heaven, we may run upon our Saviour's commands with as much swiftness as mortals can command. Let our duty be our delight. Let the service of Christ be a kingdom to us. Let us count it to be our highest gain to suffer loss for him, and our greatest ease to be fully immersed in abundant labours for his sake. *His* willing sacrifice ought to ensure *our* willing sacrifice. The Saviour bleeds freely like the camphor tree that needs no pressure,—let us as freely from our very hearts pour forth our love, and all the kindred graces and deeds of virtue.

II. Turning from this thought, I beg you, secondly, to notice **OUR LORD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE HOURS OF HIS GREATEST DISTURBANCE OF MIND.** "If ye seek me, let these go their way." That word was intended, in the first place, to be a *preservation for his immediate attendants*. It is singular that the Jews did not surround that little handful of disciples, put them in prison, and then execute them in due season. If they had done so, where would have been the Christian church? If they should have destroyed, as it seems easy for them to have done, the first nucleus of Christianity, where would have been the church of after ages? But that word "Let these go their way," very efficiently protected all the weak and trembling fugitives; why did not the soldiers capture John? He seems to have gone in and out of the palace without even a single word of challenge. Why did they not

seize upon Peter? they were searching for witnesses, why did they not examine Peter under torture, as was the Roman custom, in order to have extorted from him some railing accusation against his Lord, whom he so readily denied? Where were the others? Timid, trembling folk, they had fled like harts and roes, when they first heard the baying of the dogs of persecution; why were they not hunted up? The Jews did not lack for will, for afterwards they were gratified when James was killed with the sword, and pleased when Peter was laid in prison—why were they suffered to go unharmed? Was it not because the Master had need of them? The Holy Ghost had not yet been poured out upon them, and they were not fit to be martyrs; they were like green wood that would not burn; they were as yet unbroken to the sacred yoke of suffering, and unendowed with that irresistible spiritual strength, which made them able to bear tribulation with rejoicing, and therefore that good Shepherd, who tempers the wind to shorn lambs, tempered the wind to these young beginners.

Those words, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," were like coats of mail to them, or those fabled, invisible garments which concealed their wearers from their enemies. Under the more than brazen shield of their Lord's words, the disciples walked securely in the midst of the boisterous mob, and we find John and others of the disciples even standing at the foot of the cross while those who gnashed their teeth at Christ and laughed at him, and revealed their savage malice in a thousand ways, did not touch so much as a hair of their heads, or, as far as we know, utter one jest against them. The word of Jesus proved to be a right royal word; it was a divine word; and men were constrained to obey it. The Lord had said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," and therefore for the time his disciples were safe.

It strikes me that the expression was not only a guard for the disciples for the time, but, as no Scripture is of private interpretation, I believe that such a *royal passport has been given to all Christ's people in the way of providence*. Fear not, thou servant of Christ, thou art immortal till thy work is done. When thou art fit to suffer, and if needs be even to die, Christ will not screen thee from so high an honour, but permit thee to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism; but until thine hour is come, thou mayest go and return secure from death. Though cruel men may desire thine ill, and devise mischief against thee, thou art safe enough until the Lord shall be pleased to let loose the lion, and even then thou shalt suffer no permanent injury. It is wonderful in the lives of some of God's ministers how strikingly they have been preserved from imminent peril. We cannot read the life of Calvin without being surprised that he should have been permitted to die peaceably in his bed, an honoured man, surrounded by the town councillors and the great ones of the very city from which he had been once expelled. It seems astounding that a poor weak man whose body was emaciated with diseases of all kinds, who had no arms to wield against the furious hosts of Rome, should yet live in usefulness and then die in circumstances of peace and comfort. It is not less remarkable that the brave hero of the cross, Martin Luther, should seem as if he had carried a safe conduct which permitted him to go anywhere and everywhere. He stood up in

the Diet of Worms expecting to die, but he came out unscathed. He passed, as it were, between the very jaws of death and yet remained unharmed. Though, as I have said before, Christ has suffered many of his people to die for him, and they have rejoiced so to do, yet, when he has willed to preserve any of his servants who were needed for a special work, as Calvin and Luther undoubtedly were, he had a way of taking care of them, and saying, "Let these go their way." Take, for instance, another illustration, the life of our remarkable reformer, John Wickliffe. Many times his life was not worth a week's purchase, and yet the old enemy of the saints were robbed of their prey, and could never touch a bone of him until years after he had been buried. When he was brought up for trial before the bishop, at St. Paul's, it was a very singular circumstance that John of Gaunt should stand at his side fully armed, proudly covering the godly man with the prestige of his rank and the arm of his power. When Wickliffe was faint with standing, and begged to be allowed to sit, the bishop tells him that heretics shall have no seats, but John of Gaunt with rough, uncourtly words swears that he shall sit when he wills, and when the time comes the good man goes forth through the midst of the rabble protected by his friend. I know not that John of Gaunt knew the truth, but yet God touched the man's heart to protect his servant in the hour of peril. Vultures, when God has willed it, have protected doves, and eagles have covered with their wings defenceless children whom God would save. When the Lord wills it, if all hell should shoot such a shower of arrows as should put out the sun, and if all those arrows were aimed at one poor heart, yet not a single shaft should hit, but all be turned aside by an invisible but irresistible power from the man whom Jehovah ordained to save. We understand, then, that Jesus has issued a royal passport for all his servants, which enables them to live on in the midst of deaths innumerable.

Mystically understood the words have a far deeper meaning. The true seizure of Christ was not by Romans or by the envious Jews, but by our sins; and the true deliverance which Jesus gave to his disciples was not so much from Roman weapons as from the penalty of our sins. How anxiously do I desire that those here this morning whose sins have been tormenting them would hear the voice of Jesus, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." *The law of God* comes out to seek us who have violated it. It has many and just demands against us, but Jesus who stood in our place puts himself before the law, and he says, "Dost thou seek me? Here I am; but when thou takest me a prisoner let these, for whom I stood, go their way." So then, beloved, when the law met with the Lord Jesus and made him its servant, and constrained him to bear its penalty, all those for whom Christ stood were by his being bound, absolutely and for ever set free. Christ's suffering the penalty of the law was the means of removing his people for ever from under the legal yoke. Now let me try to apply that truth to your case. A poor soul under distress of mind has gone to the priest, and he says, "If thou wouldst be pardoned do penance." While he is flogging his back and laying on the stripes most earnestly I think I hear the Saviour saying to the whole tribe of priests, "Let these poor souls go their way. My shoulders have borne all they ought to have borne; my heart has

suffered all the griefs that they were condemned to know. The chastisement of their peace was upon me, and by my stripes they are healed. Let these go!" Put up your whip, cease from your bodily tortures, they are of no service. The law has taken the Redeemer, it does not want you. You need not suffer, Christ has suffered, and all your sufferings will now be useless and vain. Christ has paid the debt, no need for you to attempt it again. Another poor trembler has been sitting under a legal ministry, and he has been told that if he would be saved he must keep the commandments. He has therefore endeavoured to forego this sin and the other, and as far as possible to be perfect in holiness. But he has made no advance; his soul is as much in bondage as ever, unsaved with all his exertions, destitute still of true peace notwithstanding all his good works. This morning my Master cries to the preacher who talks after this fashion, "Let these poor bonded ones go their way. Do not preach to them salvation by their own doings. Do not tell them that they are to merit admittance to heaven. I have wrought out and finished their redemption; their salvation is complete in me. There is nothing for sinners to do to win forgiveness. All they have to do is to receive what I have done for them. All the righteousness they need to recommend them before God is my righteousness, which requires not that theirs be added to it, for why should their rags be joined to my cloth of gold? All the merit a sinner can plead is the merit of my passion. Wherefore should they seek after merit through their repentance and their good works? Why should such stagnant water be poured into the midst of the wine of my merit? Away with your fancied good works, away with your boastings, your religious doings, your weepings, and your prayings, for if they be used as a ground of confidence instead of the work of Jesus they are things of nought, mere rottenness and dung to be cast upon the dunghill. Since Jesus was accepted and punished by the law, sinners believing in him are free from the law's exactions, and may go their way.

Perhaps there are here some in whose hearts the law of God is making terrible confusion. You feel that you have broken the law and that you cannot keep it, and now the law is flogging you; it has tied you up as they tie up soldiers in the army to the halberts, and it has been laying on the great cat of ten tails to your back, the ten commandments of the law, till you are smarting, smarting all over. Your whole conscience is troubled. Now the Lord Jesus Christ says to the Law, "Put up, put up that whip! do not smite the sinner any more! Didst thou not smite *me*, why shouldst thou vex him." But, sinner, the only way in which thou canst escape from the law's whip is this, hasten to Jesus Christ. Thou *must* flee to Christ, thou must trust in Jesus, and if thou shalt trust in Jesus he will cast his skirt over thee, he will lift up the broad buckler of his merit and protect thee from the shafts of the foe, so that thou canst say to the law, "I am not under the curse of the law now, for I have fulfilled it in the person of my Surety, and I have suffered its penalty in the person of my Saviour.

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

Jesus Christ then, as he stands before the law and is bound by the law, and flogged by the law, and crucified by the law, and buried by the law, says to you who trust in him, "Go your way, the law cannot touch you, for it has smitten me instead of you. I was your substitute, and you may go free." Why you all know that this is simple justice; if another person shall have paid your debts, you are not afraid of being amerced again in those debts; and if you are drafted for the army and a substitute has taken your place, you are not afraid of being drawn a second time. So the Lord Jesus Christ is the substitute for all his people, and if he was a substitute for you, the law has no further penal claims upon you. Christ has obeyed it; Christ has suffered its penalty; you may rejoice in the law as being now to you a gracious rule of life, but it is not to you a yoke of bondage; you are not under it as a slave, you are free from its dominion; you are not under the law, but you are under grace. What a blessing is this!

Further, these words seem to me to bear such a meaning as this, that as we are delivered from legal exaction so are we also *delivered from all penal infliction*. I wish that some children of God were clearer on this point. When you suffer tribulation, affliction and adversity, do not think that God is punishing you for your sins, for no child of God can be punished for sin penalty. Let me not be misunderstood. A man is brought before God first of all as a criminal before a judge. You and I have stood there. Through Christ's blood and righteousness we have been absolved and acquitted as before God the Judge, and it is not possible for the law to lay so much as the weight of a feather upon us since we have been perfectly acquitted. In all the pains and sufferings which a Christian may endure, there is not so much as a single ounce of penal infliction. God cannot punish a man whom he has pardoned. But that criminal being pardoned, is then adopted into the family and becomes a child. Now, if he shall as a child offend against his father's rule, he will be chastened for it. Every one can see the distinction between the chastening of a father and the punishment of a judge. If your child were to steal you would not think of punishing that child in the light in which the judge would do it, who would commit him to imprisonment for having broken the law; but you chasten your child yourself, not so much to avenge the law as for the child's good, that he may not do this evil thing again. So our heavenly Father chastens his people with the rod of the covenant, but he never punishes them with the sword of vengeance. There is a difference between chastening and punishing. Punishing is from a judge; Christ has suffered all such punishment, so that no penal infliction can fall upon a soul that believes in him; but we may have chastisement which comes to us as the result of a father's love, and not as the result of a judge's anger; we have felt such chastisement, and have reason to bless God for it. Our Lord Jesus says with regard to all legal penalty, "If ye seek me, I have borne it: let these go free."

Once more, this text will have its grandest fulfilment *at the last*. When the destroying angel shall come forth with his sword of fire to smite the sinner, when the gulf of hell shall open and vomit forth its floods of flame, when the dread trumpet shall sound and shall make all ears to hear the voice of an avenging God, Christ shall stand forth in

the front of all the blood-bought souls that came to trust under the shadow of the wings of his mercy, and he will say to Justice, "Thou hast sought me once, and thou hast found all thou canst ask of me. Then let these go their way." And up the glorious steeps of the celestial hills the happy throng shall stream, singing as they pass through the gate of pearl and tread the pavement of transparent gold, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Then shall the great manumission of the slave take place, because Christ was bound; then shall the deliverance of the captive come, because Christ slept in the prison-house of the tomb. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." I would to God that some here would perceive that the way of deliverance is for the Lord Jesus to be bound in their stead. Trust thou in Jesus, and it shall be so.

III. Thirdly, but very briefly, notice why our Lord exhibited this great care for his people; PONDER OVER HIS SAYING concerning them, "That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me I have lost none." Here is much of matter for thought at your leisure. Do not you know that that text was a prayer? Now here it is made into a promise. What, then, is everything that Christ asks for guaranteed to his people, so that his prayer is God's promise? It is so.

Notice next that, verbally understood, this expression, which is quoted from the seventeenth of John, could only relate to the souls of God's people; but here it is taken as though it related to their bodies. From which I gather that we are never wrong in understanding promises in the largest possible sense. It is, I believe, a rule of law that if a man should get a privilege from the king that privilege is to be understood in the widest sense; whereas a punishment, or penalty, is always to be understood in the narrowest sense. In the olden times, when princes and kings used to grant monopolies, if a king had granted a monopoly upon all kinds of foreign fruits, if the words had so run, you may rest assured that the person obtaining that monopoly would have put everything down as foreign fruit that could possibly bear the name, and he would have been justified by the law for so doing. Now, when the great King gives a promise, you may encompass everything within its range which can possibly come under the promise, and we may be sure that the Lord will not run back from his word. God's words are never to be taken with a rebate, or discount, but with such blessed interest as your faith is able to put thereto. The grant of eternal life includes such providential protections and provisions as shall be necessary on the road to heaven. The house is secured for the sake of the tenant, and the body because of the soul.

There is also one more remark I cannot help making, namely, that

this text is not in the form of a promise at all. "Of them which thou gavest me *have* I lost none." It relates to the past, but here it is used as a reason why none should be lost of the present; from which I gather, that as Jesus has done in the past so will he act in the future, and that all he ever was to his people he will be to them for evermore. We may look upon every past act of grace as being a token and guarantee of future grace, and we may gather from all our experience of the Lord's goodness in the days that are gone that he will do yet again unto us as he has done, and still more abundantly until we see his face in heaven.

The gracious words before us read as follows: "Of all them which thou hast given me I have lost none." Then some are given. There is an elect nation. Oh that we may be found in that happy number! Then Jesus keeps those who are given; they cannot keep themselves, but he can keep them and will. He so well preserves them that not so much as one is lost. I have sometimes thought I might imagine such a scene as this at the gates of heaven, when the great Shepherd comes to give in his charge. "Here am I," saith he, "and the children which thou hast given me." But are they every one brought safely here?" "Yes," saith the great Shepherd, "of all whom thou hast given me I have lost none." "But where is Peter? Did he not deny thee to thy face in the hall? Did he not three times say, 'I know him not!'" "Yes, but I made him go out and weep bitterly, and then I washed him in my precious blood, and here he is," and Peter sings as sweetly as any. Then perhaps the question may be asked, "And where is such a one, the least of all saints?" Brother, you feel yourself to be the weakest, the meanest, the most useless, but an enquiry will be made for you, and the answer will be, "He is here; of all whom thou hast given me I have lost none." Oh, happy sheep in the care of such a Shepherd! Oh happy, happy hearts that can rely upon such a keeper! Dear hearer, is Jesus yours? Are you depending upon him? Say, have you cast yourself upon him? Then do not fear concerning your last days; it must be well at the last, if it is well now. If you are now in Christ, he never did cast away any, and he never will. Oh if you have but come to him and are now depending on him —

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

He suffered for you and therefore you shall go your way, and the covenant shall be fulfilled. "Of those whom thou hast given me I have lost none."

I have thus used the text as briefly as I could. I shall want your patience a few minutes while I apply this text in a sort of **SPIRITUAL SENSE**.

The first remark in this department of the subject is—*many seek Jesus but do not know who he is*. So that Christ says to them, "Whom seek ye?" Some here this morning are seeking rest, but they do not know that Jesus is the rest. You feel an aching void in your hearts. You are not happy; the theatre does not give you the pleasure it once did. Somehow life has grown insipid to you. There is a still small voice within your soul like the voice of wailing, like Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted. You are seeking you know not what. You have begun to read your Bible; you are eager to attend upon the preaching of the gospel, but you do not know what it is you want. Ah well, it is a good thing to be a seeker; though you cannot tell what it is you need, for if you do but desire and lift up your voice to God sincerely and earnestly, he will be found of you.

We now note the fact, viz., that *those who seek Christ will find him*, but they find him only because he reveals himself to them. These men sought Christ to kill him, yet he came and said, "I am he." There was a woman, if you remember, at the well of Sychar, who sought him for a very different purpose. She said, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come he will tell us all things." And Jesus said, "I that speak unto thee am he." Whoever seeks Jesus, Jesus will show himself to them. They came with lanterns and with torches, but they did not find Christ with lanterns and with torches. And you may come, my dear friend, with a great many of your own inventions, a great many fancies and imaginings, but you will not so find him. How could you expect to find the sun with a lantern? No. Christ must come and reveal himself to you, and if you seek him he will do so. Only continue to seek him. Let not past disappointments make you leave off seeking. Long as you have breath continue in prayer. I charge you before the living God if you have sought in vain, do not let Satan make thee give it up; but ask that Christ would lead thee in the right way, for if thou didst but know the right way thou needst not seek long for he is here now. Jesus can forgive this morning; before you leave that seat you shall have a full assurance of your interest in him, if you be led to understand the way of salvation. That way is simply to trust Christ, simply to believe that he can and will save you, and to trust yourself with him. I will never believe that he will let a sincere soul go hungering and thirsting after him, and let that soul die without him; but though he may be pleased for a while to let that spirit wander even in apparent blackness and darkness, yet he will at the last lift the veil from his blessed face, and ah! the sight of that face will well repay you for all the sighs and cries with which you sought him; and to hear him say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," will so wake up the music of heaven within your soul that you will think of the months of

weariness and the nights of waiting as all too little, and more than enough repaid.

One thing more, *when Jesus is found, there is always much to be given up.* "If ye seek me, let these go their way." There are always many things that you will have to let go if you have Christ, and this is very often the testing point. If a man keeps a public-house which he opens on Sunday, in which cursing and swearing abounds, if he has encouraged all sorts of vice, in order to increase his custom, can he continue in this and yet have Christ? Impossible. Now that man would like to go to heaven, but if he would he must let go his evil occupation. Yonder is a woman who has tasted the pleasures of sin. She would fain have a Saviour, but if she will have a Saviour she must let her sins go. There is a young man over yonder, proud, vain, giddy; if he would have Christ, he must let all these evils go. Our sins must be abandoned, or we cannot receive a Saviour. Christ Jesus will pardon sin, but he will never dwell in the same heart with sin. Though you may have been as base as base could be, it can all be forgiven you now; but if you continue in it, there is no mercy for you. He that confesseth his sin and forsaketh it, shall find mercy; but not the man who with hypocritical lip bewails it, and then with vicious heart plunges into it again. "If ye seek me, let these go." What, cannot you give them up? Silly companions, idle habits, foolish songs, pleasure-seeking, so-called, are these too dear to be renounced? Really, some of the things which give pleasure to men now-a-days are so absurd, so empty, so devoid of true wit, that I wonder the swine do not revolt against the mouldy husks which they are fed with now-a-days. We cannot wonder that swine do eat husks, it is natural they should, and we would not deny them their native food. If I were a swine, I think I should like to have husks that have some sort of substance in them, but the world's pleasure grows more and more vapid and worthless, the pleasure of idiots rather than of men. Cannot you give these poor things up? Are they such dear attractions, such precious things, that you let heaven go, and Christ go, sooner than let them go? Nay, I hope it will be a voice of power to you, and that you will say, "My Saviour, let them all go! what are they to thee? I shall find ten thousand times more pleasure and more profit too in following thee than in following the best of them. So let them go for ever, and may they never entice me more." Have you any self-righteousness remaining? Are you in your own conceit better than other people? Do you secretly trust in your works? Now if you want Christ, you must let all that go. Christ will tread the wine-press alone, and of the people, there must be none with him; and if you seek to be saved by Christ it must not be by the works of the law, but by grace alone. Won't you go to God that there might be a clean sweep made in some of your hearts.

and that you would come to Jesus all empty-handed as you are, and say, "Yes, Master, thy precious blood, thy triumphant resurrection, thine effectual plea; these are our hope and these our joy. We would serve thee in life, and bless thee in death. Thine we are, thou Son of God, and all that we have. Take us and keep us, and thine be the praise. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xviii.

THE BETRAYAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15TH, 1863, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”—Luke xxii. 47, 48.

WHEN Satan had been entirely worsted in his conflict with Christ in the garden, the man-devil Judas came upon the scene. As the Parthian in his flight turns round to shoot the fatal arrow, so the arch-enemy aimed another shaft at the Redeemer, by employing the traitor into whom he had entered. Judas became the devil's deputy, and a most trusty and serviceable tool he was. The Evil One had taken entire possession of the apostate's heart, and, like the swine possessed of devils, he ran violently downwards towards destruction. Well had infernal malice selected the Saviour's trusted friend to be his treacherous betrayer, for thus he stabbed at the very centre of his broken and bleeding heart. But, beloved, as in all things God is wiser than Satan, and the Lord of goodness outwitteth the Prince of Evil, so, in this dastardly betrayal of Christ, prophecy was fulfilled, and Christ was the more surely declared to be the promised Messiah. Was not Joseph a type? and, lo! like that envied youth, Jesus was sold by his own brethren. Was he not to be another Samson, by whose strength the gates of hell should be torn from their posts? lo! like Samson, he is bound by his countrymen, and delivered to the adversary. Know ye not that he was the anti-type of David? and was not David deserted by Ahithophel, his own familiar friend and counsellor? Nay, brethren, do not the words of the Psalmist receive a literal fulfilment in our Master's betrayal? What prophecy can be more exactly true than the language of the forty-first and fifty-fifth Psalms? In the first we read, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me;” and in the fifty-fifth the Psalmist is yet more clear, “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;

then I would have hid myself from him : but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him : he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart : his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." Even an obscure passage in one of the lesser prophets, must have a literal fulfilment, and for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a base slave, must the Saviour be betrayed by his choice friend. Ah ! thou foul fiend, thou shalt find at the last that thy wisdom is but intensified folly ; as for the deep plots and plans of thy craft, the Lord shall laugh them to scorn ; after all, thou art but the unconscious drudge of him whom thou abhorrest ; in all the black work thou doest so greedily, thou art no better than a mean scullion in the royal kitchen of the King of kings.

Without further preface, let us advance to the subject of our Lord's betrayal. First, concentrate your thoughts upon *Jesus, the betrayed one* ; and when ye have lingered awhile there, solemnly gaze into the villanous countenance of *Judas, the betrayer*—he may prove a beacon to warn us against the sin which gendereth apostacy.

I. LET US TARRY AWHILE, AND SEE OUR LORD UNGRATEFULLY AND DASTARDLY BETRAYED.

It is appointed that he must die, but how shall he fall into the hands of his adversaries? Shall they capture him in conflict? It must not be, lest he appear an unwilling victim. Shall he flee before his foes until he can hide no longer? It is not meet that a sacrifice should be hunted to death. Shall he offer himself to the foe? That were to excuse his murderers, or be a party to their crime. Shall he be taken accidentally or unawares? That would withdraw from his cup the necessary bitterness which made it wormwood mingled with gall. No ; he must be betrayed by his friend, that he may bear the utmost depths of suffering, and that in every separate circumstance there may be a well of grief. One reason for the appointment of the betrayal, lay in the fact that *it was ordained that man's sin should reach its culminating point in his death*. God, the great owner of the vineyard, had sent many servants, and the husbandmen had stoned one and cast out another ; last of all, he said, "I will send my Son ; surely they will reverence my Son." When they slew the heir to win the inheritance, their rebellion had reached its height. The murder of our blessed Lord was the extreme of human guilt ; it developed the deadly hatred against God which lurks in the heart of man. When man became a decide, sin had reached its fulness ; and in the black deed of the man by whom the Lord was betrayed, that fulness was all displayed. If it had not been for a Judas, we had not known how black, how foul, human nature may become. I scorn the men who try to apologize for the treachery of this devil in human form, this son of perdition, this foul apostate. I should think myself a villain if I tried to screen him, and I shudder for the men who dare extenuate his crimes. My brethren, we should feel a deep detestation of this master of infamy ; he has gone to his own place, and the anathema of David, part of which

was quoted by Peter, has come upon him, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office." Surely, as the devil was allowed unusually to torment the bodies of men, even so was he let loose to get possession of Judas as he has seldom gained possession of any other man, that we might see how foul, how desperately evil is the human heart. Beyond a doubt, however, the main reason for this was *that Christ might offer a perfect atonement for sin*. We may usually read the sin in the punishment. Man betrayed his God. Man had the custody of the royal garden, and should have kept its green avenues sacred for communion with his God; but he betrayed the trust; the sentinel was false; he admitted evil into his own heart, and so into the paradise of God. He was false to the good name of the Creator, tolerating the insinuation which he should have repelled with scorn. Therefore must Jesus find man a traitor to him. There must be the counterpart of the sin in the suffering which he endured. You and I have often betrayed Christ. We have, when tempted, chosen the evil and forsaken the good; we have taken the bribes of hell, and have not followed closely with Jesus. It seemed most fitting, then, that he who bore the chastisement of sin should be reminded of its ingratitude and treachery by the things which he suffered. Besides, brethren, that *cup must be bitter to the last degree which is to be the equivalent for the wrath of God*. There must be nothing consolatory in it; pains must be taken to pour into it all that even Divine wisdom can invent of awful and unheard of woe, and this one point—"He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," was absolutely necessary to intensify the bitterness. Moreover, we feel persuaded that by thus suffering at the hand of a traitor *the Lord became a faithful High Priest*, able to sympathize with us when we fall under the like affliction. Since slander and ingratitude are common calamities, we can come to Jesus with full assurance of faith; he knows these sore temptations, for he has felt them in their very worst degree. We may cast every care, and every sorrow upon him, for he careth for us, having suffered with us. Thus, then, in our Lord's betrayal, Scripture was fulfilled, sin was developed, atonement was completed, and the great all-suffering High Priest became able to sympathize with us in every point.

Now let us *look at the treason itself*. You perceive how black it was. Judas was *Christ's servant*, what if I call him his confidential servant. He was a partaker in apostolic ministry and the honour of miraculous gifts. He had been most kindly and indulgently treated. He was a sharer in all the goods of his Master, in fact he fared far better than his Lord, for the Man of Sorrows always took the lion's share of all the pains of poverty and the reproach of slander. He had food and raiment given him out of the common stock, and the Master seems to have indulged him very greatly. The old tradition is, that next to the apostle Peter he was the one with whom the Saviour most commonly associated. We think there must be a mistake there, for surely John was the Saviour's greatest friend; but Judas, as a servant had been treated with the utmost confidence. Ye know, brethren, how sore is that blow:

which comes from a servant in whom we have put unlimited trust. But Judas was more than this: *he was a friend, a trusted friend*. That little bag into which generous women cast their small contributions had been put into his hands, and very wisely too, for he had the financial vein. His main virtue was economy, a very needful quality in a treasurer. As exercising a prudent foresight for the little company, and watching the expenses carefully, he was, as far as men could judge, the right man in the right place. He had been thoroughly trusted. I read not that there was any annual audit of his accounts; I do not discover that the Master took him to task as to the expenditure of his privy purse. Everything was given to him, and he gave, at the Master's direction, to the poor, but no account was asked. This is vile indeed, to be chosen to such a position, to be installed purse-bearer to the King of kings, Chancellor of God's exchequer, and then to turn aside and sell the Saviour; this is treason in its uttermost degree. Remember that the world looked upon Judas *as colleague* and partner with our Lord. To a great extent the name of Judas was associated with that of Christ. When Peter, James, or John had done anything amiss, reproachful tongues threw it all on their Master. The twelve were part and parcel of Jesus of Nazareth. One old commentator says of Judas—"He was Christ's alter ego"—to the people at large there was an indentification of each apostle with the leader of the band. And oh! when such associations have been established, and then there is treachery, it is as though our arm should commit treason against our head, or as if our foot should desert the body. This was a stab indeed! Perhaps, dear brethren, our Lord saw in the person of Judas *a representative man*, the portraiture of the many thousands who in after ages imitated his crime. Did Jesus see in Iscariot all the Judases who betray truth, virtue, and the cross? Did he perceive the multitudes of whom we may say, that they were, spiritually, in the loins of Judas? Hymeneus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Philetus, Demas, and others of that tribe, were all before him as he saw the man, his equal, his acquaintance, bartering him away for thirty pieces of silver.

Dear friends, the position of Judas must have tended greatly to aggravate his treason. Even the heathens have taught us that ingratitude is the worst of vices. When Cæsar was stabbed by his friend Brutus, the world's poet writes—

"This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms,
Quite vanquish'd him; then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
_____ great Cæsar fell."

Many ancient stories, both Greek and Roman, we might quote to show the abhorrence which the heathens entertain towards ingratitude and treachery. Certain, also, of their own poets, such, for instance, as Sophocles, have poured out burning words upon deceitful friends; but we have no time to prove what you will all admit, that nothing can be

more cruel, nothing more full of anguish, than to be sold to destruction by one's bosom friend. The closer the foeman comes the deeper will be the stab he gives; if we admit him to our heart, and give him our closest intimacy, then can he wound us in the most vital part.

Let us notice, dear friends, while we look at the breaking heart of our agonizing Saviour, *the manner in which he met this affliction*. He had been much in prayer; prayer had overcome his dreadful agitation he was very *calm*; and we need to be very calm when we are forsaken by a friend. Observe his gentleness. The first word he spake to Judas, when the traitor had polluted his cheek with a kiss, was this—"FRIEND!" FRIEND!! Note that! Not "Thou hateful miscreant," but "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" not "Wretch, wherefore dost thou dare to stain my cheek with thy foul and lying lips?" no, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Ah! if there had been anything good left in Judas, this would have brought it out. If he had not been an unmitigated, incorrigible, thrice-dyed traitor, his avarice must have lost its power at that instant, and he would have cried—"My master! I came to betray thee, but that generous word has won my soul; here, if thou must be bound, I will be bound with thee; I make a full confession of my infamy!" Our Lord added these words—there is reproof in them, but notice how kind they are still, how much too good for such a caitiff—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" I can conceive that the tears gushed from his eyes, and that his voice faltered, when he thus addressed his own familiar friend and acquaintance—"Betrayest thou," my Judas, my treasurer, "betrayest thou *the Son of Man*," thy suffering, sorrowing friend, whom thou hast seen naked and poor, and without a place whereon to lay his head. Betrayest thou *the Son of Man*—and dost thou prostitute the fondest of all endearing signs—a *kiss*—that which should be a symbol of loyalty to the King, shall it be the badge of thy treachery—that which was reserved for affection as her best symbol—dost thou make it the instrument of my destruction? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Oh! if he had not been given up to hardness of heart, if the Holy Ghost had not utterly left him, surely this son of perdition would have fallen prostrate yet again, and weeping out his very soul, would have cried—"No, I cannot betray thee, thou suffering Son of man; forgive, forgive; spare thyself; escape from this bloodthirsty crew, and pardon thy treacherous disciple!" But no, no word of compunction, while the silver is at stake! Afterwards came the sorrow that worketh death, which drove him, like Ahithophel, his prototype, to court the gallows to escape remorse. This, also, must have aggravated the woe of our beloved Lord, when he saw the final impenitence of the traitor, and read the fearful doom of that man of whom he had once said, it would be better for him that he had never been born.

Beloved, I would have you fix your eyes on your Lord in your quiet meditations as being thus despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and gird up the loins of your minds, counting it no strange thing if this fiery trial should come upon you, but being determined that though your Lord should be betrayed by his

most eminent disciples, yet, through his grace you will cling to him in shame and in suffering, and will follow him, if needs be, even unto death. God give us grace to see the vision of his nailed hands and feet, and remembering that all this came from the treachery of a friend, let us be very jealous of ourselves, lest we crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame by betraying him in our conduct, or in our words, or in our thoughts.

II. Grant me your attention while we make an estimate of the man by whom the Son of man was betrayed—JUDAS THE BETRAYER.

I would call your attention, dear friends, to *his position and public character*. Judas was a *preacher*; nay, he was a foremost preacher, "he obtained part of this ministry," said the Apostle Peter. He was not simply one of the seventy; he had been selected by the Lord himself as one of the twelve, an honourable member of the college of the apostles. Doubtless he had preached the gospel so that many had been gladdened by his voice, and miraculous powers had been vouchsafed to him, so that at his word the sick had been healed, deaf ears had been opened, and the blind had been made to see; nay, there is no doubt that he who could not keep the devil out of himself, had cast devils out of others. Yet how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! He that was as a prophet in the midst of the people, and spake with the tongue of the learned, whose word and wonders proved that he had been with Jesus and had learned of him—he betrays his Master. Understand, my brethren, that no gifts can ensure grace, and that no position of honour or usefulness in the Church will necessarily prove our being true to our Lord and Master. Doubtless there are bishops in hell, and crowds of those who once occupied the pulpit are now condemned for ever to bewail their hypocrisy. You that are Church-officers, do not conclude that because you enjoy the confidence of the Church, that therefore of an absolute certainty the grace of God is in you. Perhaps it is the most dangerous of all positions for a man to become well known and much respected by the religious world, and yet to be rotten at the core. To be where others can observe our faults is a healthy thing though painful; but to live with beloved friends who would not believe it possible for us to do wrong, and who if they saw us err would make excuses for us—this is to be where it is next to impossible for us ever to be aroused if our hearts be not right with God. To have a fair reputation and a false heart is to stand upon the brink of hell.

Judas took a very high degree officially. He had the distinguished honour of being entrusted with the Master's financial concerns, and this, after all, was no small degree to which to attain. The Lord, who knows how to use all sorts of gifts, perceived what gift the man had. He knew that Peter's unthinking impetuosity would soon empty the bag and leave the company in great straits, and if he had entrusted it to John, his loving spirit might have been cajoled into unwise benevolence towards beggars of unctious tongue; he might even have spent the little moneys in buying alabaster boxes whose precious ointments should anoint the Master's head. He gave the bag to Judas, and it was discreetly, prudently, and properly used; there is no doubt he

was the most judicious person, and fitted to occupy the post. But oh! dear friends, if the Master shall choose any of us who are ministers or Church-officers, and give us a very distinguished position; if our place in the ranks shall be that of commanding officers, so that even our brother ministers look up to us with esteem, and our fellow-elders or deacons regard us as being fathers in Israel—oh! if we turn, if we prove false, how damnable shall be our end at the last! What a blow shall we give to the heart of the Church, and what derision will be made in hell!

You will observe that the character of Judas *was openly an admirable one*. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter; he was free enough from the rashness which cries, "Though all men should forsake thee yet will not I." He asks no place on the right hand of the throne, his ambition is of another sort. He does not ask idle questions. The Judas who asks questions is "not Iscariot." Thomas and Philip are often prying into deep matters, but not Judas. He receives truth as it is taught him, and when others are offended and walk no more with Jesus, he faithfully adheres to him, having golden reasons for so doing. He does not indulge in the lusts of the flesh or in the pride of life. None of the disciples suspected him of hypocrisy; they said at the table, "Lord, is it I?" They never said, "Lord, is it Judas?" It was true he had been filching for months, but then he did it by little, and covered his defalcations so well by financial manipulations that he ran no risk of detection from the honest unsuspecting fishermen with whom he associated. Like some merchants and traders we have heard of—invaluable gentlemen as chairmen of speculating companies and general managers of swindling banks—he could abstract a decent per-centage and yet make the accounts exactly tally. The gentlemen who have learned of Judas, manage to cook the accounts most admirably for the shareholders, so as to get a rich joint for their own table; over which they, no doubt, entreat the divine blessing. Judas was, in his known life, a most admirable person. He would have been an alderman ere long there is no doubt, and being very pious and richly-gifted, his advent at churches or chapels would have created intense satisfaction. "What a discreet and influential person;" say the deacons. "Yes," replies the minister; "what an acquisition to our councils; if we could elect him to office he would be of eminent service to the Church." I believe that the Master chose him as apostle on purpose that we might not be at all surprised if we find such a man a minister in the pulpit, or a colleague of the minister, working as an officer in Christ's Church. These are solemn things, my brethren; let us take them to heart, and if any of us wear a good character among men and stand high in office, let this question come home close to us—"Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" Perhaps he who shall last ask the question is just the man who ought to have asked it first.

But, secondly, I call your attention to *his real nature and sin*. Judas was a man with a conscience. He could not afford to do without it. He was no Sadducee who could fling religion overboard; he had

strong religious tendencies. He was no debauched person; he never spent a two-pence in vice on his life, not that he loved vice less, but that he loved the two-pence more. Occasionally he was generous, but then it was with other people's money. Well did he watch his lovely charge, the bag. He had a conscience, I say, and a ferocious conscience it was when it once broke the chain, for it was his conscience which made him hang himself. But then it was a conscience that did not sit regularly on the throne; it reigned by fits and starts. Conscience was not the leading element. Avarice predominated over conscience. He would get money, if honestly, he liked that best, but if he could not get it conscientiously, then anyhow in the world. He was but a small trader; his gains were no great things, or else he would not have sold Christ for so small a sum as that—ten pounds at the outside, of our money at its present value—some three or four pounds, as it was in those days. It was a poor price to take for the Master; but then a little money was a great thing to him. He had been poor; he had joined Christ with the idea that he would soon be proclaimed King of the Jews, and that then he should become a nobleman, and be rich. Finding Christ a long while in coming to his kingdom, he had taken little by little, enough to lay by in store; and now, fearing that he was to be disappointed in all his dreams, and never having had any care for Christ, but only for himself, he gets out of what he thinks to have been a gross mistake in the best way he can, and makes money by his treason against his Lord. Brethren, I do solemnly believe, that of all hypocrites, those are the persons of whom there is the least hope whose God is their money. You may reclaim a drunkard; thank God, we have seen many instances of that; and even a fallen Christian, who has given way to vice, may loathe his lust, and return from it; but I fear me that the cases in which a man who is cankered with covetousness has ever been saved, are so few, that they might be written on your finger-nail. This is a sin which the world does not rebuke; the most faithful minister can scarce smite its forehead. God knoweth what thunders I have launched out against men who are all for this world, and yet pretend to be Christ's followers; but yet they always say, "It is not for me." What I should call stark naked covetousness, they call prudence, discretion, economy, and so on; and actions which I would scorn to spit upon, they will do, and think their hands quite clean after they have done them, and still sit as God's people sit, and hear as God's people hear, and think that after they have sold Christ for paltry gain, they will go to heaven. O souls, souls, beware, beware, beware, most of all of greed! It is not money, nor the lack of money, but *the love* of money which is the root of all evil. It is not getting it; it is not even keeping it; it is loving it; it is making it your god; it is looking at that as the main chance, and not considering the cause of Christ, nor the truth of Christ, nor the holy life of Christ, but being ready to sacrifice everything for gains' sake. Oh! such men make giants in sin; they shall be set up for ever as butts for infernal laughter; their damnation shall be sure and just.

The third point is, *the warning which Judas received, and the way in*

which he persevered. Just think—the night before he sold his Master what do you think the Master did? Why, he washed his feet! And yet he sold him! Such condescension! Such love! Such familiarity! He took a towel, and girded himself, and washed Judas's feet! And yet those very feet brought Judas as a guide to them that took Jesus! And you remember what he said when he had washed his feet—"Now ye are clean, but not all;" and he turned a tearful eye on Judas. What a warning for him! What could be more explicit? Then when the Supper came, and they began to eat and drink together, the Lord said—"One of you shall betray me." That was plain enough; and a little farther on he said explicitly—"He that dippeth with me in the dish the same is he." What opportunities for repentance! He cannot say he had not a faithful preacher. What could have been more personal? If he does not repent now, what is to be done? Moreover, Judas saw that which was enough to make a heart of adamant bleed; he saw Christ with agony on his face, for it was just after Christ had said, "Now is my soul troubled," that Judas left the feast and went out to sell his Master. That face, so full of grief, ought to have turned him, must have turned him, if he had not been, given up and left alone, to deliver over his soul unto his own devices. What language could have been more thundering than the words of Jesus Christ, when he said, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born." He had said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Now, if while these thunders rolled over his head, and the lightning-flashes pointed at his person, if, then, this man was not aroused, what a hell of infernal pertinacity and guilt must have been within his soul! Oh! but if any of you, if any of you shall sell Christ for the sake of keeping the shop open on Sunday, if you shall sell Christ for the extra wages you may earn for falsehood—oh! if you shall sell Christ for the sake of the hundred pounds that you may lay hold of by a villanous contract—if you do that, you do not perish unwarned. I come into this pulpit to please no man among you. God knoweth if I knew more of your follies you should have them pointed out yet more plainly; if I knew more of the tricks of business, I would not flinch to speak of them! But, O sirs, I do conjure you by the blood of Judas, who hanged himself at last, turn you—if such there be—turn you from this evil, if haply your sin may be blotted out!

Let us for one minute *notice the act itself.* He sought out his own temptation. He did not wait for the devil to come to him; he went after the devil. He went to the chief priests and said, "What will ye give me?" One of the old Puritan divines says, "This is not the way people generally trade; they tell their own price." Judas says "What will ye give me? Anything you like. The Lord of life and glory sold at the buyer's own price. What will ye give me?" And another very prettily puts it, "What could they give him? What did the man want? He did not want food and raiment; he fared as well as his Master and the other disciples; he had enough; he had all that his needs could crave, and yet he said, What will ye give me? What will ye give me? What will ye give me?" Alas! some people's religion is grounded on that one question—

“What will you give me?” Yes, they would go to church if there are any charities given away there, but if there were more to be got by not going they would do that. “What will you give me?” Some of these people are not even so wise as Judas. Ah! there is a man over yonder who would sell the Lord for a crown, much more for ten pounds, as Judas did! Why, there are some who will sell Christ for the smallest piece of silver in our currency. They are tempted to deny their Lord, tempted to act in an unhallowed way, though the gains are so paltry that a year’s worth of them would not come to much. No subject could be more dreadful than this, if we really would but look at it carefully. This temptation happeneth to each of us. Do not deny it. We all like to gain; it is but natural that we should; the propensity to acquire is in every mind, and under lawful restrictions it is not an improper propensity; but when it comes into conflict with our allegiance to our Master, and in a world like this it often will, we must overcome it or perish. There will arise occasions with some of you many times in a week in which it is “God—or gain;” “Christ, or the thirty pieces of silver;” and therefore I am the more urgent in pressing this on you. Do not, though the world should bid its highest, though it should heap its comforts upon one another, and add fame, and honour, and respect, do not, I pray you, forsake your Master. There have been such cases; cases of persons who used to come here, but they found they did not get on, because Sunday was the best day’s trade in the week; they had some good feelings, some good impressions once, but they have lost them now. We have known others who have said, “Well, you see, I did once think I loved the Lord, but my business went so badly when I came up to the house of God, that I left it; I renounced my profession.” Ah, Judas! ah, Judas! let me call thee by thy name, for such thou art! This is the sin of the apostate over again; God help thee to repent of it, and go, not to any priest, but to Christ and make confession, if haply thou mayest be saved. You perceive that in the act of selling Christ, Judas was faithful to his master. “Faithful to his master?” you say. Yes, his master was the devil, and having made an agreement with him he carried it out honestly. Some people are always very honest with the devil. If they say they will do a wrong thing they say they ought to do it because *they said* they would; as if any oath could be binding on a man if it be an oath to do wrong? “I will never go into that house again,” some have said, and they have said afterwards, “Well, I wish I had not said it.” Was it a wrong thing? What is your oath then? It was an oath given to the devil. What was that foolish promise but a promise to Satan, and will you be faithful to him? Ah! would God that you were faithful to Christ! Would that any of us were as true to Christ as Satan’s servants are to their master!

Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. That is how most apostates do it; it is always with a kiss. Did you ever read an infidel book in your life which did not begin with profound respect for truth? I never have. Even modern ones, when bishops write them, always begin like that. They betray the Son of man with a kiss. Did you ever read a book of bitter controversy which did not begin with such a sickly lot of

humility, such sugar, such butter, such treacle, such everything sweet and soft, that you said, "Ah! there is sure to be something bad here, for when people begin so softly and sweetly, so humbly and so smoothly, depend upon it they have rank hatred in their hearts." The most devout looking people are often the most hypocritical in the world.

We conclude with the repentance of Judas. He did repent; he did repent; but it was the repentance that worketh death. He did make a confession, but there was no respect to the deed itself, but only to its consequences. He was very sorry that Christ was condemned. Some latent love that he had once had to a kind Master, came up when he saw that he was condemned. He did not think, perhaps, it would come to that; he may have had a hope that he would escape out of their hands, and then he would keep his thirty pieces of silver, and perhaps sell him over again. Perhaps he thought that he would rid himself from their hands by some miraculous display of power, or would proclaim the kingdom, and so he himself would only be hastening on that very blessed consummation. Friends, the man who repents of consequences does not repent. The ruffian repents of the gallows but not of the murder, and that is no repentance at all. Human law of course must measure sin by consequences, but God's law does not. There is a pointsman on a railway who neglects his duty; there is a collision on the line, and people are killed; well, it is manslaughter to this man through his carelessness. But that pointsman, perhaps, many times before had neglected his duty, but no accident came of it, and then he walked home and said, "Well, I have done no wrong." Now the wrong, mark you, is never to be measured by the accident, but by the thing itself, and if you have committed an offence and you have escaped undetected it is just as vile in God's eye; if you have done wrong and Providence has prevented the natural result of the wrong, the honour of that is with God, but you are as guilty as if your sin had been carried out to its fullest consequences, and the whole world set ablaze. Never measure sin by consequences, but repent of them as they are in themselves.

Though being sorry for consequences, since these are unalterable, this man was led to remorse. He sought a tree, adjusted the rope, and hanged himself, but in his haste he hanged himself so badly that the rope broke, he fell over a precipice, and there we read his bowels gushed out; he lay a mangled mass at the bottom of the cliff, the horror of every one who passed. Now you that make a gain of godliness—if there be such here—you may not come to a suicide's end, but take the lesson home. Mr. Keach, my venerable predecessor, gives at the end of one of his volumes of sermons, the death of a Mr. John Child. John Child had been a Dissenting minister, and for the sake of gain, to get a living, he joined the Episcopalians against his conscience; he sprinkled infants; and practised all the other paraphernalia of the Church against his conscience. At last, at last, he was arrested with such terrors for having done what he had, that he renounced his living, took to a sick bed, and his dying oaths, and blasphemies, and curses, were something so dreadful, that his case was the wonder of that age. Mr. Keach wrote

a full account of it, and many went to try what they could do to comfort the man, but he would say, "Get ye hence; get ye hence; it is of no use; I have sold Christ." You know, also, the wonderful death of Francis Spira. In all literature, there is nothing so awful as the death of Spira. The man had known the truth; he stood well among reformers; he was an honoured, and to a certain extent apparently a faithful man; but he went back to the Church of Rome; he apostatized; and then when conscience was aroused he did not fly to Christ, but he looked at the consequences instead of at the sin, and so, feeling that the consequences could not be altered, he forgot that the sin might be pardoned, and perished in agonies extreme. May it never be the unhappy lot of any of us to stand by such a death-bed; but the Lord have mercy upon us now, and make us search our hearts. Those of you who say, "We do not want that sermon," are probably the persons who need it most. He who shall say, "Well, we have no Judas amongst us," is probably a Judas himself. Oh! search yourselves; turn out every cranny; look in every corner of your soul, to see whether your religion be for Christ's sake, and for truth's sake, and for God's sake, or whether it be a profession which you take up because it is a respectable thing, a profession which you keep up because it keeps you up. The Lord search us and try us, and bring us to know our ways.

And now, in conclusion—there is a Saviour, and that Saviour is willing to receive us now. If I am not a saint, yet I am a sinner. Would it not be best for all of us to go again to the fountain, and wash and be clean. Let each of us go anew, and say, "Master, thou knowest what I am; I know not myself; but, if I be wrong, make me right; if I be right, keep me so. My trust is in thee. Keep me now, for thine own sake, Jesus." **Amen.**

JESUS DECLINING THE LEGIONS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27TH, 1887, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”—Matthew xxvi. 53, 54.

It is the garden of Gethsemane. Here stands our Lord, and yonder is the betrayer. He is foremost of the multitude. You know his face, the face of that son of perdition, even Judas Iscariot. He comes forward, leaving the men with the staves, and the swords, and the torches, and lanterns, and he proceeds to kiss his Master; it is the token by which the officers are to know their victim. You perceive at once that the disciples are excited: one of them cries, “Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” Their love to their Master has overcome their prudence. There are but eleven of them, a small band to fight against the cohort sent by the authorities to arrest their Master; but love makes no reckoning of odds. Before an answer can be given, Peter has struck the first blow, and the servant of the high-priest has narrowly escaped having his head cleft in twain; as it is, his ear is cut off.

One is not altogether surprised at Peter's act; for, in addition to his headlong zeal, he had most likely misunderstood the saying of his Lord at supper—“He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” There was not time for our Lord to explain, and they were so accustomed to his concrete style of speech, that they should not have misunderstood him; but they did so. He had simply told them that the days of peace, in which they could go in and out among the people, and be joyfully received by them, had now come to an end; for as he himself, who had once been in favour with all the people, would now be “reckoned among the transgressors” (see Luke xxii. 35—38), so would they be counted among the offscouring of all things. Now they could no longer reckon on the hospitality of a friendly people, but must carry their own purse and scrip; and instead of feeling safe, wherever they went, they must understand that they were in an enemy's country, and must travel through the world like men armed for self-defence. They were now to use their own substance, and not to hope for cheerful entertainment among a grateful people; and they would need to be on their guard against those who in killing

them would think that they were doing God service. They took his language literally, and therefore replied, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." Methinks he must have smiled sadly at their blunder as he answered, "It is enough." He could never have thought of their fighting that he might not be delivered unto the Jews, since for that purpose two swords were simply ridiculous. They had missed his meaning, which was simply to warn them of the changed circumstances of his cause: but they caught at the words which he had used, and exhibited their two swords. Possibly, as some have supposed, these were two long sacrificial knives with which they had killed the Paschal lamb; but, indeed, the wearing of weapons is much more general in the East than with us. Our Lord's disciples were largely Galileans, and as the Galileans were more of a fighting sort than other Jews, the wearing of swords was probably very general among them. However, two of the apostles had swords; not that they were fighting men, but probably because it was the fashion of their country, and they had thought it needful to wear them when passing through a dangerous district. At any rate, Peter had a sword, and instantly used it. He smites the first man he could reach. I wonder he had not smitten Judas, one might have excused him if he had; but it is a servant of the high-priest who bears the blow and loses his ear.

Then the Saviour comes forward in all his gentleness, as self-possessed as when he was at supper, as calm as if he had not already passed through an agony. Quietly he says, "Suffer it to be so now"; he touches the ear, and heals it, and in the lull which followed, when even the men that came to seize him were spell-bound by this wondrous miracle of mercy, he propounds the great truth, that they that take the sword shall perish with the sword, and bids Peter put up his weapon. Then he utters these memorable words: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And he also said what John alone appears to have heard—"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11).

The wound of Malchus served a gracious purpose; for it enabled our Lord to work a new miracle, the like of which he had never wrought before, namely, the restoration of a member maimed or cut off by violence. The blunder of the apostles was also overruled to answer a very instructive purpose. You wonder that the Lord should, even in appearance, encourage his disciples to have swords, and then forbid them to use them. Follow me in a thought which is clear to my own mind. For a man to abstain from using force when he has none to use is no great virtue: it reminds one of the lines of Cowper's ballad:—

"Stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright."

But for a man to have force ready to his hand, and then to abstain from using it, is a case of self-restraint, and possibly of self-sacrifice, of a far nobler kind. Our Saviour had his sword at his side that night, though he did not use it. "What!" say you, "how can that be true?" Our Lord says, "Can I not now pray to my Father, and he will give me

twelve legions of angels?" Our Lord had thus the means of self-defence; something far more powerful than a sword hung at his girdle; but he refused to employ the power within his reach. His servants could not bear this test; they had no self-restraint, the hand of Peter is on his sword at once. The failure of the servants in this matter seems to me to illustrate the grand self-possession of their Master. "Alas," he seems to say, "you cannot be trusted even with swords, much less could you be entrusted with greater forces. If you had the angelic bands at your command, down they would come streaming from the sky to execute works of vengeance, and so mar my great life-work of love." Brethren, we are better without swords and other forms of force than with them; for we have not yet learned, like our Lord, to control ourselves. Admire the glorious self-restraint of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, armed not with a sword but with the embattled hosts of "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim," yet refused even by a prayer to bring them down to his relief. Peter's passionate use of the sword illustrates the happy self-control of his Lord, and this is the use of the incident.

Let us now proceed to learn from the words of the Lord Jesus which we have selected as our text.

I. First, brethren, I would have you notice from the text **OUR LORD'S GRAND RESOURCE**. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father?" Our Lord is surrounded by his adversaries, and there are none about him powerful enough to defend him from their malice; what can he do? He says, "I can pray to my Father." This is our Lord's continual resource in the time of danger; yea, even in that time of which he said, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." He can even now pray to his Father.

First, Jesus had no possessions on earth, but *he had a Father*. I rejoice in his saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father?" He is a betrayed man; he is given up into the hands of those who thirst for his blood; but he has a Father almighty and divine. If our Lord had merely meant to say that God could deliver him, he might have said, "Thinkest thou not that I can pray to Jehovah?" or, "to God"; but he uses the sweet expression "my Father," both here and in that text in John, where he says, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" O brethren, remember that we have a Father in heaven. When all is gone and spent, we can say, "Our Father." Relatives are dead, but our Father lives. Supposed friends have left us, even as the swallows quit in our wintry weather; but we are not alone, for the Father is with us. Cling to that blessed text, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you." In every moment of distress, anxiety, perplexity, we have a Father in whose wisdom, truth, and power, we can rely. Your dear children do not trouble themselves much, do they? If they have a want, they go to father; if they are puzzled, they ask father; if they are ill-treated, they appeal to father. If but a thorn is in their finger, they run to mother for relief. Be it little or great, the child's sorrow is the parent's care. This makes a child's life easy: it would make ours easy if we would but act as children towards God. Let us imitate the Elder Brother, and when we, too, are in our Gethsemane, let us,

as he did, continue to cry, "My Father, My Father." This is a better defence than shield or sword.

Our Lord's resource was to approach his Father with prevailing prayer. "Can I not now pray to my Father?" Our Lord Jesus could use that marvellous weapon of All-prayer, which is shield, and sword, and spear, and helmet, and breast-plate, all in one. When you can do nothing else you can pray. If you can do many things besides, it will still be your wisdom to say, "Let us pray!" But I think I hear you object, that our Lord had been praying, and yet his griefs were not removed. He had prayed himself into a bloody sweat with prayer, and yet he was left unprotected, to fall into his enemies' hands. This is true, and yet it is not all the truth; for he had been strengthened, and power for deliverance was at his disposal. He had only to press his suit to be rescued at once. The Greek word here is not the same word which would set forth ordinary prayer: the Revised Version puts it, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father?" We make a great mistake if we throw all prayer into one category, and think that every form of true prayer is alike. We may pray and plead, and even do this with extreme earnestness, and yet we may not use that mode of beseeching which would surely bring the blessing. Hitherto our Lord had prayed, and prayed intensely, too; but there was yet a higher form of prayer to which he might have mounted if it had been proper so to do. He could so have besought that the Father must have answered; but he would not. O brethren, you have prayed a great deal, perhaps, about your trouble, but there is a reserve force of beseeching in you yet: by the aid of the Spirit of God you may pray after a higher and more prevailing rate. This is a far better weapon than a sword. I was speaking to a brother yesterday about a prayer which my Lord had remarkably answered in my own case, and I could not help saying to him, "But I cannot always pray in that fashion. Not only can I not so pray, but I would not dare to do so even if I could." Moved by the Spirit of God, we sometimes pray with a power of faith which can never fail at the mercy-seat; but without such an impulse we must not push our own wills to the front. There are many occasions upon which, if one had all the faith which could move mountains, he would most wisely show it by saying nothing beyond, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Had our Lord chosen to do so, he had still in reserve a prayer-power which would have effectually saved him from his enemies. He did not think it right so to use it; but he could have done so had he pleased.

Notice, that our Lord, *felt that he could even then pray*. Matters had not gone too far for prayer. When can they do so? The word "now" practically occurs twice in our version, for we get it first as "now," and then as "presently." It occurs only once in the original; but as its exact position in the verse cannot easily be decided, our translators, with a singular wisdom, have placed it in both the former and the latter part of the sentence. Our Saviour certainly meant—"I am come now to extremities; the people are far away whose favour formerly protected me from the Pharisees; and I am about to be seized by armed men; but even now I can pray to my Father." Prayer is an ever open door. There is no predicament in which we cannot

pray. If we follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, we can now pray effectually unto our Father, even as he could have done. Do I hear you say, "The fatal hour is near"? You may now pray. "But the danger is imminent!" You may now pray. If, like Jonah, you are now at the bottom of the mountains, and the weeds are wrapped about your head, you may even now pray. Prayer is a weapon that is usable in every position in the hour of conflict. The Greeks had long spears, and these were of grand service to the phalanx so long as the rank was not broken; but the Romans used a short sword, and that was a far more effectual weapon at close quarters. Prayer is both the long spear and the short sword. Yes, brother, between the jaws of the lion you may even now pray. We glory in our blessed Master, that he knew in fulness of faith that if he would bring forth his full power of prayer he could set all heaven on the wing. As soon as his beseeching prayer had reached the Father's ear, immediately, like flames of fire, angels would flash death upon his adversaries.

Our Lord's resort was not the carnal weapon, but to the mighty engine of supplication. Behold, my brethren, where our grand resort must always be. Look not to the arm of flesh, but to the Lord our God. Church of God, look not piteously to the State, but fly to the mercy-seat. Church of God, look not to the ministry, but resort to the throne of grace. Church of God, depend not upon learned or moneyed men, but beseech God in supplicating faith. Prayer is the tower of David builded for an armoury. Prayer is our battle-axe and weapons of war. We say to our antagonist: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father." Let this suffice to display our Saviour's grand resource in the night of his direst distress.

II. Secondly, let me invite your attention to OUR LORD'S UNDIMINISHED POWER IN HEAVEN at the time when he seemed to have no power on earth. He says, when about to be bound and taken away to Caiaphas, "I can presently call down twelve legions of angels from the skies." He had influence in heaven with the Father, the great Lord of angels. He could have of the Father all that the Father possessed. Heaven would be emptied if needful to satisfy the wish of the Beloved Son. The man Christ Jesus who is about to be hung upon the cross has such power with the Father that he has but to ask and to have. The Father would answer him at once: "He shall *presently* send me twelve legions of angels." There would be no delay, no hesitation. The Father was ready to help him, waiting to deliver him. All heaven was concerned about him. All the angelic bands were waiting on the wing, and Jesus had but to express the desire, and instantaneously the garden of Gethsemane would have been as populous with shining ones as the New Jerusalem itself.

Our Lord speaks of angels that his Father would give him, or send him. We may interpret it that the Father would at once put at his disposal the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Think of seraphs at the disposal of the Man of Sorrows! He is despised and rejected of men, and yet angels that excel in strength are at his beck and call. Swift of wing, and quick of hand, and wise of thought, they are charmed to be the messengers of the Son of Man, the servitors of Jesus. Think of this, beloved, when you bow before the thorn-crowned head, and when you

gaze upon the nailed hands and feet. Remember that angels and principalities and powers, and all the ranks of pure spirits by whatsoever name they are named, were all at the beck of Jesus when he was newly risen from his agony, and was about to be led away bound, to the High-priest. He is our Lord and God, even at his lowest and weakest.

Jesus speaks of "twelve legions." I suppose he mentions the number twelve as a legion for each one of the eleven disciples and for himself. They were only twelve, and yet the innumerable hosts of heaven would make forced marches for their rescue. A legion in the Roman army was six thousand men at the very lowest. Twelve times six thousand angels would come in answer to a wish from Jesus. Nay, he says, "more" than twelve legions. There can be no limit to the available resources of the Christ of God. Thousands of thousands would fill the air if Jesus willed it. The band that Judas led would be an insignificant squad to be swallowed up at once if the Saviour would but summon his allies. Behold, dear brethren, the glory of our betrayed and arrested Lord. If he was such then, what is he now, when all power is given him of his Father! Bear in your minds the clear idea that Jesus in his humiliation was nevertheless Lord of all things, and especially of the unseen world, and of the armies which people it. The more clearly you perceive this, the more will you admire the all-conquering, all-abjuring love which took him to the death of the cross.

Tarry here just a minute to recollect that the angels also are, according to your measure and degree, at your call. You have but to pray to God, and angels shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone. We do not think enough of these heavenly beings; yet are they all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. Like Elijah's servant, if your eyes were opened you would see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of God. Let us learn from our Master to reckon upon forces invisible. Let us not trust in that which is seen of the eye, and heard of the ear; but let us have respect to spiritual agencies which evade the senses, but are known to faith. Angels play a far greater part in the affairs of providence than we wot of. God can raise us up friends on earth, and if he does not do so he can find us abler friends in heaven. There is no need to pluck out the sword with which to cut off men's ears; for infinitely better agencies will work for us. Have faith in God, and all things shall work for your good. The angels of God think it an honour and a delight to protect the least of his children.

III. But I cannot linger, although I feel a great temptation to do so. My text is full of teaching, but a main point is the third one—OUR LORD'S PERFECT WILLINGNESS IN SUFFERING. I hope I have already brought that before you. Our Lord would be betrayed into the hands of sinners, but he would go with them willingly. He had not shunned the garden though Judas knew the place. No part of our Lord's sufferings came upon him by the necessity of his nature. Neither as God nor as sinless man was he bound to suffer. There was no necessity that Christ should endure any of the inflictions laid upon him, except the necessity of his fulfilling the Scriptures, and performing the work of

mercy which he came to do. He must die because he became the great sacrifice for sin; but apart from that, no necessity of death was on him. They scourged him; but they could not have lifted the thong if he had not permitted it. He thirsted on the cruel tree; but all the springs of water in the world he makes and fills, and therefore he needed not to have thirsted if he had not chosen to submit thereto. When he died, he did not die through the failure of his natural strength; he died because he had surrendered himself to death as our great Propitiation. Even in his expiring moment our Lord cried with a loud voice, to show that his life was in him still. He "gave up the ghost," freely parting with a life which he might have retained. He voluntarily surrendered his spirit to God. It was not snatched from him by a force superior to his own will: he willingly bore our sins, and willingly died as our Substitute. Let us love and bless the willing Sufferer.

Indeed, our Lord was not merely submissive to the divine will, but, if I may use words in a paradoxical manner, I would say that he was actively submissive. A single prayer would have brought our Lord deliverance from his enemies; but he exercised force upon himself, and held in his natural impulse to beseech the Father. He held in abeyance that noblest of spiritual gifts, that choicest of all forms of power—the power of prayer. One would have thought that a good man might always exercise prayer to the full of his bent, and yet Jesus laid his hand upon his prayer-power as if it had been a sword, and he put it back into its sheath. "He saved others, himself he could not save." He prayed for others; but, in this instance, for himself he would not pray, as he might have done. He would do nothing, even though it were to pray a prayer which even in the slightest degree would oppose the will of the Father. He was so perfectly submissive, yea, so eager to accomplish our salvation, that he would not pray to avoid the cruelty of his enemies and the bitterness of death. He sees it is the Father's will, and therefore he will not have a wish in opposition to it. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Remember, that he needed not to commit any wrong thing to prevent his being taken and slain: a good thing, namely, a prayer, would do it; but he will not pray: he has undertaken the work of redemption, and he must and will go through with it. He has such a desire for your salvation and for mine, such a thirst to honour and glorify his Father in the work which he had engaged to do, that he will not even prevent his sufferings by a prayer.

Wonderful is that question, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" It is as much as to say, "Who else can drink that cup? Who else can tread the wine-press of Almighty wrath? No, I must do it. I cannot lay this load upon any other shoulders." Therefore, for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame. He was willing, ay, willing from beginning to end, to be our suffering Saviour. He was willing to be born at Bethlehem, to work at Nazareth, to be mocked at Jerusalem, and at last to die at Calvary. At any one point he could have drawn back. No constraint was upon him but that of a love stronger than death.

I want you, dear hearers, to draw the inference that Jesus is willing to save. A willing Sufferer must be a willing Saviour. If he willingly

died, he must with equal willingness be ready to give to us the fruit of his death. If any of you would have Jesus, you may surely have him at once. He freely delivered himself up for us all. If he was so willing to become a sacrifice, how willing must he be that the glorious result of his sacrifice should be shared in by you, and by all who come to God by him! If there be unwillingness anywhere, you are unwilling. He rejoices to be gracious. I wish the charm of this truth would affect your heart as it does mine. I love him greatly, because I see that at any moment he might have drawn back from redeeming me, and yet he would not. A single prayer would have set him free; but he would not pray it, for he loved us so!

“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew.”

Do not grieve him by thinking that he is unwilling to forgive, that he is unwilling to receive a sinner such as you. Has he not said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”? You will delight him if you come to him, whoever you may be. If you will but draw near to him by simple trust, he will see in you the purchase of his agony; and all the merit of his death shall flow out freely to you. Come and welcome, sinner, come.

IV. Now I must lead you, with great brevity, to notice OUR LORD'S GREAT RESPECT FOR HOLY SCRIPTURE. He can have twelve legions of angels, but “how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

Notice, that our Lord believed in *the divinity of Scripture*. He says, “How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?” But if the Scriptures are only the writings of men, there is no necessity that they should be fulfilled. If they are merely the fallible utterances of good men, I see no particular necessity that they should be fulfilled. Our Lord Jesus Christ insisted upon it that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, and the reason was, that they are not the word of man, but the Word of God. The Scriptures were evidently the Word of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. He never trifles with them, nor differs from them, nor predicts that they will vanish away. It is he that saith, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

He believed in the divine origin of the Scriptures and also in *their infallibility*. “How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” He does not hint that the Scriptures might be a little mistaken. He does not argue, “I will bring the twelve legions of angels down to deliver myself, and it is no matter to me that then the Scriptures will be made void.” Oh, no! the Scriptures must be true, and they must be fulfilled, and therefore he must be betrayed into the hands of men. He settles it as a matter of necessity that Scripture must infallibly be verified, even to its jots and tittles.

See, brethren, *the priceless worth* of Scripture in the estimation of our Lord. In effect he says, “I will die rather than any Scripture

shall be unfulfilled. I will go to the cross rather than any one word of God should not be carried out." The prophet Zechariah has written, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." The fulfilment of that prophecy fell due that night, and the Son of God was prepared to be smitten as the Shepherd of the sheep, rather than the word of the Father should fall to the ground. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life; but Jesus would give his life for the Scriptures. Brethren, it were worth while for the whole church to die rather than any truth of Scripture should be given up. Let all our thousands be consumed upon the altar as one great holocaust sooner than the Scriptures should be dishonoured. The Word of the Lord must live and prevail whether we die or not. Our Lord teaches us to prize it beyond liberty or life.

The force of our Lord's language goes further yet. Let me repeat the words and then enlarge upon them. "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Holy Scripture is the transcript of the secret decree of God. We do not believe in fate, a blind, hard thing; but we believe in predestination, the settled purpose of a wise and loving Father. The Book of Fate is cruel reading, but the book of divine Fore-ordination is full of charming sentences, and those lines out of it which are written in the Scriptures we joyfully choose to have fulfilled. It is the will of our Father who is in heaven which settles the things which must be; and because of this we cheerfully yield ourselves up to predestination. Once being assured that God has appointed it, we have no struggles, nay, we will not even breathe a wish to have the matter otherwise. Let the will of the Father be the supreme law. It ought to be so. We find a depth of comfort in saying, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Now, the prophecies of Scripture were to the Lord Christ the revelation of the predestination of God that so it must be, and he cheerfully, joyfully, even without a prayer against it, gives himself up at once to that which must be, because God has appointed it. If any of you do not believe in the predestination of God, you will, probably, in some hour of depression, ascribe your sorrows to a cruel fate. The human mind, somehow or other, is driven at last to this decision, that some things are beyond the control of man and of his will, and that these are fixed by necessity. How much better to see that God has fixed them! There is the wheel revolving surely and unalterably; would it not comfort you to believe that it is full of eyes, and that it is moving according to the settled purpose of the Lord? That man who says, "It is my Father's will" is the happy man. Predestination is as sure and as certain as fate; but there is at the back of it a living and loving personality, ordering all things. To this we cheerfully yield ourselves.

Beloved, let us value Scripture as much as Christ did; I was going to say, let us value it even more: for if our Lord valued unfulfilled Scripture—which was but a shell till he became its kernel—how much more should we value it, to whom the Scriptures are fulfilled in a large degree, because the Christ has suffered and has done even as it was written of him by the prophets of God!

Time flies so quickly that I must pass on. You perceive that I have a pregnant text ; it is full of living instruction to those who desire to learn. God help us to receive with joy all its holy teaching!

V. But I must come to the last point. We will consider **OUR LORD'S LESSONS TO EACH ONE OF US** in this text.

The first lesson is this : Desire no other forces for God's work than God himself ordains to use. Do not desire that the Government should come to your rescue to support your church. Do not desire that the charms of eloquence should be given to ministers, that they may therewith command listening ears, and so maintain the faith by the wisdom of words. Do not ask that learning and rank and prestige may come upon the side of Christianity, and so religion may become respectable and influential. Means that God has not chosen to use should not be looked upon by us with covetous eyes. Has he not said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"? Jesus has all those squadrons of angels at his disposal ; do you not wish that he would use them? What a glorious vision is before us as we see their serried ranks and mark their glittering splendour! But Jesus bids them stand still and see the salvation of God wrought out without their interposition. To them he has not put in subjection the new world. They must not meddle with the redemption of men. The conflict for truth is to be a spiritual battle between man and the serpent : nothing but spiritual force is to be employed, and that not by angels, but by men. Man must overcome sin by spiritual means only. Put up the sword, Peter! Jesus does not want its keen edge. Keep your swords in your sheaths, ye seraphim! Jesus does not want even your blades of celestial temper. His weakness has done more than human or angelic strength. His suffering and death have done the deed which all the hierarchy of angels could never have accomplished. The truth is to win the fight. The Spirit is to subdue the powers of evil. Brethren, do not ask anybody else to interfere. Let us have this fight out on the ground which God has chosen. Let us know that God is omnipotent in the realm of mind, and that by his truth and Spirit he will overcome. He holds back all forces other than those of argument, and suasion, and enlightenment by his Spirit : do not let us even wish to put our hand to any force other than he ordains to use.

And, next, take care that when other forces are within reach, you do not use them for the promotion of the heavenly kingdom. When you are in argument for the truth, do not grow angry ; for this would be to fight the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons. Do not wish to oppress a person whose views are erroneous or even blasphemous. The use of bribes for the propagation of opinions is mean, and the refusal of charities to those who differ from us in sentiment is detestable. Let no threat escape your lip, nor bribe pollute your hand. It is not thus that the battles of truth are to be fought. If you ever feel inclined to shut a man's mouth by wishing him banishment, or sickness, or any sort of ill, be grieved with yourself that so unchristly a thought should have entered your head. Desire only good for the most perverse of men. Fighting for Christ would be wounding him sorely. The French king heard of the cruelties perpetrated upon our Lord, and he exclaimed, "Oh, if I had been there with a troop of my guards, I

should have cut the villains in pieces!" Yes, but Jesus did not want the King of France nor his guards: he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The Lord Jesus desires you, my brethren, to fight for him by your faith, by your holy life, by your confidence in truth, by your reliance upon the Spirit of God; but whenever your hand begins to itch for the sword-hilt, then may you hear him say, "Put up thy sword into its sheath." He will conquer by love, and by love alone. If at this present moment I could take this church and endow it with all the wealth of the Establishment, and gather into its midst all the wisdom and talent and eloquence which now adorns society, and if I could do this by one single prayer, I should long hesitate to offer the petition. These might prove idols, and provoke the living God to jealousy. Infinitely better for us to be poor and weak and devoid of that which is highly esteemed among men, and then to be baptized into the Holy Ghost, than to become strong and be left of our God. We shall war this warfare with no unsanctified weapons, with no instrument other than God appoints. Speaking the truth in the power of the Spirit of God, we are not afraid of the result. Surely this is what Christ means: "I could pray to my Father and receive at once a body-guard of angels, but I will do nothing of the kind, for by other means than these must my kingdom come."

And the next lesson is: Never attempt to escape suffering at the expense of truth: "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" says Christ: "I can escape being taken, and bound, and made a felon of; but then how are the Scriptures to be fulfilled?" Would you like to be throughout life screened from all affliction? I think I hear a great many say, "I should." Would you? Would you be always free from sickness, poverty, care, bereavement, slander, persecution? How, then, could that word be true, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction"! What would that text mean, "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not"? Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." Are you to be an exception to the rule? Oh, do not kick against suffering, for in so doing you may be fighting against God. When Peter drew his sword he was unconsciously fighting to prevent our redemption. When we struggle against tribulation or persecution we may be warring against untold benefit. Do you desire to ride through the world like princes? Do not desire such a dangerous fate; for how then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that the disciple is not above his Lord? Bow your spirit before the majesty of Scripture, and patiently endure all things for the elect's sake.

Again, never tremble when force is on the wrong side. You see they are coming, Pharisees and priests and the *posse comitatus* sent by the authorities to arrest the Saviour; but he is not afraid. Why should he be? He could command twelve legions of angels to beat off the foe. The man who knows he has a reserve behind him may walk into an ambush without fear. The multitude think that there stands before them a mere man, a feeble man, strangely red as with bloody sweat. Ah! they know neither him nor his Father. Let him give a whistle, and from behind the olives of the grove, and from the walls of the garden, and from every stone of the Mount of Olives would spring up warriors

mightier than those of Cæsar, valiant ones, before whom armies would be consumed. One of these mighties of God slew of Sennacherib's army one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in a single night ; another smote all the first-born of Egypt. Think, then, what more than twelve legions of them could accomplish ! Brethren, all these holy, heavenly beings are on our side. " Oh, but there are so many against us ! " Yes, I know there are ; but more are they that are for us. All the myriads of heaven are our allies. See ye not the legions waiting for the summons ? Who wants to give the word of command till our great Commander-in-Chief decides that the hour is come ? Let us patiently wait till he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God ; then will the reserves pour forth from heaven's gate, and all the holy angels shall swell the pomp of the great appearing. Till that moment, wait ! In your patience possess ye your souls ! The Lord Jesus waited ; his angels waited ; his Father waited. They are all still waiting. Heaven's long-suffering still runs like a silver thread through the centuries. Jesus will come with his angels in all the glory of the Father ; but dream not that he must come to-morrow or else be charged with being slack concerning his promise. Desire that he may come in your lifetime, and look out for him ; but if he tarryeth be not dismayed. If he tarry for another century do not be weary ; if another thousand years should intervene between us and the bright millennial day, yet stand ye fast each man in his place, fearing nothing, but setting up your banners in the name of the Lord. " The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. " We have no lack of strength, it is only that God wills that it be not put forth, and that our weakness for he present should be the instrument of his most majestic conquests. Lord, we are content to trust in thee and wait patiently for thee ; but leave us not, we beseech thee. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxii. 31—53 ;
Matthew xxvi. 47—54.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—307, 291, 293.

CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS.*

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 1ST, 1903,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, October 26th, 1882.

"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first: for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. . . . The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"—John xviii. 12, 13, 19—23.

NOTE the words in verse 13: "and led him away to Annas first." This man Annas has not become so infamous as Pontius Pilate, because his name did not happen to be mentioned in the Creed; but, in some respects, he was even more guilty than the Roman governor. He was one of those who handed over our Lord to Pilate, and he is included in the judgment, "he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." It must not be forgotten that he was *first* in trying the Saviour; let him have the full benefit of it: "*they led him away to Annas first.*"

Who was this man, to whose palace the Lord Jesus was first conducted? He was a man who had been high priest actually for a time, and had, for some fifty years, been regarded as high priest by the Jews, while members of his family, one after another, had in turns nominally held the office. The high-priesthood had been degraded from its permanence to become little more than an annual office, and hence the evangelist significantly says of Caiaphas

* The first portion of this sermon was revised by MR. SPURGEON, and the unusually long introductory paragraphs are set up from his own handwriting. Four other discourses in the same series will (D.V.) be published for reading on March 15th and 29th, and April 5th and 12th, after which the whole set on "The Last Days of our Lord's Passion" will, possibly, be issued in a volume, in accordance with MR. SPURGEON'S original plan in preaching the sermons.

that "he was the high priest that same year." But Annas would seem to have been secretly regarded by the Jews as the real high priest, and respect to him in that capacity was the more easily offered because, according to Josephus, five of his sons, and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, had succeeded him in the sacred office. To him, then, it was due that the victim of the priests should be first taken; he shall have this mark of distinction: "they led him away to Annas first." The Sacrifice of God, the Lamb of his passover, the Scapegoat of the Lord's atonement, shall be brought before the priest, ere he be slain.

The house of Annas was united to that of Caiaphas, and it was proposed to detain the prisoner there till the Sanhedrim could be hastily convened for his trial. If he should be brought into the palace of Annas, the old man would be gratified by a sight of Jesus, and by conducting a preliminary examination, acting as deputy for his son-in-law. Without leaving his own house, he could thus indulge his malice, and have a finger in the business. Priestly hate is ever deep and unrelenting. To-day, none are such enemies of Christ's holy gospel as those who delight in priestcraft, and it is not without prophetic meaning that our Lord must be led, as a prisoner, first to a priest's house: "they led him away to Annas first." Not in the soldiers' barracks, nor in the governor's hall, but in the high priest's palace must Jesus meet with his first captivity: there it is that a Christ in bonds seems not altogether out of place.

" See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in his lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."

Annas bore a very promising name, for it signifies *clement* or *merciful*, yet he was the man to begin the work of ensnaring the Lord Jesus in his speech, if he could be ensnared. He examined him first in a semi-private manner, that, by cunning questions, he might extract from him some ground of accusation. Under pretence of mercy, he turned inquisitor, and put his victim to the question. This priest, whose name was clemency, showed the usual tender mercies of the wicked, which are proverbially cruel. When Jesus is to be ill-treated in his servants, there is usually a pretence of pity and compassion. Persecutors are grieved to feel forced to be harsh; their tender spirits are wounded by being compelled to say a word against the Lord's people! Fain would they love them if they would not be so obstinate! With sweet language, they inflict bitter wounds; their words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords.

If I read aright the character of this man Annas, he was one of the Saviour's bitterest enemies. He was a Sadducee. Is not this the "liberal" side? Do we not reckon Pharisees to be the straitest sect of the Jews? Why he should have been so bitter against the Saviour, is pretty clear, since, if Pharisees, in their multiplication of ceremonies and self-righteousnesses, hate the

Christ, so also do the Sadducees, in their unbelief and rejection of the great truths of revelation. Here, Ritualism and Rationalism go hand in hand, and the free-thinker, with all his profession of liberality, usually displays none of it toward the followers of the truth. The Broad Church is usually narrow enough when the doctrine of the cross is under discussion. Whether this Sadducee had an interest in the sales that were effected in the temple, and whether, as some suppose, he was greatly irritated, and touched in a very tender point, namely, in his pocket, when Jesus overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, I cannot tell; but, certainly, for some reason or other, Annas was among the first of our Lord's persecutors, not only in order of time, but also in point of malice. The wealthy latitudinarian has a fierce enmity to the gospel of Christ Jesus, and will be found second to none in hunting down the adherents of Christ.

Did the military tribune and his cohort halt at the house of Annas because he had been at the bottom of the business, and Pilate had ordered them, for the time, to do the will of the high priest and his father-in-law? Was this long-headed old gentleman the counsellor of the conspirators? Did the force of character, which kept him to the front for half a century, make him a leader at this juncture? Is it possible that they called at the house of Annas to hand over their victim, that Judas might receive the blood-money? At all events, we hear no more of the traitor as being in the company of those who had seized upon his Lord.

At any rate, the Lord is led to Annas *first*, and we feel sure that there was a motive for that act. Annas, in some sense, had a priority in the peirage of enmity to Jesus; he was malignant, cruel, and unscrupulous enough to be premier in the ministry of persecutors. In all matters, there are first as well as last, and this man leads the van among the unjust judges of our Lord. He was a favourite of the first and most detestable of the Herods, and a friend of Pilate, the governor, and so, a fit ringleader in procuring the judicial murder of the innocent. All hope of justice was gone when the Holy One and the Just was delivered into those cruel and unrighteous hands. He was as determined as he was cold-blooded, and a lamb might as well look for favour from a wolf as Jesus expect candour from the old deputy high priest. For many a long year, he had held his own by flattering Herod, and the Roman, and the Jew; and he set about the work of mastering the Nazarene with cool determination and deep subtlety, hoping to pave the way for the men of the Sanhedrim who were even then being mustered to do the deed of blood on which their hearts were set.

In the house of this man, then, who is very properly called the high priest, having quite as good a right to the title as Caiaphas had, we see these two things. First, we see *our Lord under examination*; and, secondly, we see *our Lord wrongfully smitten*.

I. First, let us, tenderly, lovingly, adoringly, look at OUR DIVINE MASTER UNDER EXAMINATION.

My first remark is, that *this examination was informal, and extra-judicial*. Jesus was not yet accused of anything; so far, no

judge had taken his place upon the judgment-seat, neither were any witnesses called to give evidence against the prisoner. It was a sort of private examination, held with the view of extorting something from the captive, which might afterwards be used against him. You know how strongly and how properly our law forbids anything of the kind; and, though it may not have been contrary to Jewish law, it was certainly contrary to the eternal laws of right. A prisoner should not thus be questioned with the object of entangling him in his speech, and making him incriminate himself. If there is no charge formulated against him, let him go his way. If the entries on the charge-sheet are not completed, let him be remanded; but let him not be set before one of his most cruel foes to be questioned to his own hurt.

This is what was done in our Saviour's case when he was brought before Annas, and I think that I know many who treat him, at this time, quite as badly. They ask questions about him, and make enquiries concerning him; but they do not do it honestly and sincerely, or according to the rules of justice. You know how captious unbelievers often are, how they pick up any misquoted text, or half a text rent from its connection, and say that they are enquiring about Christ, when they are not doing it either judicially or as they would wish to be questioned were they themselves under examination. I fear that the bulk of those, who cavil at the faith of Christ, do it not as honest men, and not as they would wish to have their own characters investigated. The last book which some of them think of reading is the New Testament, and the last thing that they try to understand is Christ's true character; and one of the last things that they will ever listen to is a full and fair statement of what his gospel really is. Still, to this day, the representatives of Annas are here, and there, and almost everywhere, questioning the followers of Christ, with the design of finding out something to jeer at, something which may be hawked about as a discrepancy, or held up as obsolete, and inconsistent with the spirit of this wonderful century, of which I hear so often that I am utterly sick of it, and long for the time when the nineteenth century shall go down to its ignoble grave.

Next, *this questioning of Christ was one-sided*: "the high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." Why did he not ask him about himself,—who and what he was, and enquire specially concerning his miracles, and his whole course of life? Why did not Annas enquire, "Didst thou raise the dead? Didst thou open blind eyes? Didst thou heal the lepers? Didst thou go about doing good?" Oh, no! there was no question about any such things; they were all passed over as of no importance.

The questions began with the weakest point of all, or that which men have often regarded as the weakest; he "asked Jesus of his disciples." Can a leader help the follies and weaknesses of his followers? I suppose Annas put his question thus, "Where are your disciples?" Ah! there was Peter down there in the hall, but Christ could not call him up to witness for him; John was probably somewhere in the background, but the rest had forsaken their Lord, and

fled. Annas no doubt asked, "Who are these disciples of thine? Where didst thou pick them up?" I daresay he knew that they were men of Galilee, mostly plain fishermen, and he meant to cast a slur upon Christ on that account. If he had known more about those disciples, he might have put a great many questions which would have reflected but little honour upon the religion of Jesus.

This is just as men do now, they ask concerning Christ's disciples. I do not deny that it is quite fair to enquire what is the influence of Christianity upon the men who believe it; but, oftentimes, that one point is thrust so prominently into the front that the wonders which Christ himself wrought are thrown into the background, and the investigation thus becomes one-sided. We are quite willing that Christ himself, and his work, all that has been, all that is to be, all his designs and purposes, should be examined; but, for the most part, men search for that which they think to be the weakest point of assault, and they say, "Look at So-and-so, one of Christ's disciples; and look at So-and-so, one of his ministers. See what divisions there are in the churches;" and so forth. Yes; but, surely, if Christ be examined at all, he deserves to have a full and fair examination, it should not be upon one point alone. Blessed be his name, it matters not upon what point he is examined, **he** always has his answer ready, and a glorious one it is. If men were really willing to know the truth, they would take an all-round view of him, and look at him from this point and from that, and then judge him.

Further, *this examination was very disorderly*, for the high priest asked Christ "of his disciples, and of his doctrine." Now, logically, the enquiry should have been first concerning his doctrine, and then with respect to his disciples,—first as to his teaching, and then as to the people influenced by it. But men like Annas put their questions anyhow,—upside down, the first last and the last first,—so that they may secure some accusation against Christ. Now, if any man will sit down quietly, and really study the life, and character, and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, we shall be delighted to hear what he has to say about it; but let him study it in due order. Let him not pick out this, and leave out that, and put everything out of gear, so as to make a monster of him. Let him be looked at after the same manner as one would look at any other religious teacher, or as we might examine the character of any man brought before a court of law. I ask those, if there be any such now present, who have spoken harshly of our blessed Lord and Master, to do themselves the justice, and to do Christ the justice, to adopt another course, and to examine him as they would wish to be examined themselves, if their character and their designs were called in question.

Annas did not so, for *his examination of Christ was concerning his disciples and his doctrine*. With regard to his disciples, our Master said nothing. He had been saying much about them to his Father, and, in his almighty love and wisdom, he could have said much, there and then, concerning his disciples, if he had chosen to do so; but he did not, and therein he proved his wisdom.

All through the Scriptures, we find comparatively little said concerning God's people. The record is mostly of their faults and their failings. The reason for that is that this is not the day of their manifestation. That day comes on apace; and, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Annas thought that Christ's followers were a set of fanatics,—ignorant, unskilled, worthless people, the lower orders. The catacombs tell us, as we read the rude inscriptions there, how few of those godly folk, of whom the world was not worthy, were men of education; the most of them were evidently plain, humble, common people. Our Lord Jesus Christ has no great reverence for earthly rank or grandeur; he loves the man, but cares little for the garb he wears; and of the poorest saints it is true that "he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

It is a mercy for us, who are on Christ's side, and who have been despised in consequence, that, in the resurrection, there will also be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. There will be a bestowal of honour that has been denied here, and of credit that has been refused on the earth. God has said it, so it must be true, "Light is sown for the righteous," and their glad harvest time shall surely come; and then the glory will for ever blot out the shame and derision which may have been poured upon the faithful for the sake of Jesus Christ their Lord and Master. As yet, we will not ask him concerning his disciples; but that is the point that the adversary harps upon. Therefore, O ye disciples of Jesus, watch and pray, and seek to be like your Master! Pray to be kept from the evil which is in the world; and, as for the rest, if men despise you, count that as part of the bargain upon which you have entered, a bargain which shall, in due season, fill you with bliss eternal.

Annas also asked Christ concerning his doctrine,—what it was that he taught to those who listened to him. I will not go into that matter, for I want to speak at some length upon *the answer which Christ gave to Annas*. He first protested that it was not fair for him to be thus questioned in private as to what he had said in public. The proper thing was to ask those who had heard him, "for," said he, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple." I chose the most public places for my teaching; I had no hole-and-corner gatherings, no little conventicle in which I urged my followers to sedition. No, 'I spake openly.' The heavens heard me. On the side of the hills, I proclaimed my message. By the seashore, I spake to all who gathered around me; multitudes were often present at my services; they know what I said, and they could bear witness concerning it if they were asked to do so."

There was great openness about Christ. There was an utter absence of anything like the Jesuitical plan of saying one thing and meaning another, or using expressions that had a double meaning in them. It is true that our Lord did not explain to the great mass of the people all that he said to them, for they were so stupid that they would not receive it; but,

at the same time, there was nothing that his hearers really needed to know that he concealed from them. He carried his heart where all might read it; and even in his common teaching to the multitude, there was, if they had but had eyes to see it, all that he taught to his disciples in the most private place. There was no wish, on his part, to keep back any truth that ought to be made known to those who gathered to hear him.

I have heard it said that there are certain truths in God's Word which it is better for us not to preach. It is admitted that they are true, but it is alleged that they are not edifying. I will not agree to any such plan; this is just going back to old Rome's method. Whatsoever it has seemed good to God's wisdom to reveal, it is wise for God's servants to proclaim. Who are we that we are to judge between this truth and that, and to say that this we are to preach, and that we are to withhold? This system would make us to be, after all, the judges of what Christ's gospel is to be. It must not be so among us, beloved; that would be assuming a responsibility which we are quite unable to bear. I believe that it is because the doctrines of grace have been too much kept from the pulpit, that the pews are getting so empty. Leave the doctrines of grace out of the preaching, and you have left the marrow and fatness out of it. What is there to make the people rush to your houses of prayer, and crowd them, if there be no preaching of the election of grace,—no declaration of particular redemption, and effectual calling,—no proclamation of the blessed final perseverance of the saints? If you leave these glorious truths out of your preaching, you have put on the table nothing but the horseradish and the parsley, but the joint of meat is conspicuous by its absence.

Some people say that these things are to be talked of among the saints, but must not be preached to sinners. Oh, say not so! Every doctrine of God's Word is good; every truth in the Bible is precious; and the omission of any one part of it, wilfully, and with design, may so impair the whole of our testimony that, instead of being, like Hermon, wet with dew, our ministry will be like the accursed Gilboa, upon which no dew descended. Whatsoever the Lord has taught to you by his Spirit, my brother, tell to others. According as you have opportunity, reveal to them what God has revealed to you; remember how Christ himself charged his disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." And, to-day, the sublime and majestic truths, which cluster around the sovereignty of God, are as much to be proclaimed as the softer, and tenderer, and apparently more winsome words which tell of infinite mercy to the chief of sinners. All truths are to be preached in due proportion; there is a time for this, and a time for that, and none must be omitted. There is a particular stone which is to be the key of the arch, and another which is to go on this side, another lower down, and yet another lower down still, and the omitting of any one stone, because it does not happen to be of what we reckon to be the orthodox shape for usefulness, may spoil the whole bridge, and it may come down with a crash. Oh, that we may so build

in our teaching, that our building will last throughout eternity! At the end of our ministry, may we be able to say, "I have kept back nothing; all that Christ taught to me, I have taught to others, and so I have made full proof of my ministry." Christ was able to appeal to those who had heard him, and who could tell what his testimony had been. May God give us grace to imitate him in this respect!

Our blessed Lord answered Annas by referring him to his public life and teaching. There was no need for any other defence. We cannot imagine anything more convincing. No eloquence of speech, or forcibleness of argument, could have so completely put the wily adversary out of the field. The inquisitor himself was so ashamed, and for the moment so confounded, that a zealous official struck Jesus with his open hand. The innocent, unabashed face of the persecuted Nazarene was thus smitten because his simple defence had silenced his cruel opponent. What a wonderful answer it was! How it commends his whole character to us, and makes him seem to be even more truly majestic than ever!

I am sure there is not one of us who would dare to say of our lives, at least not so unreservedly, what Jesus could truly say of his. Our Lord's life was emphatically lived among men. He was no recluse. From early morning to the last thing at night, he was associated with men; and, therefore, all that he did was done before the eyes of men. That "fierce light that beats about a throne" ever beat about him. He was constantly being watched; every word that he uttered was remembered. Again and again, his enemies endeavoured to catch him in his speech. He could scarcely be allowed a moment's leisure, when he might unbosom himself, like one at his own fireside. He was always before the Argus-eyes of the ungodly world, who would see faults where there were none, and who, if there had been the least speck of blame, would have magnified it, and published it to the ends of the earth.

Moreover, our Lord was by no means a silent man. He spoke, and spoke often. Witness the Books that we have by way of record of that quiet life of his; and the things that he said and did were far more than those that are recorded, for John says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Yet there was never any act or word of Christ's in which friend or foe could find a single speck of sin at all. He could even challenge Satan himself to find a flaw in his life: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

His speech, too, was not only very frequent, but it was also very plain. He spoke so simply that even little children could understand him; I should think there was never one person in his audience who could truthfully say that he could not comprehend what the Preacher meant; and yet, though they could all tell what his meaning was, they could not honestly find fault with that meaning.

Another thing that is worthy of observation is that, frequently,

he spoke under great provocation; yet he never lost his temper, nor spoke unadvisedly with his lips. You and I know that, if we ever lose our temper, we are apt to say all manner of unwise, and foolish, and wicked words; but our blessed Saviour never sinned in that way, however great was the provocation to which he was subjected. He was also often misrepresented; and our tendency is, when men speak falsely of us, to go beyond the bounds of truth or prudence in replying to them. Our Lord Jesus never did that. The pendulum of the great clock of his wonderful life never swung too far either one way or the other. You have not to correct any one saying of the Saviour by what he said at some other time; all his utterances are absolute truth, whether taken separately, or taken together. Even the false witnesses, who were bribed to bring accusations against him, altogether failed to find anything that could be laid to his charge.

It must not be forgotten, also, that our blessed Master frequently spoke in the midst of turmoil. He did not always have such a quiet, orderly assembly as we have when we gather for public worship; but he had to speak, often, amidst the clamour of the angry mob, and the opposition and even the maledictions of those who hated him. Yet, even under these trying circumstances, he spoke so that he could fearlessly challenge them all to find fault with anything that he had said in their hearing. Our Lord had spoken to all sorts of characters;—bad, good, and indifferent;—and there was especially one, who betrayed him, who had heard many of his most secret speeches. Judas had been with him in his retirement, and had listened to his words when only the favoured few had been present, yet there was no single sentence or syllable that even he could plead in extenuation of his great crime in betraying his Lord.

II. I have spoken, at such length, upon this first part of my subject that I have very little time left for the second portion, namely, OUR LORD JESUS WRONGFULLY SMITTEN: "When he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?"

His answer was a very simple one, and a very proper one in all respects; yet, at the same time, it must have been a very stinging one if Annas was the kind of man that I think he was, for our Saviour seemed to say, (you may read it between the lines,) "I am not plotting in secret against another man's life. I have not talked with another man with the object of entangling him in his speech. I have not been a conspirator, but I have spoken publicly in the synagogues, and taught in the temple, in the very centre of the place of concourse; but 'in secret have I said nothing.'" This must have been a very sharp rebuke to Annas, if any conscience was left in the wretched man; so one of the abjects that stood around the hierarch smote Christ, and said, "Answerest thou the high priest so?"

Now, in the first instance, Christ met with the opposition of so-called enquiry; but here he had the vulgar opposition of persecution. Alas! there are still many, who never enquire about Christ

at all, but they decide against him, and then they begin to persecute wife, child, friend, neighbour, or whoever it may be that is on Christ's side; and, often, they strike him as this officer struck our Lord. This was a most cowardly act, for Christ was bound and helpless. Yet we have the same sort of conduct in our own day. It does seem to me a wretched thing that, if some people choose to go through the streets singing hymns, they shall be pelted with stones and mud while their own hands are bound. They cannot turn round, and fight their assailants, for their Christianity has tied their hands, and the cruel mobs know it. If these men want to fight, why do they not find some fellows, like themselves, walking through the streets, and attack them, and then see what will come of it? They are afraid to do that; for, to this day, persecution is always against men whose hands are bound. If our religion taught us to answer sharply, and to give cuff for cuff, and kick for kick, it would be all fair; but when we are commanded not to resist evil, and our very faithfulness to Christ prevents our replying to the foul language that is used against us, it is brutally cruel that we should be thus persecuted. Read all history through, and see whether some have not degraded themselves utterly beneath contempt by burning men who would not have touched a hair of their heads,—and putting to death poor men and women who could not have done them any injury, and who never wished to do so. That is the story of Christ and his followers all the way through,—first, to be questioned by people who do not want to know the truth; and, next, to be persecuted by people who really have not anything to say against them.

To the man who thus wrongfully smote him, our Saviour said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" We also may say to those who wantonly smite Christ's followers, "Why do ye so? Has Christianity done any harm to manhood in general, or to you in particular?" What has been the force that has broken the power of tyrants? At the bottom, in many countries, it has been the Word of God that has made men free. In our own times, what ended the slave trade, and set the negro free? What is it that, to-day, is the most potent force against the drunkenness of our land? Surely, nothing but the gospel of Jesus Christ. Have we, as Christians, any aim, in all the world, of which anyone can accuse us? Are we doing mischief to our fellow-men? Do we teach drunkenness, or lust, or oppression? Do you hear from us anything about robbing you of your birthright, or injuring you in any way whatsoever? Nay, you know that it is not so. Our war is for peace. Every blow that we strike is against blows. If we have to denounce anything, we do most of all denounce denunciation; and if we are bitter at all, most of all are we bitter against bitterness, and envy, and malice, and all uncharitableness.

Oh, that we could always give to our persecutors such an answer as our blessed Master gave to the officer who smote him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" There are times when we dare not say that, but we

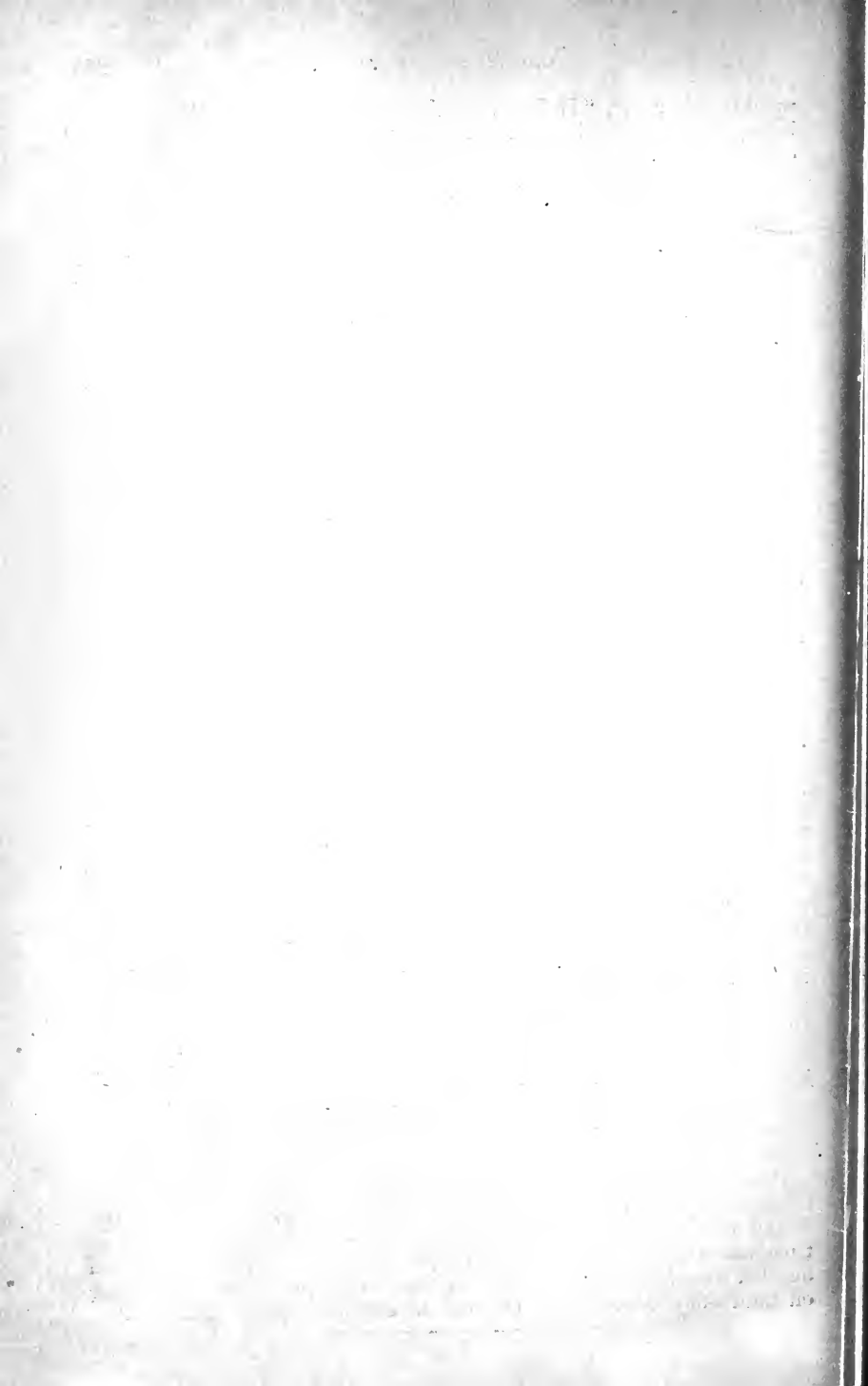
would rather say, "If I have spoken evil, do not recall it, do not bring it to my recollection. If I have spoken evil, try to forget it; or, at least, if thou rememberest it, repeat it not to another, for I am afraid that I may have said much that might stain my profession, and grieve my God." I think that, if we had our choice as to whether we would be smitten on the face, or have our own words brought up as witnesses against us, we should each one say, "If I have spoken evil, do not bear witness of the evil; but much rather smite me than bear witness against me."

Yet it is not always so; there are times when, in conscious integrity, or concerning certain words or acts of ours, we can challenge any man to find fault with us; but, taking the whole range of our lives, in public and in private, most of us would be loth to ask for such a test as that. When our adversaries persecute us, we might say to them, "Ah! did you really know all that we have been, you would not so much persecute us for our goodness, but punish us for our badness." When I have been slandered, I have often said to myself, "Ah! they have spoken a lie against me; but, if they had known me better, they might have said quite as bad a thing as that, and yet have only spoken what was true." There is not one man living, who is in his right senses, who would like to have all his thoughts written down, or all his words and acts recorded. We have often wished that half our words could be blotted out with our tears, and then the other half would have to be washed with blood before we could ourselves endure it, and much less could our Lord endure it without the application of that precious blood of Jesus, that cleanseth from all sin.

Now, I think that all this, of which I have been speaking to you, ought very much to endear the Master to us; and it will do so if we remember and believe that God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here is a Lamb that is fit for sacrifice. The high priest and all his officers may examine it as much as they please; they will find that it is perfect. There is not a blemish in it. There is no redundancy, and there is no omission. There is neither speck nor spot of sin in Christ; we cannot find any fault in him. Whether we look at him within or without, in his youth, or in his childhood, or in his manhood,—in his life or in his death,—in his speech or in his silence, in his feelings, or in his thoughts, or in his acts,—he is good, and only good, and blessed be his holy name for ever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 274, 268.

(In closing his discourse, MR. SPURGEON intimated that he had intended also to speak, in that sermon, upon Annas sending Christ bound to Caiaphas; but that he had been obliged, through want of time, and the importance of that topic, to leave it to be dealt with in another discourse. This will be the one to be published for reading on Lord's-day, March 15th, and will be entitled "Christ in Bonds.")



CHRIST IN BONDS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 15TH, 1903,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, November 2nd, 1882.

“Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.” (The Revised Version says, “Annas therefore sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.”)—John xviii. 24.

OUR only subject, on this occasion, is, CHRIST IN BONDS,—the Son of God as an Ambassador in bonds, a King in chains,—the God-man sent, bound, to take his trial in the court of the high priest, Caiaphas.

It seems to me that this binding of our Lord shows, first, something of fear on the part of his captors. Why did they bind him? He would not attack them; he had no desire to escape out of their hands; yet, probably, they thought that he might break loose from them, or in some way outwit them. Alas! that men should ever have been thus afraid of him who came alone from heaven, neither bearing arms nor wearing armour,—who came to injure none, nor even to protect himself against the hurts that any might inflict upon him,—at first, lying as a babe in a manger, and all his life long exhibiting rather the weakness of manhood than its strength; yet were his adversaries often afraid of him. So is it still; there is a latent, secret conviction, in the minds of men, that the Christ is greater than he seems to be. Even when they attack him with their infidel weapons, they never seem to be satisfied with their own arguments, and they are continually seeking fresh ones. To this very day, the ungodly are afraid of Christ, and, often, their raging against him resembles the noise made by the boy who, when hurrying through the graveyard, whistles to keep his courage up.

They also bound Christ, no doubt, to increase the shame of his condition. Our Saviour said to those who came to arrest him in the garden, “Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords, and with staves to take me?” And now they bound him fast as though he were a thief,—perhaps tied his hands, with tight cords, behind his back, to show that they regarded him as a felon, and that they

were not taking him into a civil court where some case of law might be pending, but they already condemned him by the very act of binding him. They treated him as if he were already sentenced, and were not worthy to stand, a free man, and plead for himself before the judgment-seat. Oh, what a shame that the Lord of life and glory should be bound,—that he, whom angels delight to worship, that he who is the very sun of their heaven, should yet be bound as though he were a malefactor, and be sent away to be tried for his life!

We may also look at this matter of the binding of the Saviour as an increase of his pain. I suppose none of you have ever been bound as our Lord was at that time; if you had been, you would know the discomfort and pain which must attend such action. John tells us that, in Gethsemane, "the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him." He had scarcely risen from his knees, and the bloody sweat was like fresh ruby dew upon him, yet these men "bound him, and led him away to Annas first." I do not find any indication that his bonds were unloosed by Annas, or that he had even a moment's relief or relaxation granted to him; but, with the cruel ropes still binding him fast, he was sent across the great hall into the other wing of the palace in which Caiaphas resided: "Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas." Then this, surely, must have been done in very wantonness of malice. I have already said that they seemed to have some sort of fear that their captive would, after all, escape from them; yet they might, readily enough, have banished that fear from their minds. There was no need to bind Him. O cruel persecutors, look into his face! If you are resolved to lead him away to his death, you may lead him like a sheep goes to the slaughter. He will not even open his mouth to upbraid you. There was no need to put any bonds upon One so gentle as he was. Out of very wantonness, I say, they must have done it, that they might express their hatred by every conceivable method, both in the little details, and in the great end at which they were aiming all the while, namely, to put him to a most painful death. Ah, me! how shamefully was our blessed Master maltreated in this inhospitable world! Men had often been regicides, and we need not wonder at that when we think what tyrants they were who were thus slain; but these men were turning into deicides, putting to death the Son of God himself; and, ere they did it, they heaped upon him every mark of scorn and dishonour that was possible, that they might cause him to die with opprobrium as well as with pain.

You, who love your Saviour, will think, with tender sympathy, of how he was bound by these wicked men; my special object is, to try to find out what are the lessons which we may learn from the bonds of Christ.

I. The first lesson is this. From the binding of our dear Redeemer, I learn a lesson concerning sin. **THE BONDS OF CHRIST TEACH US WHAT SIN WOULD DO TO GOD IF IT COULD.**

The unregenerate heart, in its enmity against God, would treat him exactly as the men of nineteen hundred years ago served the

Son of God. What was done to Jesus is just what man would do, if he could, to the Lord God of heaven and earth himself. "What!" say you, "would men bind God?" Ah, sirs! they would do much more than that if they could, but they would certainly do that. They would annihilate God if they could, for "the fool hath said in his heart, No God,"—that is to say, "No God for me!" He would kill God if it were possible. There would be no gladder news to many men, who are living to-day, than for them to be informed, with absolute certainty, that there was no God at all; all their fears would be at once silenced by such tidings. As for us, who love and trust him, all our joys would be gone, and our worst fears would be realized, if God were gone; but, as for the ungodly, it would be the gladdest news that ever was rung out from church steeple if they could be assured that God was dead. They would kill him if they could; but, as they cannot kill him, they seek to bind him.

Observe how they try to do this *by denying his power*. There are many men, who say that they believe in God, yet what sort of God is it in whom they believe? It is a God who is fettered by his own laws. "Here is the world," they say, "but let not anyone suppose that God has anything to do with the world." They seem to have a theory that, somehow or other, it got wound up, like a great clock, and it has been going on ever since. God has not even been to see it; indeed, the probability is that he cannot see. Their god does not see, and does not know anything; he is not the living God. They pretend to pay him the compliment of saying that there may be some great first cause; they do not know even that for certain, because they do not know anything. We live in an age in which the man, who professes to be a learned man, calls himself "an agnostic",—a Greek word which, in the Latin, signifies "an ignoramus." That is, when you get to be a very clever man, then you become an ignoramus, knowing nothing at all. Such people go crowing, all over the world, that they do not know anything at all;—they do not know whether there is any God at all, or if there is a God, they do not know that he has anything to do with the world. They say that it is going on just on its own account. God may set worlds going if he pleases, but he has nothing to do with them afterwards.

Ah, beloved! but the truth is, that God's laws are simply the ways in which he acts. There is no force in the world apart from God. All the potency of attraction is simply because God still lives, and pours his energy into the matter that attracts. Every moment, it is God who works in all things according to the good pleasure of his own will. Omnipotence is, in fact, the source of all the potency that there is in the universe. God is everywhere; and, instead of being banished from the world, and the world going on without him, if God were not here, this planet, and the sun, and moon, and stars, would retire into their native nothingness, as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it, and is gone for ever. God alone is. All the rest—call them what you please,—are appearances that come out of his ever-existing power. God is. The other

things may be or may not be; but God is. Well did David write, under the Spirit's inspiration, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongeth unto God." But that is not the kind of God that the ungodly want; they want one whose hands they can bind so as to make him powerless.

Especially will they do this *with regard to providence*. "Look," say they; "you Christian people pray, and you are foolish enough to believe that, because you pray, God hears you, and sends you the blessings that you ask for." It is assumed that we are fools; but, I think, it is a mere assumption. Probably, these gentlemen, who are so generous in disposing of their epithets, may be giving away what really belongs to themselves. We are fools; so they say,—these men of culture, the thinking people; at least, they are the people who call themselves by these high-sounding names, and having done so, then, to prove that their culture has made perfect gentlemen of them, they call all the rest of us, and especially all Christians, fools. Well, we are not anxious to contend with them as to that matter, and we are quite satisfied to take the position that we do take, and to be called fools, because we believe that God does hear and answer our petitions. Even when these people are willing to own that there is a God in providence at all, he is hand-tied, so that he can do nothing. Well, as far as I am concerned, I would as soon believe in a god made out of the mud of the Ganges, or in the fetish of the Hottentot, as bow my knee to a god who could not hear, and could not answer me.

Some unbelievers talk of a God who is handbound *so far as the punishment of sin is concerned*. "Men will die like dogs;" so some of these doggish men say. "God will not punish sin;" so say some sinners, who imagine that they have prepared a dunghill for themselves to fall upon whenever God shall fling them out of window as utterly worthless. They imbibe ideas that are contrary to the truth about the Most High in order that they may be able to sin with impunity. But, whatever they may think or say, let us rest assured that there is a God, and that he is a God before whom everyone of us must appear to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. We may be quite certain that, although, in his longsuffering, he may patiently wait a while before punishing iniquity, yet his hand is not bound, and he will lift it ere long; and when he raises it to smite the man who has broken his laws, he will do it so effectually that the sinner shall know that, verily, there is a God who will not pass by transgression, or wink at sin, when it remains unrepented. Let us, then, be ever happy to bear our testimony that God cannot be bound, but let us always expect to see unconverted men, in one way or another, attempting to bind the hands of the Most High as these sinners in Jerusalem bound the Christ of God.

Some people think that God ought to do this, and he ought not to do that; and the moment you begin to reason with them, they do not refer to what the Scripture says, but they have a preconceived notion as to what ought to be done or not done. That is to say, you would tie his hands, so that *he must do what you judge to be right*;

but, if he judges any particular course to be right, and it does not meet your taste, then, straightway, you will either have no God at all, or else a god that shall be handcuffed by your reason, and held in bonds to do your bidding. In the person of our blessed Master brought from Gethsemane with his hands tightly bound, we see an exact picture of what wicked men would always do with God if they could, and what they actually do to him, spiritually, in their own minds and hearts. God save us from being guilty of such a sin as that! Oh, that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ may cleanse that sin away if it lies as a load upon the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing!

II. Secondly, we have here A LESSON OF LOVE.

Our Lord Jesus was sent away, bound, by Annas to Caiaphas; but, before they bound him, there were other bands upon him. *Christ was bound by the cords of love*; and who but himself had bound him thus? Of old, or ever the earth was, his prescient eye foresaw all his people, and their sin, and he loved them, and he gave himself to them then, in the eternal purpose; and often did he look, through the vista of the ages, upon the men and women who were yet to be born, and, with a near and dear love to each one of them, he pledged himself that, for them, he would bear the shame, and the spitting, and that he would even die in their room and stead, that he might redeem them unto himself. So, when I see our Divine Master thus led to the judgment-seat, I grieve over the bonds of cord with which men tied him, but my heart exults over those invisible bands with which he bound himself by purpose, by covenant, by oath, by infinite, immutable love, that he would give himself to be a ransom for his people.

Then, following upon those cords of love, if you look closely, you will see his love again displayed in that *he was bound with our bonds*. We, dear friends, had sinned against God, and so had incurred the sentence of infallible justice, and now that sentence must fall upon him. We ought to have been bound, but Christ was bound instead of us. If you and I had been bound with despair, and hopelessly led away to that prison from which none shall ever escape; if this had been the moment when we were commencing to feel the torments of the hell which our sins deserve, what could we have said? But, lo! in our room, and place, and stead, Jesus is led away to bear the wrath of heaven. He must not lift his hand in his own defence, or raise his finger for his own comfort, for he is bearing,—

“That we might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”

III. But now, thirdly, learn hence A LESSON OF GREAT PRIVILEGE.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was bound, and there flows from that fact its opposite, *then, his people are all free*. When Christ was made a curse for us, he became a blessing to us. When Christ was made sin for us, we were made the righteousness of God in him. When he died, then we lived. And so, as he was bound, we are set free. The type of that exchange of prisoners is seen in the fact that

Barabbas was set free when the Lord Jesus Christ was given up to be crucified; and still more in his plea for his disciples in the garden, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." It is with wondrous joy in our hearts that we sing,—

"We were sore in bondage bound,
But our Jesus set us free."

Do we, think you, dear friends, use our liberty as we should? Do we not, sometimes, pray to God as if we were tongue-tied, and had the bonds upon our tongue? Do we not go to the great coffers full of grace, and, instead of helping ourselves, as we have the right to do, we stand there as if our hands were bound, and we could not take a single pennyworth of the abundant fulness that is laid up there for us? Sometimes, when there is work to be done for Christ, we feel as if we were in bonds. We dare not stretch out our hands, we are afraid to do so; yet Jesus has set us free. O believer, why dost thou go about as if thou still didst wear the gyves and fetters on thy feet? Why dost thou stand like one who is still in bonds? Thy freedom is sure freedom, and it is righteous freedom. Christ, the great Emancipator, has made thee free, and thou art "free indeed." Enjoy thy liberty; enjoy access to God; enjoy the privilege of claiming the promises which God has given to you. Enjoy the exercise of the power with which God has endowed you, enjoy the holy anointing with which the Lord has prepared you for his service. Do not sit and mope like a bird in a cage, when you are free to soar away. I can conceive of a bird, that has been in a cage for years; the cage may be all taken away,—every wire of it; and yet the poor thing has been so accustomed to sit on that perch, inside the cage, that it takes no notice of the fact that its prison-house is gone, and there it sits and mopes still. Away with thee, sweet songster! The green fields and the blue sky are all thine own. Stretch thy wings, and soar away above the clouds, and sing the carol of thy freedom as though thou wouldst make it reach the ears of the angels. So let it be with your spirit, and with mine, beloved. Christ has set us free; therefore, let us not go back into bondage, or sit still as though we were in prison, but let us rejoice in our liberty this very hour, and let us do so all our days.

IV. The fourth lesson, from the binding of Christ, is A LESSON OF OBLIGATION.

This may seem like a paradox in contrast with the previous lesson, yet is it equally true. Beloved, was Jesus bound for you and for me? *Then, let us be bound for him and to him.* I rejoice in the sweet inability that results from perfect love to Christ. "Inability?" you ask. Yes, I mean inability. The true child of God "cannot sin, because he is born of God." There are many other things that he cannot do; he cannot forsake his Lord, for he says, with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." He cannot forget his obligations; he cannot withhold his time, his strength, his substance, from his Lord; he cannot become an earthworm and a money-grabber. He cannot wed his soul to any other, for Christ has espoused him to himself as a chaste virgin.

There are times when the child of God says, with Nehemiah, "Should such a man as I flee?" Or, "How can such a privileged individual as I am indulge in such-and-such a sin?" The ungodly sometimes jeer at us, and say, "Ah, you cannot do so-and-so! We can." And we reply, "We have lost no power that we ever wish to have, and we have gained the power of concentrating all our force upon righteousness and truth; and, now, our heart is bound too fast to Christ for us to go after your idols. Our eyes are now so taken up with the sight of our Saviour that we cannot see any charms in the things with which you would bewitch us. Our memory is now so full of Christ that we have no desire to pollute the precious stores that lie therein by memories of sin."

Henceforth, we are crucified with Christ, and that brings to us a blessed inability in which we greatly rejoice. Our heart may stir, perhaps, a little, but our hands and feet are fastened to the wood, and cannot move. Oh, blessed is the inability when, at last, neither heart can love, nor brain can think, nor hand can do, nor even imagination can conceive anything that goes beyond the sweet circle of a complete consecration to the Lord, and absolute dedication to his service! Come, then, ye angels of the Lord, and bind us to him! Let this be the prayer of every believer, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Let nothing ever tempt us away from our Lord. Ye may count the cost of all Egyptia's treasure, and then let it go; and it shall vanish like a dream, for there is nothing in it.

"Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion's children know;"—

and these shall remain with you who are bound to Christ, with him to live, and for him to die, if need be. So, whenever we see Christ in bonds, let us pray that we also may wear his bonds, and be just as much bound as he was. "O God!" let every Christian say, "I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds, now bind me to thyself and to thy blessed service once for all."

V. The last lesson is one which I pray that we may all of us learn, whether we are saints or sinners; it is a LESSON OF WARNING.

Dear friends, I have tried to picture, though I have done it in a very feeble way, Christ being bound with cords; and now I want very solemnly to say to all of you,—Do not you bind Christ with cords. Beware, you who are unconverted, that you never bind Christ. You may do so *by not reading his Word*. You have a Bible at home, but you never read it; it is clasped, laid away in a drawer with your best pocket handkerchiefs? Is it not so? That is another picture of Christ in bonds,—a poor shut-up Bible, that is never allowed to speak with you,—nay, not even to have half a word with you, for you are in such a hurry about other things that you cannot listen to it. Untie the cords; let it have its liberty. Commune with it sometimes. Let the heart of God in the Bible speak to your own heart. If you do not, that clasped Bible—that shut-up Bible—that precious Book hidden away in the

drawer—is Christ in prison; and, one day, when you little expect it, you will hear Christ say, “Inasmuch as ye did this to the greatest of all my witnesses, ye did it unto me.” You kept Moses, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and all the prophets, in prison; and all the apostles, and the Master himself, you bound with cords, and you would not hear a word that they had to say. Let not that be true of any one of you, dear friends.

There are others, *who will not go to hear the Word*. They do not attend any place of worship. They may have dropped in here for once; but, as a rule, they never go anywhere to worship God. Here, in London, people live in the street where there is a soul-saving ministry, yet many of them never cross the threshold of the house of prayer. In some streets, not one in a hundred ever darkens the doors of the place where God’s people gather for worship. Is not that tying Christ’s hands? How can the gospel get to people who will not hear it,—absolutely refuse to listen to it? They are really gagging our blessed Master, and that is even worse than binding him with cords. They thrust a gag between his teeth, and make him hold his tongue so far as they are concerned. Some of them, if they could, would gag the messenger as well as his Master, for they want him not. “Trouble us not,” they say. “Art thou come to torment us before the time?” And so they bind Christ, and send him away, just as Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas.

Some there are, who both read the Bible, and go to hear the gospel, but they tie Christ up, all the same, *by prejudice*. Some people can never get a blessing, through certain ministers, because they have made up their minds that they will not be profited by them. You know how they come, with some preconceived notion; and though an angel from heaven were to speak, they would pick holes in whatever he might say, because of the prejudice which exists in their mind. Probably, they can give no better reason for their antagonism than the person gave who did not like Dr. Fell,—

“I do not like you, Dr. Fell,
The reason why, I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell.”

I have known men bind Christ in another way, *by delaying their decision*. They have heard a sermon, and have felt its power, their soul has been impressed by it; but their chief idea has been to try to escape from Christ, or to bind his hands, if possible. I think I have told you before that, once, when I was preaching in the country, the gentleman, with whom I stayed, suddenly got up, towards the end of the sermon, and went out; and a dear friend, who had gone with me, followed him outside, and asked him, “What brought you out here?” He replied, “If I had stopped there another five minutes, I should have got converted. Mr. Spurgeon seems to treat me just as if I were made of india rubber; he squeezes me into any shape he likes, so I was obliged to come out.” “But,” my friend said, “might it not have been a great blessing to you if you had been converted?” “Well, no,” he replied;

"at least, not just now. I have some things in prospect that I really could not miss, so I cannot afford to be converted just now." There are others, who do not act quite like that, but the result is the same. They say, by their actions, if not in so many words, "Now, Lord, I am going to tie you up for a little while. I mean to give heed to you by-and-by; I hope your blessed hand will be laid upon me for my salvation, but not just now, please;—not just now." Such people always use silken cords, but the binding is just as effective as it would be if they took an ugly pair of handcuffs, such as a policeman pulls out for a thief. The man says, "Permit me just to tie your hands for a little while;—another month, perhaps,—possibly another year." Oh, that accursed procrastination! How many have been ruined to all eternity by it! It is the bond that binds the hand of Christ the Saviour, who says, "Now is the day of salvation."

Other men bind the hands of Christ *by seeking pleasure in sin*. After having been impressed under a sermon, they go straight away to some ungodly meeting-place,—a public-house, perhaps; or, on the morrow, they go into society where every serious thought will, in all probability, be stamped out as men stamp out a fire; and what is this but binding the hands of Christ? I know some,—I tremble as I think of them,—who persistently do that which they know will prevent them from ever feeling the power of the Word of God. Oh, that, by some means, they could be wrenched out of their present position, and be carried right away where truth might influence them, that so they might be led to Jesu's feet! I think I hear someone say, "That is a shocking way to bind Christ's hands." Then mind, my friend, that you do not yourself fall into that sin.

Now, in closing, I want to speak to the Lord's own people just for a minute or two.

Do you not think, beloved, that you and I have sometimes tied Christ's hands? You remember reading this sentence, "He could not do many mighty works there." His hands were tied; but what tied them? Finish the quotation: "*because of their unbelief.*" Are there not many churches where they have tied the hands of Christ because they do not believe he can do any mighty works there? If the Lord Jesus Christ were to convert three thousand people, at one time, under their pastor's preaching, what do you think the deacons and elders of that church would probably say? "Well, we never thought that we should see such excitement as this here; to think that it should have come into our place of worship! We must be very careful now. No doubt these people will be wanting to join the church. We shall have to summer them, and winter them, and try them a good deal; we do not like such excitement." Ah, sirs, you need not trouble yourselves with any such expectation! God is not likely to give such a blessing to you; he never sends his children where they are not wanted; and, as a rule, until he prepares his people to receive the blessing, the blessing will not come.

Do you not think, also, that *a minister may very easily tie the hands of Christ?* I am afraid I have done so, sometimes, without meaning it. Suppose I were to preach some very fine sermons;—

I do not do that, mark you;—but just suppose I were to preach some very fine sermons that went right over people's heads, and a good old woman were to say, "I would not have the presumption to understand it, but it is very wonderful," do you not think that I should be tying Christ's hands with garlands of flowers? And may we not come into the pulpit, and talk a lot of theological jargon, and use words which are appropriate to us in the class-room, but quite misunderstood, or never understood at all, by the mass of the people? Is not that tying Christ's hands? And when a preacher is what they call very "heavy",—by which is not meant that he is weighty,—but dull; or when he is very cold and heartless, and preaches as if he were working by the piece, and would be glad to get it all over,—when that is the case, do you not think that Christ's hands are tied? Have you never heard sermons of which you might fairly say, "Well, if God were to convert anybody by that discourse, it certainly would be a miraculous kind of miracle,—something altogether out of the common way of miracles, for he would be using an implement that was positively calculated to produce just the opposite effect, and making it accomplish his purposes of grace"? I have heard such sermons, now and then, to my great sorrow. And you Sunday-school teachers must take care that you do not so teach as really to be hindrances to your scholars rather than helps, for that is to tie the hands of Christ, and to lead him into your class, like Samson bound, rather to make sport for Philistines than to get honour to himself. May we all have the grace given to us to avoid such an evil as that!

And do you not think, dear friends, that we, who do love Christ, bind his hands *when we are cowardly and retiring, and never say a word for him*? How can the gospel save sinners if it is never spoken to them? If you never introduce Christ to your companions,—never put a little book on your friend's table,—never try to say just a word about the Saviour to him, is not that tying Christ's hands? The next thing to having no Christ at all is for the church to be silent concerning him. It is an awful thing to contemplate what it would be if there were no Saviour; but what improvement is it if there be a Saviour, but men never hear of him? Come, you very retiring people, do not excuse yourselves any longer. "Oh, but!" says one, "I always was of a very retiring disposition." So was that soldier, who was shot for running away in the day of battle; he was guilty of cowardice, and was put to death for it. If you have been, up to the present time, binding the Master by your retiring spirit, you should at once come forward, and declare what Christ has done for you, that, with unbound hands, he may do the like for others.

And do you not think that, *whenever we are inconsistent in our conduct*,—especially in the family,—we tie the hands of Christ? There is a father praying for his children that they may live before God. Five minutes after, listen to him. Why, his boys hate the sight of him! He is such a tyrant to them that they cannot endure him. There is a mother, too, who is praying God to save her daughters. She goes upstairs, and pleads very earnestly for them;

yet she comes down, and lets them have whatever they like to ask, and never says a word by way of checking them in their evil courses. She acts like a female Eli to every one of them; is not she tying the hands of Christ? What can she expect but that God, who works according to rules, will be more likely to let her unkind kindness influence her girls for evil, than to answer her prayers for their conversion? Let us be holy, dear friends, for then we shall, by faith, see the holy God freely moving and working among us, and doing great deeds to his own glory. So may he do, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVIII. 12—14, 19—24; MARK XIV. 53—65; AND LUKE XXII. 63 71; XXIII. 1.

The passages, which we are about to read from three of the Evangelists, make up a continuous narrative of our Lord's trial before the high priest.

First, John gives us an account of our Saviour's appearance before Annas, of which I need not say much, as I recently preached upon it.*

John xviii. Verses 12—14. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

19—21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

What an admirable answer that was! Whatever he might have said about his doctrine, they would have twisted into a ground of accusation against him, so he simply said, "Mine has been public teaching, open to all. I was not found in holes and corners, secretly fomenting sedition. I spoke in the streets; I spoke in the synagogue; I spoke in the temple; ask those who heard me to tell you what I said." What more convincing answer could he have given?

22—24. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.*

So there we see him standing, bound, before Caiaphas, the acting high priest for that year.

Now follow the narrative as given by Mark.

Mark xiv. Verses 53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

We may regard what was said to Jesus, by Annas and Caiaphas, as a sort of unofficial preliminary examination; and, meanwhile, their fellow-

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,820, "Christ before Annas."

conspirators were scouring the streets of Jerusalem to gather together the members of the Sanhedrim, and also searching among the slums in order to find witnesses who could be bribed to give false evidence against Jesus.

55. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.*

A pretty court that was, occupied in seeking for witnesses who might enable them to condemn to death a prisoner against whom no charge had yet been formulated.

56—59. *For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.*

It was a rule that they should be examined separately, and there had not been time for them to be coached up as to what they were to say, so one contradicted the other, and it looked as if the trial must break down.

60. *And the high priest stood up in the midst,*

Losing all patience, he stood up, in a furious rage at the turn things were taking.

60, 61. *And asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*

This time, according to Matthew's account, the high priest said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Being thus, as it were, put upon his oath, the Saviour felt compelled to answer. He could not remain silent when such a great and important question was at stake.

62—65. *And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.*

Perhaps we have the same narrative in Luke; possibly, however, he gives us a continuation of the sad story; it is difficult to say which is the case.

Luke xxii. Verses 63—71. *And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.*

Chapter xxiii. Verse 1. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.*

MAJESTY IN MISERY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5TH, 1903,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 7th, 1883.

“And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.”
—Luke xxii. 63—65.

I SUPPOSE that all this cruelty took place while our Lord was before Caiaphas, in the dead of night, before the Sanhedrim had been fully gathered together to hold their trial at daybreak. His enemies were in so great a hurry to condemn him that, as soon as he arrived at the high priest's house, they must needs have a kind of preliminary examination that they might try the tack upon which they meant to sail in endeavouring to procure a conviction against him. After he had been thus, in an informal and illegal way, condemned without any proper trial, they left him in the custody of their officers until, early in the morning, they should have summoned the rest of their companions, so as again to go through the farce of trying him whom they knew to be innocent.

While these officials had Christ in their keeping, they might at least have left him in peace and quietness. According to the rules of all civilized nations, a prisoner detained in custody should be guarded from insult and ill-treatment while in that condition. Whatever his ultimate punishment may be, after he has been tried, and found guilty, while he is as yet uncondemned, he is reckoned to be under the protection of the state that has arrested him, and he ought not to be subjected to insult or injury. But here, as if they had been so many savages, the judges of our Lord abandoned him to those abjects whom they employed to do their foul work, and those wretched creatures treated him with mingled cruelty and scorn: “The men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.” Could they not have allowed him a little time of rest? The traces of the bloody sweat must still have been upon him. They could see, by the emaciation of his person, that he was, as it had been
No. 2,825.

long before foretold that he would be, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He must already have been ready to faint under the rough usage which had been meted out to him both before and at his preliminary trials before Annas and Caiaphas. His tormentors must have seen how exhausted he was, yet they had no pity for him in their hard, unfeeling hearts, and they allowed him no respite, and gave him no opportunity to prepare himself to answer the charges that were about to be brought against him. There were none found to vindicate his character, or to plead his cause; but the intervals between the informal and the more formal trials were spent in mockery and in scorn.

These men were gross cowards. I am sure that they must have been, because they were so cruel, for cruelty is one of the badges of cowardice wherever you find it. These are the very men who, in the garden, "went backward, and fell to the ground," when Christ did but say, "I am he," in answer to their declaration that they were seeking "Jesus of Nazareth." They went out, with swords and staves, to take him prisoner, yet they fell to the ground when he did but speak a word or two to them; but now that they had him in their power, and perceived that he was, apparently, not inclined to exert the divine energy with which he was endowed, but that he was as submissive as a sheep before her shearers, they determined to be as cruel as they could to him. God grant that the sin of cruelty to anything that lives may never be justly laid to the charge of any one of us! If you have acted cruelly, even though it be to the meanest thing in creation, despise yourself, for you are of a lower order than the creature that you tortured; and if these men could have judged themselves aright, they would have despised themselves. They seem to me to have been the very meanest of mankind who, having such a gentle sufferer in their power, instead of showing any humanity to him, seemed as if they could not sufficiently abuse him, and indulged their vile nature to the utmost in mocking and persecuting him.

I. I hope that some spiritual profit may come to us while we are considering this terrible part of the suffering of our Lord; and, first, I want you, in imagination, to gaze upon MAJESTY IN MISERY.

There stands Jesus of Nazareth. I will not attempt to picture him. There has never yet been a painter who could pourtray the lineaments of that wondrous face. The highest art has never yet been able to satisfy itself upon that point even though it has borrowed its outline and its colours from the Scriptures themselves. The most skilful hand grows unsteady in the presence of One so glorious in his griefs. I will not, therefore, attempt to draw a portrait of my Lord and Master, but will simply ask you, by faith, to behold him, clothed with the garment that was without seam, bound, delivered over to the officers, and surrounded by them while they mocked and scoffed at him. Letting your eye rest upon him in a loving look, regarding him as the great centre of your heart's affection, what do you see,—you who believe in his Deity, and who can say that he is "very God of very God" to you?

If your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, you will here see *Omnipotence held captive*. "The men that held Jesus" did not really know who he was; he appeared to them to be a poor Galilean peasant, speaking the country brogue, they saw that he was a humble, lowly, emaciated man; and, as he had been committed to their charge, they held him as their prisoner. But they did not recognize that he was the Almighty God, the very Deity that created the heavens and the earth, for "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He was, at that very moment, "upholding all things by the word of his power;" and, amid all his weakness, and in all his sufferings, he was still "over all, God blessed for ever," whom all the holy angels continued to adore. Is it not a great mystery that omnipotence should thus be held captive? What a marvellous thing it is that he, who can create or who can destroy, according to the good pleasure of his own will, should take upon himself our nature, and in that nature should sink so low as to become subject even to the very coarsest and most cruel of mankind! What a wondrous stoop of condescension is here! Omnipotence allows itself to be bound, and never proves itself more truly omnipotent than when it restrains itself, and permits itself to be held as a prisoner by sinful men.

Look again at this Majesty in misery, and you will see *glory mocked*, for "the men that held Jesus mocked him." To them, he seemed to be a fit subject for ridicule and derision in professing to be a king, when he had neither an armed host nor multitudes of followers who could hope to stand for a single second against the mighty Cæsar who held Israel in bondage. Ay, but there was a glory in Christ, which he had deigned to veil and to conceal for a while, but which angels still beheld and adored; yet these men were mocking him! There are some themes which seem to strike a speaker dumb, and this subject has something like this effect upon me. It appears to me amazing that the God, who had reigned in glory over myriads of holy angels, should be mocked by miscreants who could not even have lived an instant longer in his presence if he had not permitted them to do so; yet I see, in my text, that he, who made the heavens and the earth, stood there to be despised and rejected of men, and to be treated with the utmost contumely and scorn. I can make that statement, but you cannot realize what it means. This is one of those great mysteries of the faith that seem to stagger you. You believe it without the slightest hesitation; yet, the more you try really to grasp and comprehend it, the more it seems to elude you, and to tower above you.

Thus, we see omnipotence held captive, and glory mocked.

Next, we see *goodness smitten*, perfect, infinite, unutterable goodness stricken, bruised, assailed, assaulted: "The men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him." To smite wickedness, is an act of justice; and even to lift the sword against oppression, may not always be a thing to be condemned; but to smite him who never did any man a wrong, but who has done all men some measure of good, and who has given to some men all conceivable

good,—ah, this is brutish indeed! The blessed Son of God, who stood there, had within his soul that mercy which endureth for ever, yet they smote him;—there burned in his heart a love which many waters could not quench, and which the floods could not drown, yet they smote him! He had come here upon no errand of vengeance, but to bring peace and goodwill to men, and to set up a kingdom of joy and love; yet they bound him! Ah, me! it is wonderful that goodness should be so good as to submit to this shameful indignity; none but divine goodness would have submitted to it.

See what these mockers and smiters did next to our Lord. They produced a handkerchief, or a cloth of some kind, and they put it over his eyes. *Omniscience must seem to be blinded*; which, in truth, it cannot be; yet, in the Christ, there was the omniscience of the Godhead, and, to the utmost of their power, these men blinded him, in the hope that he might not see what they were doing. I know some who are trying to act thus at this present time. The only god that they have is a blind god. They believe in what they call “the forces of nature,” and then they condescendingly talk as though God was only the aggregate of the forces of nature working according to certain mechanical laws that can never be altered. The god in whom they profess to believe is a god that does not see. They tell us that it is idle to pray, or to think that God takes any interest in such insignificant individuals as we are. Ah! I remember reading about those gods of the philosophers: “They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” “But our God is in the heavens,” seeing all that happens, and doing as he pleases among the hosts above and among men below. He is not now to be blindfolded, as he was once, when he condescended to wear our nature, and to bear our sin. Yet it is wonderful that he should ever have permitted this indignity to be put upon him. The spouse in the Canticles truly sings, “His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set,”—exceeding the very stars of heaven for brightness,—yet they covered them over! His eyes flamed with love, and in them there did gleam bright diamonds of pity for all the sorrows of mankind; yet those cruel men did hide those precious eyes of his, blindfolding the Christ of God!

Now, surely, they had made him suffer enough, far too much; yet again the infinite beauties of his blessed countenance were to be marred, for “they struck him on the face.” “Oh, but, had we been there,” we say, “our indignation would have burned against them for striking that dear face!” Yet we had need lay aside our indignation, and bring forward penitence instead, for we also have sometimes smitten that dear face of Jesus, which is as the sun of heaven, far brighter than the sun which lights up the world. All other beauties put together cannot equal the marvellous charms

of that countenance which was marred more than any man's. There is nothing under heaven, or in heaven itself, that can rival the face of the Well-beloved; yet these men struck it! I think an angel might well shiver with horror if, for the first time, he heard that men had struck the face of his Lord. It was but his human face, it is true; but therein they struck at all of Deity that they could reach. It was man smiting God in the face. A slap in the face of Deity was what it really meant. Ah, me! that my Master should ever have had to endure such insult and pain,—that he should ever have been willing to suffer such indignity as this,—was there ever love like unto his?

Then the mockers said, "Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?" That was *justice defied*. They seemed to say to our Lord, as they smote him, "Tell us what our name is; say who struck that blow. Thou canst not resist it; thou canst not avenge thyself; but, at least, see if thou canst tell the name of him that smote thee. We defy thee so to do." Ah! he had written down their names, and they will find out, one day, that he knows them all, for there are none who smite the Saviour who will not have their blows come back upon themselves unless they repent of their sin. There was justice defied, as "they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?"

I say again that I am not able worthily to speak on such a theme as this, and I think I never shall be however long I may live. It is not within the compass of lips of clay, with words of air, to describe the condescending sufferings of him who, though he was rightly called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," nevertheless stooped so low as to be mocked, smitten, blindfolded, and smitten again for your sakes and mine.

"Vexed, I try and try again,
Still my efforts all are vain:
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

The wonder of this Majesty in misery can be described in four words. The first wonder is that, under all this torture, our Lord was so *patient*. Not a flush of anger appeared on his cheek, not a flash of wrath from his eyes. He bore it all, bore it in his very soul, with divine patience, the very patience of "the God of patience."

The next wonder is, that he was *silent* under all this cruelty; not a word did he utter either in complaint or in condemnation of his assailants. This proved his true greatness. Eloquence is easy as compared with silence, and perhaps it would not have been true of Christ that "never man spake like this Man," if it had not also been true of him that never man was silent like this Man. He fulfilled to the letter the ancient prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Lord, teach us how to imitate thy patience and thy silence!

Notice, in the third place, how *eloquent* he was by that very silence. He said more for us, and more to us, by holding his tongue than if he had delivered himself of many burning sentences. It is matchless eloquence that is seen in the calm serenity of Christ in the presence of these cruel persecutors, in the forgiving character of Christ under the most exasperating circumstances, and in the patience of Christ under unparalleled sufferings.

And yet again, I see something so triumphant in our Saviour's griefs that, while I call him patient, silent, and eloquent, I must also call him *victorious*. His persecutors could not make him give way to anger. They could not destroy his mercy; they could not slay his love; they could not cause him to think of himself; they could not make him declare that he would go no further with his work of saving sinners now that men began to scoff at him, and smite him, and despitefully use him. No; the strong-souled Christ still perseveres in his merciful work, even as a mighty hunter pursues his game upon the mountain, leaping from crag to crag, and cliff to cliff, defying danger and death that he may secure the creature on whose track he has gone. So, O thou mighty Christ, thou didst accomplish thy glorious purpose of love and mercy! Thou didst lead captivity captive by suffering, to the bitter end, all that was inflicted upon thee, even unto the death of the cross.

Thus have I tried to picture Majesty in misery; but I have not been able to describe either Christ's Majesty or his misery as they deserve to be described. Muse on them, and pray the Spirit of God to give you such a sight of them as human nature by itself can never afford you.

II. Now I pass on to notice, secondly, that my text seems to me to show us **SIN AT ITS SPORT**.

All this sad scene represents what sin did when it had the opportunity,—when all restraining bands were loosed, and it could act according to its own evil will. It also represents what sin is still doing, as far as it can, and what would always be the action of sin if it were not hindered by the almighty power of God.

What, then, does sin do in the hour of its liberty? I invite you to notice, first,—and to pay particular attention to any part that may come home to yourself,—*the levity of sin*. These men are grossly insulting the Christ of God; but, to them, it is a sport, a game. They play at blindfolding him; it is simply mirth and amusement to them. Sad indeed is it that sin should ever be what men call sport, yet I need scarcely remind you how often it is so, even now, to many. They run after it with the utmost eagerness, and they call it pleasure;—they call that which is provoking God pleasure,—they call that which crucified Christ pleasure! They say that “they must see life,” and they call that “life” which forced from Jesus a bloody sweat, and which afterwards dragged him to a cruel death. And, alas! they say of many a sin, “What a delight it is to us! Would you make our life miserable by taking away our enjoyments?” So it becomes a matter of enjoyment to them to smite Christ on the face, and to mock him! Perhaps I am addressing some who have

even made the Bible into a jest-book; their puns and mirth have been pointed with passages of Holy Writ. Possibly, others have made rare fun out of some venerable Christian, some faithful servant of the living and true God. Well, sirs, if you have done so, I would have you know how heinous is your sin in thus making sport of the godly; such "sport" as that, unless you repent of it, will damn you for ever; as surely as you live, it will shut you out from the great Father's love, and close the door of mercy against you, world without end. Yet that is how sin acts when it has its liberty; ay, and it sports even with the wounds of a crucified God! Alas, that it should ever do so!

Notice, next, *the utter wantonness of sin*. If these men really wanted to get amusement out of Christ, they were able to get it; but what need was there for them also to smite him? What need was there of all that superfluity of cruelty by which they put him to such shame and pain? If Christ must die, at least let him die in peace; why that spitting in his face, that terrible scourging, that awful aggravation of his griefs? It was because men will sin out of sheer wantonness. I have known some persons sin in such strange ways that I have wondered why they did it. It was not for pleasure; at least, I could not see any pleasure in it. It caused the man's own family to be utterly miserable, and brought them and himself, too, down to poverty; what mirth or merriment could there be in that? There are some who seem as if they could never be happy unless they were engaged in making themselves unhappy for ever and ever. They are not content without committing some extravagance in sin, and making their whole lives an outrageous series of rebellions against God. If any of you have ever been guilty of such wantonness in sin, may the Holy Spirit cause a gracious influence to steal over you, so that you will no longer grieve the Christ of God, but will yourself grieve that you should ever have sinned so shamefully against him!

Then note, next, *the cruelty of sin*. I have already asked, and I repeat the question,—What need was there for these men to strike the Saviour? What pleasure could they derive from all the pain they caused to him? By the mouth of his ancient prophets, the Lord said, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" It was in their own interests that he thus pleaded with men, for he would not have them injure themselves; and sin is ever self-injury; it is a sort of suicide. Whenever a man does wrong, mischief must certainly come of it; and God knows this, so he beseeches men not to act so foolishly. And, oh! when a man mocks at true religion, rejects Christ, and postpones the day of repentance, he is piercing again that dear heart that bled for the unworthy, and grieving that blessed Spirit who still strives with the sons of men, though he is often vexed and grievously provoked by them. Why are you so unkind to your God? Surely, there can be no necessity for committing such a sin as this.

Then, observe *the desperate unbelief that there often is in sin*. These men would not have blindfolded Christ if they had really believed him to be the Son of God; but they acted as they did

because they had no faith whatsoever in him. This is the great evil that lies at the root of most men's sins,—they believe not in Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent. It is this of which the Spirit of God convinces men, as our Saviour foretold concerning him: "He will convince the world of sin . . ., because they believe not on me." Yet there is nothing more reasonable, nothing more worthy to be believed, than the revelation of God as given to us in the Holy Scriptures; and a man has only to test and try for himself whether it be true, or not, and he shall soon have the proof of its verity in his own bosom! Let him really believe it, and then see whether it does not make him both holy and happy; and that shall be to him the test of its truth.

Notice, again, *how often there is in sin a kind of defiance of God.* If a boy were to come to his father, and were to say to him, "I will do all manner of rude and unkind things to you, yet you will not chastise me," it would not be long before that father would make his son smart if he were himself worthy to be a father; but sinners act towards God in that kind of way. They often do to God what these persecutors did to Christ; so far as they can, they mock him, and smite him, and defy him. Am I addressing anyone who has ever called down upon his own person the curse of God? Beware lest that blasphemous prayer of yours be answered the next time you utter it, for it is God's way to answer prayer, and, nayhap, he will answer yours, and then where will you be? Some have even dared to defy God thus: "Well, even if it be as you say, I am willing to take my chance; but I will not submit to God." Ah, sir! Pharaoh tried that plan, and he repented of it, I think, when it was too late. In the midst of the Red Sea, when the waters began to overwhelm him and all his mighty host, then he learned what were the consequences of saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Every sin has in it a measure of defiance of God, it is like these men striking Christ upon the face, and saying to him, "Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?"

I will not linger longer upon this part of my theme except just to say that there is one more thing about sin that is peculiarly lamentable, namely, *the multiplicity of sin.* Read the 65th verse: "And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." One thing, two things, twenty things, will not content them; they must say "many other things" against him. When a man once gives himself up to sin, it is like getting into a current which bears him onward where, at first, he had no thought of going. If you wade into the waters of sin, it will not be long that you will be able to retain a foothold; and, by-and-by, unless the Lord shall, in his grace, prevent such a calamity, the rapid current will bear you away to your everlasting destruction. It is no use for you to say, "Thus far will I go in sin, but no farther." You cannot stop when you please; if you once commit yourself to the influence of sin, you know not whither it will carry you. Alas! alas! some men seem as if they never could sin enough to satisfy themselves. They multiply their transgressions beyond all count. Every iron of iniquity that they have is thrust into the fire. Both their hands

are diligently engaged in doing mischief. Sometimes, they rise up early; but, more often, they sit up late,—possibly, all the night through, that they may waste the more precious hours in their wickedness. So God is aggrieved, and Christ is wounded afresh by the sin of man. It is a sad, sad picture; I cast a veil over it, and turn to something brighter and better.

III. We have seen Majesty in misery, and sin at its sport; now, thirdly, let us see LOVE AT ITS LABOUR.

All that shame and suffering was endured by our Saviour for love of each of us who can truly say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." All this blindfolding, and mocking, and smiting was borne by Christ for your sake, beloved, and mine. I will not try to describe it further, but I will ask you just to spend a minute or two in trying to realize that sad scene. For you,—as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe,—for you, the King of glory became the King of scorn, and bore all this despising and rejection of men. For you, John; for you, Mary; for you, old friend; for you, in your youth. If thou, whoever thou art, believest in him, he was thy Substitute. Thy faith gives thee the assurance that he was enduring all this for thee;—for thee, I say, as much as if he had no other redeemed one, but had paid the ransom price all for thee. Less than this would not have sufficed for thee, though it is, indeed, sufficient for all the innumerable host redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.

Let us, then, see love at its labour. I mean, our love to our Lord; though I might also speak of our Lord's love to us, and what it did for us. What shall our love do to show how grateful we are to Jesus for all that he endured for us? Well, first, *let it set penitence to confess*. Come, my heart, here is room for the display of thy grief. Why was Christ mocked in Jerusalem? Surely it was because thou hast mocked God with prayers that were no prayers, with hymns carelessly sung, with Scriptures read as if they were merely the writings of men, with professions of religion that were hollow and empty. Brothers and sisters, have not you some of these things to repent of? If you have mocked him thus, the mocking that he endured in the hall of the high priest was on your account.

And as he was blindfolded, let us weep because our unbelief has often blindfolded him. We imagined that he did not know about us, or that he had forgotten us. We thought that he could not see the end from the beginning, and that he would not be able to bring good out of evil. Let me ask you, dear friends,—Have you not often made Christ to be a blindfolded Christ so far as your apprehension of him was concerned? If so, because you have thus blindfolded God by your unbelief, you are, by your sin, imitating the guilt of these men who literally blindfolded Christ.

And as we behold him smitten, let us again grieve as we remember how it was written of him, "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Every sin that we have ever committed made a gory furrow upon his precious back. Those black and blue bruises,

that alternate upon his sacred shoulders, were caused by the cruel scourging to which each of us contributed our share by our transgressions. O beloved, weep as you see him bearing what you ought to have borne!

And when you read that they asked him taunting questions while his eyes were blindfolded, ask thyself, O child of God, whether thou hast not often done the same? Have you never asked for a sign, instead of walking by faith? I confess that I have sometimes wished that I could have some token or indication of what my Lord thought. Ah, that is what these cruel men sought from Christ; they tried to get him to convince them that he knew them when his eyes were blinded. O brothers and sisters, let us never seek a sign, as that wicked and adulterous generation did; but let us walk by faith, and not by sight, and implicitly trust our Lord. Because we have not trusted him as we should have done, but have demanded of him signs and tokens, we have been too much like these men who asked him, saying, "Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?"

I said that we would see love at its labour, so I want you, next, to let your love *urge faith to confide in Christ*. Come, dear friends, in all this suffering of our Saviour, let us see fresh reasons for trusting ourselves more entirely in the hands of Christ. Those men held Jesus in order that neither death nor hell might ever be able to hold us. He was held in our stead, so he says concerning us, as he said concerning his disciples in the garden, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." The great Substitute is held as a prisoner so that all, for whom he stood as Surety, might be set at liberty for ever.

He also was mocked; and to what end was that? We deserve eternal shame and contempt because of our sin, but he took all that shame upon himself, and made this wonderful exchange. As he put on the rags of our shame, he said to us, "Take my glittering vesture, and wear it!" and now, the glory which he had with the Father from eternity, he has put upon his people, that they may be like him, and may be with him where he is for ever and ever. What a wonderful exchange is this! As Thomas read the Deity of Christ in his wounds, so do I read the eternal glory of his people in the mockery which he endured on their behalf.

When you see your Lord smitten, why is that but that there may be no smittings and no woundings for you now or for ever? You shall go free, for Jesus has borne all that you deserved to bear; he bore blow after blow that not one might ever fall upon you.

Why, too, was Jesus blindfolded but that we might be able to see? Our sin had blinded us to all that was worth seeing, but his death has taken away the scales, and we can now see because he was caused not to see. Because he suffered these miserable miscreants to bind his eyes, therefore are our eyes unbound to-day, and they shall be yet more unbound in that day when we shall behold him face to face, and be no more parted from him.

And why was Jesus blasphemed by the "many other things"

which they falsely laid to his charge? He was blasphemed that we might be justified. He was unrighteously accused and slandered in order that we might be able boldly to say, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Therefore, be ye glad, beloved. While ye sorrow over your Lord's griefs, rejoice over what those griefs have brought to you, and what they will continue to bring to you throughout eternity.

Now, lastly, let our love at its labour *arouse our zeal to consecration to our Lord*. Was he held captive? Then come, my most burning zeal, and inflame me with devotion to his cause. Was he held thus for me? Then he shall hold me fast, and never let me go. My Lord, I do surrender myself, my life, my all, to thee, to be thy willing captive for ever! Take these eyes, these lips, these hands, these feet, this heart, and as thou wast and art altogether mine, so let me be altogether thine. Is not this a fair requital? Does any child of God demur to that?

Then, next, as they did despise him, come, my soul, what sayest thou to this? Why, that I will despise the world that did despise my Lord and Saviour. O world, world, world, thou art a blind, blear-eyed, black-hearted thing to have treated my Master so! Shall I conform to thy customs? Shall I flatter thee? Shall I ask for thine applause? Nay, thou art crucified to me. As a felon nailed up to the cross, so, O world, art thou to me because thou hast crucified the Christ, the infinitely-lovely Son of God! Henceforth, the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world.

And as they blindfolded Jesus, what then? Why, I will be blindfolded, too; I will henceforth see no charm, no attraction, anywhere but in my Lord. Mine eyes shall behold him, and not another, in the glory that is yet to be revealed; and, to-day, I can say, with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Go through the world, beloved, blindfolded to all but Christ, and you shall do well.

And, as they struck Jesus on the face, what will you and I do to show how much we love that face which was so shamefully ill-treated? My heart brings up before me a vision of that "sacred head, once wounded," encircled by the crown of thorns, that dear face, so bruised and battered, yet even then more beautiful than all the other loveliness of heaven beside. Jesu, Son of God, and Son of man, we do adore thee; and we haste to kiss those blessed feet of thine, in loving adoration, and we do it all the more because wicked men did smite thee upon the cheek! Reverence and love we gladly give to him who once was clouted by abjects, and who afterwards was nailed to the accursed tree.

And, inasmuch as these men said "many other things blasphemously against him," come, my brothers, let us say many things in his praise; and, sisters, join us in the holy exercise. No one shall close our lips, faulty as they are, from speaking in honour of our dear Lord. Sometimes, with the prophet, we are ready to confess that we are men of unclean lips, and that we dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips; but, such as we are, we will render

to him the calves of our lips, and give glory to his holy name. Never be ashamed to speak up for your Lord, beloved. Never blush to own that you belong to him. Nay, if you do blush at all, blush with shame that you do not love him more, and serve him better. By the memory of that dear face, blindfolded and smitten, while cruel men all around slander him with their blasphemous accusations, I charge you to—

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross!”

God help you so to do!

Oh, that some here, who have never believed in Jesus Christ, would now begin to trust him! I do not invite you, just now, so much to believe in him in his glory as to believe in him in his shame. Was he really the Son of God, and did he suffer for guilty men all that we have been thinking of, and far more than that? Then, I must believe in him. To me, Jesus Christ seems to be a character that men could never have invented. He must be historical, for he is so original. Unaided human minds could never have thought out such a character. There are strange things in Buddhism, and other false religions, and men with wild imaginations have conceived curious notions concerning their gods; but I challenge anyone to show me, in any book except God's Book, anything that can parallel the story of the Eternal God himself becoming man in order to make atonement for the sins of his creatures, that is, the sins committed by them against himself. Yes, brothers and sisters, I must believe in him. What is more, I must believe that he died for me,—

“That on the cross he shed his blood
From sin to set me free.”

Having so believed,—I speak as God's witness to all who can hear me,—I feel an inward peace that nothing can break, a holy joy that nothing can disturb, and a sacred calm which death itself shall not be able to destroy. I have been at the deathbeds of many of our brethren and sisters who have been accustomed to worship here, and who have been members of this church; and—note this testimony, I pray you,—I have never seen one of them afraid to die. I have not met with one coward among them all; but I have heard some of them singing triumphantly in their last hours, as merrily as though it were their marriage day, while others have been as calm and quiet as if to die were but to go to bed, and sleep a while, and wake again in the morning. Believe ye in the Lord Jesus Christ, in this very Lord who stooped from the heights of glory to the depths of shame and suffering; and you also shall find that your confidence in him shall be rewarded even in this life; while, as for the world to come,—ah! then, when there shall be no blindfolded eyes for him,—no mockery and scorn and smiting for him,—but all shall be glory for ever and ever, then you and I, if we are believers in him, shall eternally share his glory. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

OUR LORD'S TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 5TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.”—Mark xiv. 64.

THIS one sentence is selected because custom demands a text ; but in reality we shall follow the entire narrative of our Lord's trial before the high-priests. We shall see how the Sanhedrim arrived at their unrighteous sentence, and what they did afterwards, and so, in a sense, we shall be keeping to our text. We have just been reading three passages—John xxiii. 12—24 ; Mark xiv. 53—65 ; and Luke xxii. 66—71. Please to carry these in your minds while I rehearse the mournful story.

The narrative of our Lord's grief, if it be carefully studied, is harrowing in the extreme. One cannot long think of it without tears ; in fact, I have personally known what it is to be compelled to leave my meditations upon it from excess of emotion. It is enough to make one's heart break fully to realize the sufferings of such an One, so lovely in himself and so loving toward us. Yet this harrowing of the feelings is exceedingly useful : the after result of it is truly admirable. After mourning for Jesus we are raised above our own mourning. There is no consolation under heaven at all like it ; for the sorrows of Christ seem to take the sting out of our own sorrows, till they become harmless and endurable. A sympathetic contemplation of our Lord's grief so dwarfs our griefs that they are reckoned to be but light afflictions, too petty, too insignificant, to be mentioned in the same day. We dare not write ourselves down in the list of the sorrowful at all when we have just seen the sharp pains of the Man of Sorrows. The wounds of Jesus distil a balm which heals all mortal ills.

Nor is this all, though that were much in a world of woe like this ; but there is a matchless stimulus about the passion of the Lord. Though you have been almost crushed by the sight of your Lord's agonies, you have risen therefrom strong, resolute, fervent, consecrated. Nothing stirs our hearts' depths like his heart's anguish. Nothing is too hard for us to attempt or to endure for One who sacrificed himself for us. To be reviled for his dear sake who suffered such shame for us becomes no great affliction ; even reproach itself when borne for him

becomes greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. To suffer in body and in mind, even unto death, for him were rather a privilege than an exaction : such love so swells our hearts that we vehemently pant for some way of expressing our indebtedness. We are grieved to think that our best will be so little ; but we are solemnly resolved to give nothing less than our best to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

I believe also that full often careless hearts have been greatly affected by the sufferings of Jesus : they have been disturbed in their indifference, convinced of their ingratitude, weaned from their love of sin, and attracted to Christ by hearing what he bore on their behalf. No loadstone can draw human hearts like the cross of Christ. His wounds cause even hearts of stone to bleed. His shame makes obstinacy itself ashamed. Men never so plentifully fall before the great bow of God as when its arrows are dipped in the blood of Jesus. Those darts which are armed with his agonies cause wounds such as never can be healed except by his own pierced hands. These are the weapons which slay the sin and save the sinner ; killing at one stroke both his self-confidence and his despair, and leaving him a captive to that conqueror whose glory it is to make men free.

This morning I would not only preach the doctrines that come out of the cross, but the cross itself. I suppose that was one of the great differences between the first preaching of all and the preaching after the Reformation. After the Reformation we had clearly ringing out from all pulpits the doctrine of justification by faith and other glorious truths, which I hope will be made more and more prominent ; but the first fathers of the church set forth the same truths in a less theological fashion. If they dwell little upon justification by faith they were wonderfully full upon the blood and its cleansing power, the wounds and their healing efficacy, the death of Jesus and our eternal life. We will go back to their style for awhile, and preach the facts about our Lord Jesus Christ rather than the doctrinal inferences therefrom. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would so bring the sorrows of our Lord near to each heart that every one of us may know the fellowship of his sufferings, and possess faith in his salvation and reverent love for his person.

I. We will begin our narrative this morning by first asking you to think of **THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND MASTER BY THE HIGH PRIEST**. They brought in our Lord from the garden bound ; but they also kept fast hold upon him, for we read of "the men that held him." They were evidently afraid of their prisoner, even when they had him entirely in their power. He was all gentleness and submission ; but conscience made cowards of them all, and they therefore took all a coward's care to hold him in their grasp. As the court had not yet gathered in sufficient numbers for a general examination, the high priest resolved that he would fill up the time by personally interrogating his prisoner.

He commenced his malicious exercise. The high priest asked Jesus *concerning his disciples*. We cannot tell what were the questions, but I suppose they were something like these : "How is it that thou hast gathered about thee a band of men ? What did they with thee ? What was thine ultimate intention to do by their means ? Who were they ?

Were they not a set of fanatics, or men discontented and ready for sedition?" I do not know how the crafty Caiaphas put his question: but the Saviour gave no reply to this particular enquiry. What could he have said if he had attempted to answer? Ah, brothers, what good could he have said of his disciples? We may be sure he would say no ill. He might have said, "Concerning my disciples, one of them has betrayed me; he has still the blood-money in his hand which you gave him as my price. Another of them, down in the hall there, before the cock crows will deny that he ever knew me, and add oaths and cursing to his denial: and as for the rest, they have all forsaken me and fled." Therefore our Lord said nothing concerning his disciples, for he will not turn the accuser of his own, whom he came, not to condemn, but to justify.

The high priest also asked him concerning *his doctrine*. I suppose he said to him, "What new teaching is this of thine? Are *we* not sufficient to teach the people—the Scribes so learned in the law, the Pharisees so attentive to ritual, the Sadducees so philosophical and speculative? Why needest thou intrude into this domain? I suppose thee to be little more than a peasant's son: what is this strange teaching of thine?"

To this enquiry our Lord did answer, and what a *triumphant reply* it was! Oh that we could always speak, when it is right to speak, as meekly and as wisely as he! He said, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret I have said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I have said." Oh, brethren, no reply to slander can be compared with a blameless life. Jesus had lived in the full blaze of day where all could see, and yet he was able to challenge accusation and say, "Ask them which heard me." Happy is the man who has no need to defend himself because his works and words are solid testimonials to his uprightness and goodness. Our Saviour answered his questioner very gently, but yet most effectually, by his appeal to facts. He stands before us at once the mirror of meekness and the paragon of perfection, with slander like a wounded snake writhing at his feet. What a delight to have this triumphant pleader for our advocate, to urge his own righteousness in our defence! None can impugn his absolute perfection, and that perfection covers all his saints this day. Who shall accuse us now that Jesus has undertaken to plead for us?

This overwhelming answer, however, brought the Saviour *a blow from one of the officers of the court* who stood by. Was not this a most shocking deed? Here was the first of a new order of assaults. Hitherto we have not heard of strokes and blows; but now it is fulfilled, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon his cheek." This was the first of a long series of assaults. I wonder who the man was that struck the Master so. I could wish that the Master's reply to him may have influenced his heart to repentance; but if not, it is certain that he led the van in personal assaults upon our Lord's person: his impious hand first struck him. Surely if he died in impenitence the memory of that blow must remain as a never-dying worm within him. To-day he cries, "I was the first to smite him: I struck him on the mouth with the palm of my hand." The old writers upon the Passion give us

various details of the injuries inflicted upon the Saviour by that blow; but we attach no importance to such traditions, and therefore will not repeat them, but simply say that there was general belief in the church that this blow was a very grievous one, and caused the Saviour much pain. Yet while he felt that blow, and was perhaps half staggered by it, the Master did not lose his composure, or exhibit the least resentment. His reply was everything it ought to be. There is not a word too much. He does not say, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," as did the Apostle Paul. We will not censure the servant, but we will far more commend the Master. He meekly said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" Enough, surely, if there remained any tenderness in the heart of the aggressor, to have made him turn his hand upon his own breast in penitential grief. One would not have wondered had he cried out, "Forgive me, O thou divinely meek and gentle One, and let me henceforth be thy disciple."

Thus have we seen the first part of our Lord's sufferings in the house of the high priest, and the lesson from it is just this—Let us be meek and lowly in heart as the Saviour was, for herein lay his strength and dignity. You tell me I have said that before. Yes, brethren, and I shall have to say it several more times before you and I have learned the lesson well. It is hard to be meek when falsely accused, meek when roughly interrogated, meek when a cunning adversary is on the catch, meek when smarting under a cruel blow which was a disgrace to a court of justice. You have heard of the patience of Job, but it pales before the patience of Jesus. Admire his forbearance, but do not stop at admiration; copy his example, write under this head-line and follow every stroke. O Spirit of God, even with Christ for an example, we shall not learn meekness unless thou dost teach us; and even with thee for a teacher we shall not learn it unless we take his yoke upon us and learn of him; for it is only at his feet, and under thy divine anointing that we shall ever become meek and lowly of heart, and so find rest unto our souls.

The preliminary examination is therefore over, and it has ended in no success whatever for the high priest. He has questioned Jesus and he has smitten him, but the ordeal brings nothing to content the adversary. The prisoner is supremely victorious, the assailant is baffled.

II. Now comes a second scene, **THE SEARCH FOR WITNESSES AGAINST HIM.** "The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none." A strange court that meets with the design to find the prisoner guilty, resolved in some way or other to compass his death. They must proceed according to the forms of justice, and so they summon witnesses, though all the while they violate the spirit of justice, for they ransack Jerusalem to find witnesses who will perjure themselves to accuse the Lord. Every man of the council is writing down somebody's name who may be fetched in from the outside, for the people have come from all parts of the land to keep the Passover, and surely some may be hunted up who, in one place or another, have heard him use an actionable mode of speech. They fetch in, therefore, everyone that they can find of that degraded class who will venture upon perjuring themselves if the bribe be forthcoming.

They scour Jerusalem to bring forth witnesses against Jesus ; but they had great difficulty in accomplishing their design, because they were bound to examine the witnesses apart, and they could not make them agree. Lies cannot be easily made to pair with each other, whereas truths are cut to the same pattern. Moreover, many sorts of witnesses that they could readily find they did not dare to bring forward. Witnesses were forthcoming who could testify that Jesus had spoken against the tradition of the elders ; but in that some who were in the council, namely, the Sadducees, were agreed with him to a large extent. It would never do to bring forward a charge about which they would not be unanimous. His denunciations of the Pharisees could not be the charge, for these pleased the Sadducees ; neither could they allege his outcry against the Sadducees, for in this the Pharisees were agreed with him. You recollect how Paul, when brought before this Sanhedrim, took advantage of their division of opinion and cried, " I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee ; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question " ; and in this manner created a dissension among the conclave, which for a time wrought in his favour. Our Lord took higher and nobler ground, and did not stoop to turn their folly to his own benefit ; yet, they being conscious of their internal feuds, cautiously avoided those points upon which they were not in harmony. They might have brought forward their old grievance that the Lord Jesus did not observe the Sabbath after their fashion ; but then it would have come out more publicly that he had healed the sick on the Sabbath. It would not do to publish that fact, for who would think of putting a person to death for having opened the eyes of one born blind, or having restored a withered arm on the Sabbath-day ? That kind of witness was therefore set aside. But might they not have found some witnesses to swear that he had talked about a kingdom that he was setting up ? Might not this readily have been made to mean sedition and rebellion ? Yes, but then that was rather a charge to allege against him before Pilate's civil court, whereas theirs was an ecclesiastical tribunal. Moreover, there were Herodians in the council who were very restive under the Roman yoke, and could not have had the face to condemn anyone for being a patriot ; and beside, the people outside would have sympathized with Jesus all the more if they had supposed that he would lead them on rebelling against Cæsar. Therefore they could not urge that point. They must have been greatly puzzled to know what to do ; especially when even on those points which they decided to bring forward the witnesses no sooner opened their mouths than they contradicted each other. At last they had it. There came two whose evidence was somewhat agreed ; and they asserted that on a certain occasion Jesus Christ had said, " I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." Here was blasphemy against the holy and beautiful house of the Lord, and this would serve their turn. Now, the Saviour had said something which was a little like the testimony of these false witnesses, and a misunderstanding had made it more like it ; but still their statement was a lie, and none the less a lie because a shadow of truth had fallen upon it, for the worst kind of lie is that which is manufactured out of a truth : it does more mischief a great deal than if it were a falsehood from stem to stern.

The Saviour had not said, "I will destroy this temple": he said, "Destroy this temple," that is to say, "Ye will destroy it, and ye may destroy it." He had not referred to the Jerusalem temple at all; this spake he concerning the temple of his body which would be destroyed. Christ has never said, "Destroy this temple which is made with hands, and I will build another without hands": in his language there is no allusion to hands at all. These refinements were of their own inventing, and his language gave no colour for them. He had not said, "I will build another"; he had said, "I will raise it up," which is quite a different thing. He meant that his body, after being destroyed, would be raised up again on the third day. They had altered a word here and a word there, the mood of one verb and the form of another, and so they made out our Lord to say what he never thought of. Yet even on that charge they did not agree. One said one thing upon it, and another said another, so that even this paltry accusation could not be brought against the Saviour. Their patched-up falsehood was made of such rotten stuff that the pieces would not hold together. They were ready to swear to anything that came into their perjured imaginations, but they could not be got to swear any two of them to the selfsame thing.

Meanwhile the Lord himself *stands silent*; like the sheep before her shearers, he is dumb, and openeth not his mouth; and I suppose the reason was partly that he might fulfil the prophecy, partly because the grandeur of his soul could not stoop to contend with liars, and most of all because his innocence needed no defence. He that is in some measure guilty is eager to apologize and to extenuate: his excuses usually suggest to men of experience the belief that there may be some ground for the accusation. He that is perfectly innocent is in no haste to answer his slanderers, for they soon answer one another. Our Lord did not desire to get into a vain jangle with them, and so to lead them on to utter still more falsehoods. If speech can do no good then indeed silence is wise: when the only result would have been to provoke his enemies to add to their iniquities it was magnanimous compassion which led the slandered Saviour to hold his speech.

We must not refrain from noticing *the comfort* which in some degree had been ministered to our Lord by the accusation which came most to the front. He stands there, and he knows they are about to put him to death, but they themselves remind him that their power over him has no longer lease than three days, and at the end of that short time he will be raised up again, no more to be at their disposal. His enemies witnessed the resurrection to him. I say not that his memory was weak, or that he would possibly have forgotten it amid his sorrows, but yet our Lord was human, and modes of comfort which are valuable to us were also useful to him. When the mind is tortured with malicious falsehood, and the whole man is tossed about by pains and griefs, it is good for us to be reminded of the consolations of God. We read of some who were "tortured, not accepting deliverance," and it was the hope of resurrection which sustained them. Our Lord knew that his soul would not be left in the abodes of the dead, neither should his flesh see corruption, and the false witnesses brought this vividly before his mind. Now, indeed, could our Redeemer say, "Destroy this temple, and in

three days I will raise it up." These ravens have brought the Saviour bread and meat. In these dead lions our glorious Samson has found honey. Sustained by the joy that was set before him he despises the shame. Strange that out of the mouths of those who sought his blood there should come the memorial of one of his greatest glories.

Now, brethren, here again we learn the same lesson as before, namely, let us gain meekness, and prove it by our power to hold our tongues. Eloquence is difficult to acquire, but silence is far more hard to practise. A man may much sooner learn to speak well than learn not to speak at all. We are in such a hurry to vindicate our own cause that we damage it by rash speech: if we were calm, gentle, quiet, forbearing as the Saviour was, our pathway to victory would be much more easy.

Observe, again, the armour with which Christ was clad: see the invulnerable shield of his holiness. His life was such that slander could not frame an accusation against him which would last long enough to be repeated. So frail were the charges that, like bubbles, they vanished as soon as they saw the light. Our Lord's enemies were utterly baffled. They hurled their darts against him, but, as if they fell upon a shield of blazing diamond, every arrow was broken and consumed.

Learn also this other lesson that we must expect to be misrepresented: we may reckon that our words will have other meanings to ungracious ears than those which we intended; we may expect that when we teach one thing which is true they will make us out to have stated another which is false; but let us not be overwhelmed by this fiery trial as though it were some strange thing. Our Lord and Master has endured it, and the servants must not escape. Wherefore endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and be not afraid.

Amid the din of these lies and perjuries, I hear the still small voice of a truth most precious, for like as Jesus stood for us at the bar, and they could not cause an accusation to abide upon him, so when we shall stand in him at the last great day, washed in his blood and covered with his righteousness, we too shall be clear. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If Satan should appear as the accuser of the brethren, he will be met by the voice, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" Yes, beloved, we too shall be cleared of slander. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The glorious righteousness of him who was falsely accused shall deliver the saints and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

III. But I must not dwell too long even on such themes as these, and therefore I pass on to THE PERSONAL INTERROGATION which followed upon the failure to bring forward witnesses. The high priest, too indignant to sit still, rises and stands over the prisoner like a lion roaring over his prey, and begins to question him again. It was an unrighteous thing to do. Should the judge who sits to administer law set himself to prove the prisoner guilty, or, what is worse, shall he try to extort confession from the accused which may be used against him? It was a tacit confession that Christ had been proved innocent up till then. The high priest would not have needed to draw something out

of the accused one if there had been sufficient material against him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point, and he knew it, and was red with rage. Now he attempts to bully the prisoner, that he may extract some declaration from him which may save all further trouble of witnesses, and end the matter. The question was forced home by a solemn adjuration, and it effected its purpose, for the Lord Jesus did speak, though he knew that he was thereby furnishing a weapon against himself. He felt under bond to answer the high priest of his people when he used such adjuration, bad man as that high priest was; and he could not draw back from a charge so solemn lest he should seem by his silence to deny the truth upon which the salvation of the world is made to hinge. So when the high priest said to him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" how distinctly and outspoken was the Master's reply. Though he knew that his death would thus be compassed, he witnessed a good confession. He plainly said, "I am," and then he added to that declaration, "Ye shall see the Son of man,"—so he brings out his humanity as well as his deity, "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." What a majestic faith! It is wonderful to think that he should be so calm as to confront his mockers, and assert his glory while he was in the depths of shame. He did as good as say, "You sit as my judges, but I shall soon sit as your judge: I seem to you to be an insignificant peasant, but I am the Son of the Blessed; you think that you will crush me, but you never will; for I shall speedily sit at the right hand of the power of God, and come in the clouds of heaven." He speaks boldly, as well became him. I admire the meekness that could be silent, I admire the meekness that could speak gently, but I still more wonder at the meekness that could speak courageously, and still be meek. Somehow or other, when we rouse ourselves to courage, we let in harshness at the same door, or if we shut out our anger, we are very apt to forget our firmness. Jesus never slays one virtue to make room for another. His character is complete, full-orbed, perfect, whichever way we look at it.

And surely, brethren, this must have brought another sweet consolation to our divine Master's heart. While smarting under that cruel blow, while writhing under those filthy accusations, while enduring such contradiction of sinners against himself, he must have felt satisfied from within in the consciousness of his Sonship and his power, and in the prospect of his glory and triumph. A well of water springs up within his soul as he foresees that he shall sit at the right hand of God, and that he shall judge the quick and the dead, and vindicate his redeemed. It is a wise thing to have these consolations always ready to hand. The enemy may not see their consolatory power, but we see it. To us from beneath the altar there issues forth a stream whose gentle flow supplies our spirits with a quiet gladness such as all earth's waters can never rival. Even now we also hear the Father say, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."

Notice, ere we pass away from this point, that, practically, the trial and the interrogation ended in our Lord's being *condemned because of his avowal of his deity*. They said, "Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death."

I cannot make out at all those people who call themselves Unitarians, and deny our Lord's deity. Unitarians we also are, for we believe in one God, and one God only; but they tell us that this blessed Christ our Master is not God, and yet they own that he was the most excellent of men, the most perfect of human beings. I cannot see it myself. He seems to me to be a blasphemer, and nothing else, if he be not God; and the Jews evidently held that opinion, and treated him accordingly. If he had not said that God was his Father, they would not have been so enraged against him. They put him to death because of the assertion of his deity, and the declaration that he would sit at the right hand of power and judge the world. To-day multitudes are willing to take Christ as a teacher, but they will not have him as the Son of God. I do not doubt that the Christian religion might be received in many places if it were shorn of its strength; if, in fact, its very soul and bowels were torn out of it, by setting forth Jesus as one of the prophets and nothing more. Hear how our wise men talk of him as one of a line of great reformers, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and they often add Confucius and Mahomet. Do we give place to this? No, not for an instant. He is verily the Son of the Blessed. He is divine, or false. The accusation of blasphemy must lie against him if he be not the Son of the Highest.

IV. We must now pass on and linger for a second or two over THE CONDEMNATION. They condemned him out of his own mouth: but this, while it wore the semblance of justice, was really unjust. The prisoner at the bar has affirmed that he is the Son of God. What next? May he not speak the truth? If it be the truth he must not be condemned, but adored. Justice requires that an enquiry be made as to whether he be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, or not. He has claimed to be the Messiah. Very well, all those in the court are expecting the Messiah; some of them expect him to appear very speedily. May not this be the sent one of the Lord? Let an enquiry be made into his claims. What is his lineage? Where was he born? Have any prophets attested him? Has he wrought miracles? Some such enquiries are due to any man whose life is at stake. You cannot justly condemn a man to die without examining into the truth of his defence, for it may turn out that his statements are correct. But, no, they will not hear the man they hate, the mere claim condemns him; it is blasphemy, and he must die.

He says he is the Son of God. Come, then, Caiaphas and council, call for witnesses for the defence. Enquire whether blind eyes have been opened and the dead raised up. Ask whether he has wrought miracles such as no man ever wrought in the midst of Israel throughout all time. Why not do this? O no, he must be taken from prison and from judgment, and none shall declare his generation. The less enquiry the more easy to condemn him unjustly. He has said he is the Christ and the Son of God, he is therefore guilty of death. Alas, how many there are who condemn Christ's doctrine without making due enquiries into it,—condemn it on the most trivial grounds. They come to hear a sermon, and perhaps find fault with the mannerism of the preacher, as if that were sufficient reason for denying the truth which he preaches; or else they say, "This is so strange—we cannot believe it." Why not? Are

not strange things sometimes true, and is not many a truth wondrously strange until you get familiar with it? These men will not condescend to hear Christ's proof of claim: they will make no enquiry. In this, like the Jewish priests, they practically cry, "Away with him! Away with him!"

He is condemned to die, and the high priest rends his clothes. I do not know whether he wore at that time the robes in which he ministered, but doubtless he wore some garb peculiar to his sacerdotal office, and this he rent. Oh, how significant! The house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi had their garments rent, and the temple, within a few hours, rent its veil from the top to the bottom: for priests and temple were alike abolished. They little knew it, but in all they did there was a singular significance: those rent garments were an index of the fact that now the Aaronic priesthood was for ever rent, and the great Melchisidec priesthood had come in, for the true Melchisidec there and then stood before them in all the majesty of his patience.

Observe that they were all agreed; there were no dissentients; they had taken care, I have no doubt, not to let Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa know anything about this meeting of theirs. They held it in the night, and they only rehearsed it in the early morning, for the sake of keeping their old Rabbinical law that they must try prisoners by daylight. They hurried up the trial, and any that might have spoken against their bloodthirsty sentence were kept out of the way. The assembly was unanimous. Alas for the unanimity of ungodly hearts against Christ! It is wonderful that there should be such quarrels among Christ's friends, and such unity among his foes, when the point is to put him to death. I never heard of quarrels among devils, nor did I ever read of sects in hell: they are all one in their hatred of the Christ and of God. But here are we split up into sections and parties, and often at war with one another. O Lord of love, forgive us: King of concord, come and reign over us, and bring us into a perfect unity around thyself.

The sentence was "death." I say nothing of it but this. Death was the sentence due to me, the sentence due to you, and they laid it upon our Substitute. "Worthy of death,"—they said—all of them. All hands were held up; all voices said "Yea, yea" to the verdict. Yet there was no fault in him. Say rather, there was every excellence in him. As I hear Jesus condemned to die my soul falls at his feet and cries, "Blessed Lord, now hast thou taken my condemnation; there is, therefore, none for me. Now hast thou taken my cup of death to drink, and henceforth it is dry to me. Glory be to thy blessed name, henceforth and for ever."

V. I am almost glad that my time is so far advanced, for I must needs set before you the fifth and most painful scene. No sooner have these evil men of the Sanhedrim pronounced him guilty of death, than the servants, the guards, and those that kept the high-priests' hall, eager to please their masters, and all touched with the same brute-like spirit which was in them, straightway began to *abuse* the infinite majesty of our Lord. Consider THE ABUSE. Let me read the words: "Some began to spit on him." "Began to spit on him!" Thus was contempt expressed more effectively than by words. Be astonished, O heavens,

and be horribly afraid. His face is the light of the universe, his person is the glory of heaven, and they "began to spit on him!" Alas, my God, that man should be so base! Some went further, and they "covered his face." It is an Eastern custom to cover the face of the condemned, as if they were not fit to see the light, nor fit to behold their fellow men. I know not whether for this reason, or in pure mockery, they covered his face, so that they could not see it, and he could not see them. How could they thus put out the sun and shut up bliss. Then when all was dark to him we read that they began to say, "Prophecy, Who is he that smote thee?" Then another did the like, and many were the cruel cuffs they laid about his blessed face. The mediæval writers delighted to talk about the teeth that were broken, the bruises on the cheeks, the blood which flowed, the flesh that was bruised and blackened; but we dare not thus imagine. Scripture has cast a veil, and there let it abide. Yet it must have been an awful sight to see the Lord of glory with his face bestained by their accursed phlegm and lroid with their cruel fists. Here insult and cruelty were combined: ridicule of his prophetic claims and dishonour to his divine person. Nothing was thought bad enough. They invented all they could of shame and scorn, and he stood patient there though a single flash of his eye would have consumed them in a moment.

Brothers, sisters, this is what our sin deserved. A shameful thing art thou, O sin! Thou dost deserve to be spit upon! This is what sin is constantly doing to Christ. Whenever you and I sin we do, as it were, spit in his face: we also hide his eyes by trying to forget that he sees us; and we also smite him whenever we transgress and grieve his Spirit. Talk not of cruel Jews: let us think of ourselves, and let us be humbled by the thought. This is what the ungodly world is ever doing to our blessed Master. They also would hide his eyes which are the light of the world: they also despise his gospel, and spit upon it as an utterly worn out and worthless thing: they also do despite to the members of his body through his poor afflicted saints who have to bear slander and abuse for his dear sake.

And yet over all this I seem to see a light most blessed. Christ must be spit upon, for he has taken our sin: Christ must be tortured, for he is standing in our stead. Who is to be the executioner of all this grief? Who shall take upon himself the office of putting Christ to shame? Our redemption was being wrought out this way,—who shall be the drudge to perform this miserable work? Fling in the clusters richer than the grapes of Eshcol; fling them in, but who shall tread them out and laboriously extract the wine, the generous wine which cheereth God and man? The feet shall be the willing feet of Christ's own adversaries: they shall extort from him that which shall redeem us and destroy all evil. I rejoice to see Satan outwitted, and his malice made to be the means of his own overthrow. He thinks to destroy Christ, and by that deed he destroys himself. He pulls down evil upon his own head and falls into the pit which he has digged. Thus shall all evil ever work for the good of the Lord's people; yea, their greatest good shall oftentimes come out of that which threatened their ruin, and wrought in them the utmost anguish. Three days must the Christ suffer and die and lie in the grave; but after that he must bruise the serpent's head

and lead captivity captive, and that by the means of the very suffering and shame which he is now enduring ; in like manner shall it happen to his mystical body, and Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly.

I leave this subject, hoping that you will pursue it in your meditations. Here are three observations.

First, how ready should we be to bear slander and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff, and think it a hard thing that people should mock at you. Who are you, dear sir? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall he have all the bitter, and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier you, to demand better fare than your Captain!

How earnestly, next, ought we to honour our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put him to shame, let us be ten times more earnest to bring him glory. Is there anything we can do to-day by which he may be honoured? Let us set about it. Can we make any sacrifice? can we perform any difficult task which would glorify him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with our might. Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying him, even as his adversaries were ingenious in the methods of his shame.

Lastly, how surely and how sweetly may all who believe in him come and rest their souls in his hands. Surely I know that he who suffered this, since he was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us. Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions. Glory be to God, that spittle on his countenance means a clear, bright face for me. Those false accusations on his character mean no condemnation for me. That putting him to death proves the certainty of our text last Sabbath morning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Let us sweetly rest in Jesus, and if ever our faith is agitated, let us get away to the hall of Caiaphas, and see the Just standing for the unjust, the Faultless One bearing condemnation for sinners. Let us in the high-priest's hall judge and condemn every sin and every doubt, and come forth glorying that the Christ has conquered for us, and that we now wait for his appearing with delight. God bless you, brothers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xxiii. 12—24
Mark xiv. 53—65; Luke xxii. 66—71.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—333, 275, 286.

NEVERTHELESS. HEREAFTER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus saith saith unto him, Thou hast said (or said so), nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”—Matthew xxvi. 64.

OUR Lord, before his enemies, was silent in his own defence, but he faithfully warned and boldly avowed the truth. His was the silence of patience, not of indifference; of courage, not of cowardice. It is written that “before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession,” and that statement may also be well applied to his utterances before Caiaphas, for there he was not silent when it came to confession of necessary truth. If you will read the chapter now open before us, you will notice that the high priest adjured him, saying, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?” to which he replied at once, “Thou hast said it.” He did not disown his Messiahship; he claimed to be the promised one, the messenger from heaven, Christ the anointed of the Most High. Neither did he for a moment disavow his personal deity: he acknowledged and confessed that he was the Son of God. How could he be silent when such a vital point as to his person was in question? He did not hold them in suspense, but openly declared his Godhead by saying, “I am;” for so are his words reported by one of the evangelists. He then proceeded to reveal the solemn fact that he would soon sit at the right hand of God, even the Father. In the words of our text he declared that those who were condemning him would see him glorified, and in due time would stand at his bar when he would come upon the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and dead according to our gospel. See, then, dear brethren, in a few words, the great truths of our holy religion clearly set forth by our Lord Jesus: he claimed to be the Christ of God, and the Son of God, and his brief statement by implication speaks of Jesus dead, buried, and risen, and now enthroned at the right hand of God in the power of the Father, and Jesus soon to come in his glorious second advent to judge the world in righteousness. Our Lord’s confession was very full, and happy is he who heartily embraces it.

I intend to dwell upon three catch-words around which there gathers a world of encouraging and solemn thought. The first is "*nevertheless*," and the second is "*hereafter*;" what the third is you shall know hereafter, but not just now.

I. "*NEVERTHELESS*," said Christ, "hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This, then, is the string from which we must draw forth music. "*Nevertheless*," which being interpreted by being pulled in pieces, signifies that truth is never-the-less sure because of opposition. "*Nevertheless*," not one atom the less is the truth certain to prevail, for all that you say or do against it. Jesus will surely sit at the right hand of power, and come in due season upon the clouds of heaven. Let us dwell for a little time upon this important fact, that truth is none the less certain because of the opposition of men and devils.

Observe, first, that *the Saviour's condition when he made use of that "nevertheless" was no proof that he would not rise to power.* There he stood, a poor, defenceless, emaciated man, newly led from the night-watch in the garden and its bloody sweat. *He was a spectacle of meek and lowly suffering*, led by his captors like a lamb to the slaughter, with none to speak a word on his behalf. He was surrounded by those who hated him, and he was forsaken by his friends. Scribes, Pharisees, priests, were all thirsting for his heart's blood. A lamb in the midst of wolves is but a faint picture of Christ standing there before the Sanhedrim in patient silence. And yet, though his present condition seemed to contradict it, he who was the faithful and true witness spake truly when he testified, "*Nevertheless, hereafter ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. Despite my present shame and suffering, so it shall be.*"

He gives himself that lowly, humble title of Son of man, as best indicating himself in his condition at that time. "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The humiliation of Christ did not in the least endanger his after glory. His sufferings, his shame, his death, did not render it any the less certain that he would climb to his throne. Nor did the cavillings of his opposers keep him for one instant from his place of honour. I wish you to remember this, for there is a great principle in it. There are many poor weakminded people who cannot take sides with a persecuted truth, nor accept anything but the most popular and fashionable form of religion. They dare not be with truth when men spit in its face, and buffet it, and pour contempt upon it; but it will be victorious none the less, although cowards desert it and falsehearted men oppose it. If it stand alone at the bar of the world, a culprit to be condemned,—if it receive nothing but a universal hiss of human execration,—yet, if it be the truth, it may be condemned, but it will be justified; it may be buried, but it will rise; it may be rejected, but it will be glorified, even as it has happened to the Christ of God. Who would be ashamed of truth at any time when he knows the preciousness of it? Who will tremble because of present opposition when he foresees what will yet come of it? What a sublime spectacle—the man of sorrows standing before his cruel judges in all manner of weakness and poverty and contempt, at the same time heir of all things, and

appointed, nevertheless, to sit at the right hand of power and to come in the clouds of heaven.

Nor may we think only of his condition as a despised and rejected man; for he was, on his trial, charged with grievous wrong, and about to be *condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities*. The scribes learned in the law declared that he blasphemed: and the priests, familiar with the ordinances of God, exclaimed, "Away with him; it is not meet that he should live." The high priest himself gave judgment that it was expedient for him to be put to death. It is a very serious thing, is it not, when all the ecclesiastical authorities are against you,—when they are unanimous in your condemnation? Yes, verily, and it may cause great searching of heart; for no peaceable man desires to be opposed to constituted authority, but would sooner have the good word of those who sit in Moses' seat. But this was not the last time in which the established ecclesiastical authorities were wrong, grievously wrong. They were condemning the innocent, and blaspheming the Lord from heaven. Nor, I say, was this the last time in which the mitre and the gown have been upon the side of cruel wrong: yet this did not un-Christ our Saviour or rob him of his deity or his throne. On the same principle human history brings before us abundance of instances in which, nevertheless, though scribes, priests, bishops, pontiffs, and popes condemned the truth, it was just as sure, and became as triumphant, as it had a right to do. There stands the one lone man, and there are all the great ones around him—men of authority and reputation, sanctity and pomp—and they unanimously deny that he can ever sit at the right hand of God: "But, nevertheless," saith he, "hereafter ye shall see the Son of man at the right hand of power." He spoke the truth: his declaration has been most gloriously fulfilled hitherto. Even thus over the neck of clergy, priests, pontiffs, popes, his triumphant chariot of salvation shall still roll, and the truth—the simple truth of his glorious gospel—shall, despite them all, win the day, and reign over the sons of men.

Nor is this all. Our Lord at that time was *surrounded by those who were in possession of earthly power*. The priests had the ear of Pilate, and Pilate had the Roman legions at his back. Who could resist such a combination of force? Craft and authority form a dreadful league. One disciple drew a sword, but just at the time when our Lord stood before the Sanhedrim that one chivalrous warrior had denied him; so that all the physical force was on the other side. As a man he was helpless when he stood bound before the council. I am not speaking now of that almighty power which faith knows to have dwelt in him; but as to human power, he was weakness at its weakest. His cause seemed at the lowest ebb. He had none to stand up in his defence—nay, none to speak a word on his behalf; for, "Who shall declare his generation?" And yet, for all that, and even because of it, he did rise to sit at the right hand of power, and he shall come in the clouds of heaven. So if it ever comes to pass, my brother, that thou shouldst be the lone advocate of a forgotten truth,—if thy Master should ever put thee in all thy weakness and infirmity in the midst of the mighty and the strong, do not thou fear or tremble; for the possession of power is but a trifle compared with the possession of truth, and he that has the right may

safely defy the might of the world. He shall win and conquer, let the princes and powers that he take to themselves what force and craft they choose. Jesus, nevertheless, wins, though the power is all against him, and so shall the truth which he represents, for it wears about it a hidden power which baffles all opponents.

Nor was it merely all the power, there was *a great deal of furious rage against him*. That Caiaphas, how he spoke to him! "I adjure thee," saith he, "by God." And after he has spoken he rends his garments in indignation, his anger burns like fire; but the Christ is very quiet, the Lamb of God is still, and looking his adversary in the face, he says, "Nevertheless, hereafter thou shalt see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." He was strong, and therefore calm; confident, and therefore peaceful; fully assured, and therefore patient. He could wait, for he believed; and his prophecy was true, notwithstanding the high priest's rage. So if we meet with any man at any time who gnashes his teeth upon us, who foams in passion, who dips his pen into the bitterest gall to write down our holy faith, who is indefatigable in his violent efforts against the Christ of God,—what mattereth it? "Nevertheless, ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power." "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," said Jehovah; and he declared the decree though the heathen raged and the people imagined a vain thing. Well may he smile at rage who is so sure of victory.

Yes, but it was not one person that raged merely. The people of Jerusalem, and the multitudes that had come up to the passover, bribed and egged on by the priests and the Pharisees, were all hot after our Saviour's death, clamouring, "Crucify him, crucify him;" and yet there he stood, and as he heard their tumult, and anticipated its growing demand for his blood, he lost not his confidence, but he calmly said, "Nevertheless, hereafter, shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power." Behold his perfect inward peace, and see how he manifests it by a bold confession in the very teeth of all his adversaries. "Ye may be as many as the waves of the sea; and ye may foam and rage like the ocean in a storm, but the purpose and the decree of God will, nevertheless, be fulfilled; ye cannot let or hinder it one whit. Ye, to your everlasting confusion, shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power."

Beloved, you know that after he had said this our Lord was taken before Herod and Pilate, and at last was put to death: and he knew all this, foreseeing it most clearly, and yet it did not make him hesitate. He knew that he would be crucified, and that his enemies would boast that there was an end of him and of his kingdom. He knew that his disciples would hide themselves in holes and corners, and that nobody would dare to say a word concerning the man of Nazareth: he foreknew that the name of the Nazarene would be bandied about amid general opprobrium, and Jerusalem would say, "That cause is crushed out: that egg of mischief has been broken;" but he, foreseeing all that, and more, declared, "Nevertheless, hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." I cannot help harping upon the text—I hope I shall not weary you with it, for to me it is music. I do not like running over the word "*nevertheless*"

too quickly, I like to draw it out and repeat it as "never—the—less." No, not one jot the less will his victory come. Not in the least degree was his royal power endangered or his sure triumph imperilled. Not even by his death and the consequent scattering of his disciples was the least hazard occasioned; but, indeed, all these things wrought together for the accomplishment of the divine purpose concerning him, and the lower he stooped the more sure he was to rise ultimately to his glory.

And now, beloved, it is even so. The man Christ Jesus was despised and rejected of men, but at this moment he sits at the right hand of power: all power is given to him in heaven and in earth, and therefore does he bid us proclaim his gospel. There is not an angel but does his bidding; providence is arranged by his will, for "the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Atoning work is done, and, therefore, he sits. His work is well done, and, therefore, he sits on the right hand of God, in the place of honour and dignity. Before long he will come. We cannot tell when: he may come to-night, or he may tarry many a weary year: but he will surely come in person, for did not the angels say to the men of Galilee, as they stood gazing into heaven, "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"? He shall come with blast of trumpet and with thousands of angelic beings, all doing him honour. He shall come with flaming fire to visit the trembling earth. He shall come with all his Father's glories on, and kings and princes shall stand before him, and he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously. The tumults of the people, and the plotting of their rulers, shall be remembered in that day, but it shall be to their own eternal shame: his throne shall be none the less resplendent.

I beg you to learn the spiritual lesson which comes out of this. I have already indicated it, and it is this—never be afraid to stand by a losing cause. Never hesitate to stand alone when the truth is to be confessed. Never be overawed by sacerdotalism, or daunted by rage, or swayed by multitudes. Unpopular truth is, nevertheless, eternal, and that doctrine which is scouted and cast out as evil to-day shall bring immortal honour to the man who dares to stand by its side and share its humiliation. Oh, for the love of the Christ who thus threw a "*nevertheless*" at the feet of his foes, follow him whithersoever he goeth. Through flood or flame, in loneliness, in shame, in obloquy, in reproach, follow him! If it be without the camp, follow him! If every step shall cost you abuse and scorn, follow still; yea, to prison and to death still follow him, for as surely as he sitteth at the right hand of power so shall those who love him and have been faithful to his truth sit down upon his throne with him. His overcoming and enthronement are the pledges of the victory both of the truth and of those who courageously espouse it.

Thus have we sounded our first great bell—"NEVERTHELESS." Let its music ring through the place and charm each opened ear.

II. The second bell is "HEREAFTER." "Nevertheless, hereafter." I like the sound of those two bells together: let us ring them again. "*Nevertheless, hereafter.*" The hereafter seems in brief to say to me that *the main glory of Christ lies in the future.* Not to-day, perhaps, nor to-morrow will the issue be seen! Have patience! Wait a while.

“Your strength is to sit still.” God has great leisure, for he is the Eternal. Let us partake in his restfulness while we sing, “*Nevertheless, hereafter.*” O for the Holy Spirit’s power at this moment; for it is written, “he will show you things to come.”

It is one great reason why the unregenerate sons of men cannot see any glory in the kingdom of Christ because to them it is such a future thing. Its hopes look into eternity: its great rewards are beyond this present time and state, and the most of mortal eyes cannot see so far. Unregenerate men are like Passion in John Bunyan’s parable: they will have all their good things now, and so they have their toys and break them, and they are gone, and then their hereafter is a dreary outlook of regret and woe. Men of faith know better; and like Patience in the same parable, they choose to have their best things last, for that which comes last, lasts on for ever. He whose turn comes last has none to follow him, and his good things shall never be taken away from him. The poor, purblind world cannot see beyond its own nose, and so it must have its joys and riches at once. To them speedy victory is the main thing, and the truth is nothing. Is the cause triumphant to-day? Off with your caps, and throw them up, and cry “Hurrah!” no matter that it is the cause of a lie. Do the multitudes incline that way? Then, sir, if you be worldly-wise, run with them. Pull off the palm branches, strew the roads, and shout “Hosanna to the hero of the hour!” though he be a despot or a deceiver. But not so—not so with those who are taught of God. They take eternity into their estimate, and they are contented to go with the despised and rejected of men for the present, because they recollect the hereafter. They can swim against the flood, for they know whither the course of this world is tending. O blind world, if thou wert wise, thou wouldst amend thy line of action, and begin to think of the hereafter too; for, brethren, the hereafter will soon be *here*. What a short time it is since Adam walked in the garden of Eden: compared with the ages of the rocks, compared with the history of the stars, compared with the life of God, it is as the winking of an eye, or as a flash of lightning. One has but to grow a little older, and years become shorter, and time appears to travel at a much faster rate than before, so that a year rushes by you like a meteor across the midnight heavens. When we are older still, and look down from the serene abodes above, I suppose that centuries and ages will be as moments to us; for to the Lord they are as nothing. Suppose the coming of the Lord should be put off for ten thousand years—it is but supposition—but if it were, ten thousand years will soon be gone, and when the august spectacle of Christ coming on the clouds of heaven shall really be seen, the delay will be as though but an hour had intervened. The space between now and then, or rather the space between what is “now” at this time, and what will be “now” at the last—how short a span it is! Men will look back from the eternal world and say, “How could we have thought so much of the fleeting life we have lived on earth, when it was to be followed by eternity? What fools we were to make such count of momentary, transient pleasures, when now the things which are not seen, and are eternal, have come upon us, and we are unprepared for them!” Christ will soon come, and at the longest, when he cometh,

the interval between to-day and then will seem to be just nothing at all; so that "hereafter" is not as the sound of far-off cannon, nor as the boom of distant thunder, but it is the rolling of rushing wheels hastening to overtake us.

"Hereafter!" "Hereafter!" Oh, when that hereafter comes, how overwhelming it will be to Jesus' foes! Now where is Caiaphas? Will he now adjure the Lord to speak? Now, ye priests, lift up your haughty heads! Utter a sentence against him now! There sits, your victim upon the clouds of heaven. Say now that he blasphemes, and hold up your rent rags, and condemn him again. But where is Caiaphas? He hides his guilty head: he is utterly confounded, and begs the mountains to fall upon him. And, oh, ye men of the Sanhedrim, who sat at midnight and glared on your innocent victim, with your cold, cruel eyes, and afterwards gloated over the death of your martyred Prince, where are ye now—now that he has come with all his Father's power to judge you? They are asking the hills to open their caverns and conceal them: the rocks deny them shelter. And where, on that day, will you be; you who deny his deity, who profane his Sabbath, who slander his people, and denounce his gospel—oh, where will you be in that tremendous day, which as surely comes as comes to-morrow's rising sun? Oh, sirs, consider this word—"Hereafter!" I would fain whisper it in the ear of the sinner, fascinated by his pleasures. Come near and let me do so—*hereafter!* I would make it the alarm of the bed-head of the sleeping transgressor, who is dreaming of peace and safety, while he is slumbering himself into hell. Hereafter! Hereafter! Oh, yes, ye may suck the sweet, and eat the fat, and drink as ye will; but hereafter! hereafter! What will ye do hereafter when that which is sweet in the mouth shall be as gall in the belly, and when the pleasures of to-day shall be a mixture of misery for eternity? Hereafter! Oh, hereafter! Now, O Spirit divine, be pleased to open careless ears, that they may listen to this prophetic sound.

To the Lord's own people there is no sound more sweet than that of "hereafter." "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." Welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome, Redeemer, Saviour! Welcome in every character in which thou comest. What acclamations and congratulations will go up from the countless myriads of his redeemed, when first the ensigns of the Son of man shall be seen in the heavens! On some one of earth's mornings, when the children of men shall be "marrying and giving in marriage," while saints shall be looking for his appearing, they shall first of all perceive that he is actually coming. Long desired, and come at last. Then the trumpet shall be heard, waxing exceeding loud and long, ringing out a sweeter note to the true Israel than ever trumpet heard on the morn of Jubilee. What delight! What lifting up of gladsome eyes! What floods of bliss! Oppression is over, the idols are broken, the reign of sin is ended, darkness shall no more cover the nations. He cometh, he cometh: glory be to his name!

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

O blessed day of acclamations! how shall heaven's vault be rent with them when his saints shall see for themselves what was reserved for him and for them in the "hereafter." "Ye shall see the Son of man at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

That word "hereafter," my brothers and sisters, is, at this moment, our grandest solace, and I wish to bring it before you in that light. Have you been misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered because of fidelity to the right and to the true? Do not trouble yourself. Vindicate not your own cause. Refer it to the King's Bench above, and say, "Hereafter, hereafter." Have you been accused of being mad, fanatical, and I know not what besides, because to you party is nothing, and ecclesiastical pride nothing, and the stamp of popular opinion nothing; because you are determined to follow the steps of your Master, and believe the true and do the right? Then be in no hurry; the sure hereafter will settle the debate. Or are you very poor, and very sick, and very sad? But are you Christ's own? Do you trust him? Do you live in fellowship with him? Then the hope of the hereafter may well take the sting out of the present. It is not for long that you shall suffer; the glory will soon be revealed in you and around you. There are streets of gold symbolic of your future wealth, and there are harps celestial emblematical of your eternal joy. You shall have a white robe soon, and the dusty garments of toil shall be laid aside for ever. You shall have a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory; and therefore the light affliction which is but for a moment may well be endured with patience. Have you laboured in vain? Have you tried to bring souls to Christ, and had no recompense? Fret not, but remember the hereafter. Many a labourer, unsuccessful to the eye of man, will receive a "Well done, good and faithful servant" from his Master in that day. Set little store by anything you have, and wish but lightly for anything that you have not. Let the present be to you, as it really is, a dream, an empty show, and project your soul into the hereafter, which is solid and enduring; for, oh! what music there is in it!—what delight to a true child of God! "Nevertheless, hereafter."

I feel half inclined to have done, and to send you out of the place, singing all the way, "Nevertheless, hereafter." The people outside might not understand you, but it would be a perfectly justifiable enthusiasm of delight.

III. Now, thirdly. Where am I to look for my third bell? Where is the third word I spoke of? In truth, I cannot find it in the version which we commonly use, and there is no third word in the original, and yet the word I am thinking of is there. The truth is that the second word, which has been rendered by "hereafter," bears another meaning; I will give you what the Greek critics say, as nearly as can be, the meaning of the word is, "HENCEFORWARD." "Henceforward ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." "*Henceforward.*" That is another word, and the teaching gathered out of it is this: *even in the present there are tokens of the victory of Christ.* "But," says one, "did Christ say to those priests that henceforward they should see him sitting at the right hand of power?" Yes, yes, that is what he meant. He meant,

"You look at me and scorn me ; but, sirs, you shall not be able to do this any longer, for henceforward you shall see for yourselves that I am not what I appear to be, but that I sit at the right hand of power. Henceforward, and as long as you live, you shall know that galling truth." And did that come true? Yes, it came true that night ; for when the Saviour died there came a messenger unto the members of the Sanhedrim and others, and told them that the veil of the temple was rent in twain. In that moment, when the man of Nazareth died, that splendid piece of tapestry seemed to tear itself asunder from end to end as if in horror at the death of its Lord. The members of that council, when they met each other in the street and spoke of the news, must have been dumb in sheer astonishment ; but while they looked upon each other the earth they stood upon reeled and reeled again, and they could scarcely keep their feet. This was not the first wonder which had that day startled them, for the sun had been beclouded in unnatural darkness. At midday the sun had ceased to shine, and now the earth ceases to be stable. Lo, also, in the darkness of the evening, certain members of this council saw the sheeted dead, newly arisen from their sepulchres, walking through the streets ; for the rocks rent, the earth shook, and the graves opened, and the dead came forth and appeared unto many. Thus early they began to know that the man of Nazareth was at the right hand of power.

Early on the third morning, when they were met together, there came a messenger in hot haste, who said, "The stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. Remember that ye placed a watch, and that ye set your seal upon the stone. But early this morning the soldiers say that he came forth. He rose, that dreaded One whom we put to death, and at the sight of him the keepers did quake and became as dead men." Now, these men—these members of the Sanhedrim—believed that fact ; and we have clear evidence that they did so, for they bribed the soldiers, and said, "Say ye, his disciples came and stole away his body while we slept." Then did the word also continue to be fulfilled, and they plainly saw that Jesus whom they had condemned was at the right hand of power. A few weeks passed over their heads, and, lo, there was a noise in the city, and an extraordinary excitement. Peter had been preaching and three thousand persons in one day had been baptized into the name which they dreaded so much ; and they were told, and they heard it on the best of evidence, that there had been a wonderful manifestation of the Holy Spirit, such as was spoken of in the book of the prophet Joel. Then they must have looked one another in the face, and stroked their beards, and bitten their lips, and said one to another, "Did he not say that we should see him at the right hand of power?" They had often to remember that word, and again and again to see its truth, for when Peter and John were brought before them, it was proven that they had restored a lame man, and these two unlearned and ignorant men told them that it was through the name of Jesus that the lame were made to leap and walk. Day after day they were continuously obliged, against their will, to see, in the spread of the religion of the man whom they had put to death, that his name had power about it such as they could not possibly gainsay or resist. Lo, one of their number, Paul, had been converted, and was

preaching the faith which he had endeavoured to destroy. They must have been much amazed and chagrined, as in this also they discerned that the Son of man was at the right hand of power.

Yes, say you, but did they see him coming in the clouds of heaven? I answer, yes. Henceforth they saw that also, for they began to have upon their minds forebodings, and dark thoughts. The Jewish nation was in an ill state, the people were getting disquieted, imposters were rising, and the leading men of the nation trembled as to what the Romans would do. At last there came an outbreak, and the imperial power was defied, and then such of them as still survived began to realize the words of Christ. When they saw the comet in the sky, and the drawn sword hanging over Jerusalem, when they saw the city compassed about with armies, when they marked the legions dig the trenches, and throw up the earthworks and surround the devoted city, while all around was fire and famine; when from every tower upon the walls they could see one of their own countrymen nailed to a cross, for the Romans put the Jews to death by crucifixion by hundreds, and even by thousands,—then must they have begun to see the coming of the Son of man. And when, at last, the city was destroyed and a fire-brand was hurled even into the holy place, and the Jews were banished and sold for slaves till they would not fetch the price of a pair of shoes, so many were they and so greatly despised,—then they saw the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance on his adversaries.

Read the text as meaning, “Henceforward, ye shall see the Son of man at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” It is not the full meaning of the passage, but it is a part of that meaning, beyond all question.

Beloved, even at the present time we may see the tokens of the power of Christ among us. Only tokens, mark you; I do not want to take you off from the hereafter, but henceforward and even now there are tokens of the power of our Lord Jesus. Look at revivals. When they break out in the church how they stagger all the adversaries of Christ. They said—yes, they dared to say—that the gospel had lost all its power—that, since the days of Whitefield and Wesley, there was no hope of the masses being stirred, yet when they see, even in this house, from Sabbath to Sabbath, vast crowds listening to the word, and when some few months ago no house could be built that was large enough to accommodate the thronging masses who sought to hear our American brethren, then were they smitten in the mouth, so that they could speak no more, for it was manifested that the Lord Christ still lives, and that, if his gospel be fully and simply preached, it will still draw all men to him, and souls will be saved, and that not a few.

And look ye, in the brave world outside, apart from religion, what influences there are abroad which are due to the power of the Christ of God. Would you have believed it twenty years ago that in America there should be no more a slave; that united Italy should be free of her despots? Could you have believed that the Pope would be puling about his being a prisoner in the Vatican, and that the power of anti-christ would be shorn away? No, the wonders of history, even within the last few years, are enough to show us that Christ is at the right

hand of power. Come what will in the future, mark ye this, my brethren, it will never be possible to uphold tyranny and oppression long, for the Lord Christ is to the front for the poor and needy of the earth. O despots, you may do what you will, and use your craft and policy, if you please, but all over this world the Lord Jesus Christ has lifted up a plummet and set up a righteous standard, and he will draw a straight line, and it will pass through everything that offends, that it may be cut off; and it will also pass over all that is good and lovely, and right, and just, and true, and these shall be established in his reign among men. I believe in the reign of Christ. Kings, sultans, czars—these are puppets all of them, and your parliaments and congresses are but vanity of vanity. God is great, and none but he. Jesus is the King in all the earth. He is the man, the King of men, the Lord of all. Glory be to his name. As the years progress we shall see it more and more, for he has had long patience, but he is beginning now to cut the work short in righteousness. He is baring his right arm for war and that which denies manhood's just claims, that which treads upon the neck of the humanity which Christ has taken, that which stands against his throne and dominion, must be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel, for the sceptre in his hand is a rod of iron, and he will use it mightily. The Christ, then, gives tokens still of his power. They are only tokens, but they are sure ones, even as the dawn does not deceive us, though it be not the noontide.

And oh, let me say, there be some of you present who are enemies of Christ, but you also must have perceived some tokens of his power. I have seen him shake the infidel by the gospel till he has said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He has taken him in the silence of the night and probed his conscience: in his gentleness and love, and pity he has led the man to think, and though he has not altogether yielded, yet he has felt that there is a solemn power about the Christ of God. Some of the worst of men have been forced to own that Christ has conquered them. Remember how Julian, as he died, said, "The Nazarene has overcome me: the Nazarene has overcome me." May you not have to say that in the article of death, but oh that you may say it now. May his love overpower you, may his compassion win you, and you will see in your own salvation tokens of his power.

But I must have done, for my time has fled, but I desire to add that it will be a blessed thing if everyone here, becoming a believer in Jesus, shall henceforward see him at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. Would to God we could live with that vision full in view, believing Jesus to be at the right hand of power, trusting him and resting in him. Because we know him to be the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, we ought never to have a doubt when we are doing what is right. We ought never to have a doubt when we are following Jesus, for he is more than a conqueror, and so shall his followers be. Let us go on courageously, trusting in him as a child trusts in his father, for he is mighty upon whom we repose our confidence.

Let us also keep before our mind's eye the fact that he is coming. Be ye not as the virgins that fell asleep. Even now my ear seems to hear the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Arise, ye

virgins, sleep no longer, for the bridegroom is near. As for you, ye foolish virgins, God grant that there may yet be time enough left to awake even you, that you may yet have oil for your lamps before he comes. He comes we know not when, but he comes quickly. Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Be ye as men that watch for their Lord, and as servants that are ready to give in their account, because the master of the house is near.

In that spirit let us come to the Lord's table, as often as we gather there, for he has said to us, "Do this until I come." Outward ordinances will cease when he comes, for we shall need no memorial when the Lord himself will be among us. Let us here pledge him in the cup. That he is coming we do verily believe; that he is coming we do joyfully proclaim. Is it a subject of joy to you? If not—

"Ye sinners seek his face,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Bow to the sceptre of his grace,
And find salvation there."

God bless you for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matt. xxvi. 47—75.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 746.

AN AWFUL CONTRAST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 12TH, 1896,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 11th, 1886.

“Then did they spit in his face.”—Matthew xxvi. 67.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.”—Revelation xx. 11.

GUIDED by our text in Matthew's Gospel, let us first go in thought to the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, and there let us, in deepest sorrow, realize the meaning of these terrible words: “Then did they spit in his face.” There is more of deep and awful thunder in them than in the bolt that bursts overhead, there is more of vivid terror in them than in the sharpest lightning flash: “Then did they spit in his face.”

Observe that these men, the priests, and scribes, and elders, and their servitors, did this shameful deed after they had heard our Lord say, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” It was in contempt of this claim, in derision of this honour which he foretold for himself, that “then did they spit in his face,” as if they could bear it no longer, that he, who stood to be judged of them, should claim to be their Judge; that he, whom they had brought at dead of night from the garden of Gethsemane as their captive, should talk of coming in the clouds of heaven: “Then did they spit in his face.”

Nor may I fail to add that they thus assaulted our Lord after the high priest had rent his clothes. My brethren, do not forget that the high priest was supposed to be the representative of everything that was good and venerable among the Jews. The high priest was the earthly head of their religion; he it was who, alone of mortal men, might enter within the mysterious veil; yet he it was who condemned the Lord of glory, as he rent his clothes, and said, “He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.” It makes me tremble as I think of how

eminent we may be in the service of God, and yet how awfully we may be enemies of the Christ of God. Let none of us think that, though we even clamber up to the highest places in the church, we are therefore saved. We may be high priests, and wear the Urim and the Thummim, and put on the breastplate with all its wondrous mystic stones, and bind around us the curious girdle of the ephod, and yet, for all that, we may be ringleaders in expressing contempt of God and of his Christ. It was when Caiaphas, the high priest, had pronounced the word of condemnation against Christ, that "then did they spit in his face." God grant that we may never take upon ourselves any office in the Church of God, and then, girt about with the authority and influence which such an office might lend to us, be the first to pour derision and contempt upon the Christ of God! Yet I do not hesitate to say that when men look to the earthly priesthood instead of looking to Christ, the great High Priest, when men are taught to trust in the mass instead of trusting in Christ's one sacrifice for sin upon the cross, it is then that the very priests do lead the way in spitting in his face. Antichrist never more surely dwells anywhere than in the place where Christ is thus dishonoured, and none do him such dire disgrace as those who ought to bow at his feet, and lift him high among the sons of men, yet who reject him, and refuse his rightful claims.

"Then did they spit in his face," after he had proclaimed his Godhead as King and Judge of all, and after the man who ought to have been his principal earthly servant had turned arch-traitor, and led the way in contempt of him by accusing him of blaspheming. "Then did they spit in his face."

There are two or three thoughts that come to my mind when I think that these wicked men did actually spit in Christ's face,—in that face which is the light of heaven, the joy of angels, the bliss of saints, and the very brightness of the Father's glory. This spitting shows us, first, *how far sin will go*. If we want proof of the depravity of the heart of man, I will not point you to the stews of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor will I take you to the places where blood is shed in streams by wretches like to Herod and men of that sort. No, the clearest proof that man is utterly fallen, and that the natural heart is enmity against God, is seen in the fact that they did spit in Christ's face, did falsely accuse him, and condemn him, and lead him out as a malefactor, and hang him up as a felon that he might die upon the cross. Why, what evil had he done? What was there in his whole life that should give them occasion to spit in his face? Even at that moment, did his face flash with indignation against them? Did he look with contempt upon them? Not he; for he was all gentleness and tenderness even towards these his enemies, and their hearts must have been hard and brutal indeed that "then did they spit in his face." He had healed their sick, he had fed their hungry, he had been among them a very fountain of blessing up and down Judæa and Samaria; and yet, "then did they spit in his face." I say again, relate not to me the crimes of ancient nations, nor the horrible evils committed by uncivilized men, nor the more elaborate iniquities of our great cities; tell me not of the abominations of Greece or Rome;—this—this, in

the sight of the angels of God, and in the eyes of the God of the angels, is the masterpiece of all iniquity: "Then did they spit in his face." To enter into the King's own palace, and draw near to his only-begotten Son, and to spit in his face,—this is the crime of crimes which reveals the infamous wickedness of men. Humanity stands condemned of the blackest iniquity now that it has gone as far as to spit in Christ's face.

My meditation also turns towards the Well-beloved into whose face they spat; and my thought concerning him is this, *how deep was the humiliation he had to endure!* When he was made sin for us, though he himself knew no sin; when our Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself the iniquities of his people, and was burdened with the tremendous weight of their guilt, it became incumbent upon the justice of God to treat him as if he were actually a sinner. He was no sinner, and he could be none; he was perfect man and perfect God, yet he stood in the place of sinners, and the Lord caused to meet upon him the iniquity of all his people. Therefore, in the time of humiliation, he must not be treated as the Son of God, neither must he be held in honour as a righteous man; he must first be given up to shame and to contempt, and then to suffering and to death; and, consequently, he was not spared this last and most brutal of insults: "Then did they spit in his face." O my Lord, to what terrible degradation art thou brought! Into what depths art thou dragged through my sin, and the sin of all the multitudes whose iniquities were made to meet upon thee! O my brothers, let us hate sin; O my sisters, let us loathe sin, not only because it pierced those blessed hands and feet of our dear Redeemer, but because it dared even to spit in his face! No one can ever know all the shame the Lord of glory suffered when they did spit in his face. These words glide over my tongue all too smoothly; perhaps even I do not feel them as they ought to be felt, though I would do so if I could. But could I feel as I ought to feel in sympathy with the terrible shame of Christ, and then could I interpret those feelings by any language known to mortal man, surely you would bow your heads and blush, and you would feel rising within your spirits a burning indignation against the sin that dared to put the Christ of God to such shame as this. I want to kiss his feet when I think that they did spit in his face.

Then, once more, my thoughts run to him again in this way, I think of *the tender omnipotence of his love*. How could he bear this spitting when, with one glance of his eye, had he been but angry, the flame might have slain them, and withered them all up? Yet he stood still even when they did spit in his face; and they were not the only ones who thus insulted him, for, afterwards, when he was taken by the soldiers into Pilate's hall, they also spat upon him in cruel contempt and scorn.

"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in his lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."

How could he bear it? Friends, he could not have borne it if he had not been omnipotent. That very omnipotence, which would have

enabled him to destroy them, was omnipotence of love as well as omnipotence of force. It was this that made him—if I may so say,—“restrain himself,” for there is no omnipotence like that which doth restrain omnipotence. Yet so it was that he could endure this spitting from men; but can you think of this marvellous condescension without feeling your hearts all on fire with love to him, so that you long to do some special act of homage to him, by which you may show that you would fain recompense him for this shame if you could?

I will not say more about that point, for the shameful fact stands indelibly recorded in the Scripture: “Then did they spit in his face;” but I want to bring the truth home, brethren, and to show you how we may have done to Christ what these wicked men did. “Oh!” says one, “I was not there; I did not spit in his face.” Listen; perhaps you have spat in his face, perhaps even *you* have spat in his face. You remember that touching hymn that we sometimes sing,—

“My Jesus! say what wretch has dared
Thy sacred hands to bind?
And who has dared to buffet so
Thy face so meek and kind?
“My Jesus! whose the hands that wove
That cruel thorny crown?
Who made that hard and heavy cross
That weighs thy shoulders down?
“My Jesus! who with spittle vile
Profaned thy sacred brow?
Or whose un pitying scourge has made
Thy precious blood to flow?
“’Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For thy sweet mercy’s sake!”

There are still some who spit in Christ’s face by *denying his Godhead*. They say, “He is a mere man; a good man, it is true, but only a man;” though how they dare say that, I cannot make out, for he would be no good man who claimed to be God if he was not God. Jesus of Nazareth was the basest of impostors who ever lived if he permitted his disciples to worship him, and if he left behind him a life which compels us to worship him, if he was not really and truly God; therefore, of all those who declare that he is not God,—and there is a very great company of them even amongst the nominally religious people of the present day,—we must sorrowfully, but truthfully say, “Then did they spit in his face.”

They also do the same who *rail at his gospel*. There are many, in these days, who seem as if they cannot be happy unless they are tearing the gospel to pieces. Especially is that divine mystery of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ the mark for the arrows of the wise men, I mean those who are wise according to the wisdom of this world. We delight to know that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of his people.

“He bore that we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”

Yet I have read some horrible things which have been written against that blessed doctrine, and as I read them I could only say to myself, "Then did they spit in his face." If there is anything that is beyond all else the glory of Christ, it is his atoning sacrifice; and if ever you thrust your finger into the very apple of his eye, and touch his honour in the tenderest possible point, it is when you have aught to say against his offering of himself a sacrifice unto God, without blemish and without spot, that he might put away the iniquities of his people. Wherefore judge yourselves in this matter, and if ye have ever denied Christ's Deity, or if ye have ever assailed his atoning sacrifice, it might truly have been said of you, "Then did they spit in his face."

Further, this evil is also done *when men prefer their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ*. There are some who say, "We do not need pardon, we do not want to be justified by faith in Christ, we are good enough already," or, "We are working out our own salvation; we mean to save ourselves." O sirs, if you can save yourselves, why did Jesus bleed upon the cross? It was a superfluity indeed that the Son of God should die in human form if there be a possibility of salvation by your own merits; and if you prefer your merits to his, it must be said of you also, "Then did they spit in his face." Your righteousnesses are only filthy rags; and if you prefer these to the fair white linen which is the righteousness of saints, if you think to wash yourselves in your tears, and so you despise that precious blood apart from which there is no purging of our sin, still to you does our text apply, "then did they spit in his face," when they preferred their own righteousness to Christ's.

I have often spoken to you about the parable of the prodigal son; but, possibly, your case is more like that of the elder brother in the parable; you have your portion of goods, it is all your own, and you are keeping it. You are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. You are self-righteous, you think that you can do very well without God and without Christ, and you half suspect that God can hardly do without you. You are doing so very well in the observance of rites and ceremonies, and the performance of charity and devotions that, if *you* go into the far country, you will cut a very respectable figure; you will be one of those excellent citizens of that country who will, in due time, send some poor prodigal into *your* fields to feed your swine. I am inclined to believe that your case is even more sad and hopeless than that of the prodigal himself. You, too, have gone far away from God, you are living without him. He is not in all your thoughts, you could almost wish that there were no God, for then there would be no dark cloud hovering in the distance to spoil your summer's day, no fear of storms to come to mar the joy of the hour. Just as truly as of the avowed infidel who openly rejects Christ, it must be said of you, "Then did they spit in his face."

The same thing is, oh! so sadly true *when anyone forsakes the profession of being a follower of Christ*. There are some, alas! who, for a time, have appeared to stand well in the Church of God,—I will not judge them,—but there have been some who, after making a profession

of religion, have deliberately gone back to the world. After seeming for a while to be very zealous, they have become worldly, gay, and perhaps even lascivious and vile. They break the Sabbath, they neglect the Word of God, they forsake the mercy-seat; and their last end is worse than their first. When a man forsakes Christ for a harlot, when he gives up heaven for gold, when he resigns the joys he professed to have had in Christ in order that he may find mirth in the company of the ungodly, it is another instance of the truth of these words, "Then did they spit in his face." To prefer any of these things to Christ, is infamous; and the mere act of spitting from the mouth seems little compared with this sin of spitting with the very heart and soul, and pouring contempt upon Christ by choosing some sin in preference to him. Yet, alas! how many are thus still spitting in Christ's face. Perhaps some now present are doing it.

If, dear friends, our conscience in any measure accuses us of this sin, *let us at once confess it*; let us humble ourselves before the Lord; and with the very mouth that spat upon him, let us kiss the Son lest he be angry, and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

And when we have confessed the sin, *let us believe that he is able and willing to forgive us*. I know that it requires a great act of faith, when sin is consciously felt, to believe in the splendour of divine mercy; but, dear friends, do believe it. Do the Lord Jesus the great honour of saying to him, "Gracious Lord, wash me in thy precious blood; though I did spit in thy face, wash me in that cleansing fountain, and I shall be whiter than snow;" and according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you. You shall have the forgiveness even of this great sin if you confess it, and believe that Christ is both able and willing to forgive it.

And when you have done that, then *let your whole life be spent in trying to magnify and glorify him* whom you and others have defamed and dishonoured. Oh, I think that, if I had ever denied Christ's Deity, I should want to stand in this pulpit night and day to revoke what I had said, and to declare him to be the Son of God with power! I think that, if I had ever set up anything in opposition to him, I should want day and night to be setting him up above everything else, as indeed, I long to do. Come, Christian brethren and sisters, let us do something unusual in Christ's honour; let us find out something or invent something fresh, either in the company of others or all by ourselves, by which we may further glorify his blessed name.

Yet once more, if ever anybody should despise us for Christ's sake, let us not count it hard, but *let us be willing to bear scorn and contempt for him*. Let us say to ourselves, "'Then did they spit in his face.' What, then, if they also spit in mine? If they do, I will 'hail reproach, and welcome shame,' since it comes upon me for his dear sake." See, that wretch is about to spit in Christ's face! Put your cheek forward, that you may catch that spittle upon your face, that it fall not upon him again, for as he was put to such terrible shame, every one who has been redeemed with his precious blood ought to count it an honour to be a partaker of the shame, if by any means we may screen him from being further despised and rejected of men.

There, dear friends, I have not preached, I have just talked very, very feebly, and not at all as I wished and hoped I might be able to do, about this wonderful text: "Then did they spit in his face."

Now try to follow me, just for a few minutes, while I let you see that same face in a very different light. Our second text is in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, at the 11th verse:—"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, *from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away*; and there was found no place for them."

This passage needs no words of mine to explain it. Notice how the apostle begins: "*I saw.*" Oh, I wish I had the power to make you also see this great sight! Sometimes, vividly to realize a truth even once, is far better than to have merely heard it stated ten thousand times. I remember the story of a soldier who was employed in connection with one of the surveys of Palestine. He was with some others of the company in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and without thinking seriously of his words, he said to his comrades, "Some people say that, when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world, the judgment will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, in this very place where we now are." Then he added, "When the great white throne shall be set, I wonder whereabouts I shall be." It is said that he carelessly exclaimed, "I shall sit here upon this big stone," and he sat down; but in an instant he was struck with horror, and he fainted, because in the act of sitting down he had begun to realize somewhat of the grandeur and the terror of that tremendous scene. I wish I knew how to do or say anything by which I could make you realize this scene that John saw in vision. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to heaven from the top of Olivet in his own proper body, and he shall so come in like manner as he was taken up into heaven; but he shall come, not the lowly Man of sorrows, but as Judge of all seated upon a great white throne; and John says, "I saw it." As we sang, a few minutes ago,—

"The Lord shall come! but not the same
As once in lowliness he came;
A silent lamb before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.

"The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm;
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind."

I wish, dear friends, that even in your dreams you might see this sight, for, though I have no trust in dreams by themselves, yet any realization of this great truth will be better than the mere hearing of it.

"I saw," said John, "a great white throne." He saw a throne, for Christ now reigns, he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and when he comes again, he will come in the power of universal sovereignty as the appointed Judge of all mankind. He will come upon a throne.

That throne is said to be *white*. What other throne can be so described? The thrones of mere mortals are often stained with

injustice, or bespattered with the blood of cruel wars; but Christ's throne is white, for he doeth justice and righteousness, and his name is truth.

It will also be a *great white throne*,—a throne so great that all the thrones of former kings and princes shall be as nothing in comparison with it. The thrones of Assyria, and Babylon, and Persia, and Greece, and Rome, shall all seem only like tiny drops of dew to be exhaled in a moment; but this great white throne shall be the recognized seat of the King of kings, the Sovereignty over all sovereignties: "I saw a great white throne."

John not only saw the great white throne, but also "*Him that sat upon it.*" What a wondrous sight was that! John saw him, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." John saw him whose divine majesty shall shine resplendent even through the nail-prints which he shall still wear when seated on the great white throne. What a sight it was to John, who had leaned his head upon Christ's bosom, to behold that same Master, whom he had seen die upon the cross, now sitting upon the throne of universal judgment: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it."

Now notice what happened: "*from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.*" As soon as ever this great white throne appeared, heaven and earth began to roll away like a wave receding from the shore. What must HE be before whose face heaven and earth shall retreat as in dismay?

Observe, first, *Christ's power.* He does not drive away the heaven and the earth; he does not even speak to them; the sight of his face is all that is needed, and the old heaven, and the old sin-stained earth, shall begin to flee away, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" and all that by the mere showing of Christ's face. He does not have to lift his arm, he has not to seize a javelin, and to hurl it at the condemned earth; at the sight of his face, heaven and earth shall flee away.

Behold the terror of *Christ's majesty.* And what will you do in that day,—you who did spit in his face, you who did despise him? What will you do in that day? Suppose the great judgment day had already come, suppose that the great white throne was just over yonder, and that when this service was over, you must appear with all the risen dead before your Judge. One would have to say, "I have refused him; how shall I dare to look in his face?" Another would cry, "He drew me once, I felt the tugging of his love, the drawings of his Spirit; but I resisted, and would not yield. How can I meet him now? How can I look him in the face?" Another will have to say, "I had to strive hard to escape from the grasp of his hand of mercy; I stifled conscience, and I went back into the world." You will all have to look into that face, and that face will look at all of you. One will have to say, "I gave up Christ for the world." "I gave him up for the theatre," another must say. "I gave him up for the dancing saloon," another will say. "I gave him up for the love of women," another will say. "I gave him up that I

might carry on my business as I could not carry it on if I was a true Christian; I gave up Christ for what I could get." You will have to say all this, and that very soon. As surely as you see me upon this platform now, you shall see the King upon the great white throne then, that King who was once despised and rejected of men.

O sirs, I would that ye would think of all this! It is not one hundredth part so much my concern as it is yours; I am not afraid to see Christ's face, for he hath looked on me in love, and blotted out all my sin, and I love him, and long to be with him for ever and ever. But if you have never had that look of love, if you have never been reconciled to him, I ask you, by the love you bear yourselves, to begin to think about this matter. Begin to prepare to meet this King of men, this Lord of love, who, as surely as he is the Lord of love, will be the King of wrath, for there is no anger like the anger of love. There is no indignation like "the wrath of the Lamb," of which we read a few minutes ago. Divine love, when it has become righteous indignation, burns like coals of juniper, and is quenchless as hell. Wherefore,—

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there;"

and ere heaven and earth begin to flee away from the face of him who sits upon the throne, and ere ye yourselves begin to cry to the rocks to cover you and the mountains to hide you from that face,—seek ye his face with humble penitence and faith, that you may be prepared to meet him with joy in that last tremendous day.

If what I have been saying be all a dream, dismiss it, and go your ways to your sins; but if these things be the very truth of God,—and verily they are,—do act as sane men should, think them over, and prepare to meet your Judge. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVI. 57—68; REVELATION VI. 12—17, XIX. 11—16,
XX. 11—15, AND XXI. 1.

We shall read two or three short portions of God's Word in order to bring before you the wonderful contrast to which I am about to direct your thoughts.

Matthew xxvi. Verse 57. *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.*

It was night, but these wicked men could sit up for this cruel deed, to judge the Lord of glory, and to put the innocent One to shame. They "led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

58. *But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

I have heard Peter represented as if he did wrong to follow Christ "afar off." I think he was the bravest of all the apostles, for scarcely one of them followed Christ at all at that time. Afterwards, John bethought himself, and came into the judgment hall. Peter kept at a distance from his Lord, but he did follow him, and he did go into the high priest's palace. He "went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." Peter was right enough in following Christ; it was afterward, when the temptation came, that he fell so grievously.

59, 60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none:*

Because they did not agree, they would not hold together. This is the weakness of falsehood, that it contradicts itself. These men felt that they must have some show of truth-likeness even in condemning Christ, and this they could not get at first even from their false witnesses.

60, 61. *Yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

Brethren, observe, that this was a little twisting of Christ's words, but that slight wresting made them as different as possible from what Christ had really said. I suppose that, if you want to know how this twisting or wresting is done, any one of our general elections will give you the most wonderful examples of how everything that any man may say can be twisted to mean the very reverse of what he said. If there is one thing in which English people are expert beyond all others, it is in the art of misquoting, misstating, and misrepresenting. As our Lord was wronged in this fashion, nobody need be surprised if the like should happen unto him. "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

62. *And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?*

What was the good of answering? What is ever the good of answering when the only evidence brought against one is palpable and wilful misrepresentation? So the Saviour was silent; and thus, he not only proved his wisdom, but he also fulfilled that marvellous prophecy of Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

63. *But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.*

Now came the answer, the good confession that our Lord witnessed before his cruel adversaries.

64. *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

How that sentence must have come with the vividness of a lightning flash before their faces! What a declaration of power from One who stood there bound before his enemies, apparently helpless, and about to die!

65—68. *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him*

with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

Our Lord had told these mockers that they should one day see him coming in the clouds of heaven. Let us read in the Book of the Revelation concerning that great event.

Revelation vi. Verses 12—16. *And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

Think of the contrast between this awful cry and the sentence we read just now: "Then did they spit in his face." "Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Think, too, of the contrast of which we were reminded in our opening hymn,—

"While sinners in despair shall call,
'Rocks, hide us; mountains, on us fall!'
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
Shall joyful sing, 'The Lord is come!'"

17. *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

Let us read further on in the same Book.

Revelation xix. Verses 11, 12. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns;*

"Bright with all his crowns of glory,
See the royal Victor's brow."

Again note the contrast: "Then did they spit in his face." "And on his head were many crowns;"—

12—16. *And he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

And this is he in whose face his enemies did spit.

Now turn to the next chapter.

Revelation xx. Verse 11. *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

Driven, like chaff before the wind, from the face of him who sat upon the throne.

12—15. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Revelation xxi. Verse 1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

SECOND-HAND.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 28TH, 1899,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, February 12th, 1882.

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?”—John xviii. 34.

I EXPLAINED, this morning,* why our Saviour put that question to Pilate. The Roman governor had asked him, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” And Jesus as good as said to him, “Have you, of your own knowledge, seen anything in me that looks like setting up to be a king in opposition to Cæsar? You intend, by asking me that question, to enquire whether I have led a rebellion against your government, or the imperial authority which you represent. Now, has there been anything which you have observed which would have led you to make this enquiry, or do you only ask it because of what the Jews have been saying in their enmity against me?” You will see, dear friends, that our Lord asked this question in order that he might get from Pilate's own lips the acknowledgment that he had not seen any sign of sedition or rebellion in him, and that it might be proved that the charge had been brought to Pilate by those outside, and had not come from the Roman governor himself.

We will, now, forget Pilate for a while, for I want to use this question in two ways with reference to ourselves. First, I shall utilize it as a *warning against second-hand cavils at Christ and his gospel*. Some people have a large stock of them, and we might say to each one of these cavillers, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?” Then, in the second place, I shall use the text as a *warning against all second-hand religion*, pressing this question home upon each one who speaks up for Christ, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?”

I. We will begin with the opponents of the Lord Jesus, and consider our text, first, as A WARNING AGAINST SECOND-HAND CAVILS AT CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL.

There are a great many people in the world who really do not know

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,644, “Our Lord's first appearance before Pilate.”

why they oppose religion; and if you ask them the reason, they repeat some old bit of scandal, some stale slander upon Jesus and his cross, and they give that as their answer. I firmly believe that there are thousands, who are ranked among the opposers of the gospel, who have not anything to say against Christ of their own knowledge; but others have told them something or other, and they go on repeating and reiterating the old exploded obsolete objections that have been demolished thousands of times, and I suppose they and others of their kind will keep on doing the same thing right to the end of time.

As soon as ever Jesus Christ's gospel was launched upon the world's sea, it had to encounter opposing winds, and storms, and tempests. Like a scarred veteran, the gospel has had battle after battle to fight. In our Lord's own day, it was opposed most vigorously. His apostles found that, wherever they went, their feet were dogged by those who railed at Jesus and his Word; and when the apostles had all fallen asleep, the early churches found that they had need of an order of men who became the apologists for the gospel, and who bravely stood up to defend it against the attacks of divers heathen philosophers, and sceptics, and heretics who arose wherever the truth was preached. Everywhere, there was opposition to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his servants girded up their loins to do battle for him and for his truth.

That great campaign has continued even down to this day, and there is this very remarkable fact about it, that, at the present moment, most of the objections that are brought against the gospel are those that were answered and silenced some hundreds of years ago; and, even when they appeared, all those centuries back, they were then only reproductions of some older objections which had been answered, and, as the defenders of the faith thought, had been trampled out, like sparks of fire trodden under foot. But, somehow, an ill wind has begun to blow again, and the fire, which some hoped was finally extinguished, has burned up once more. Originality in scepticism has almost ceased to be; we scarcely ever hear anything fresh in the way of heresy nowadays. We are troubled with the very errors which our forefathers answered a hundred years ago; yet the adversaries of the truth go on cleaning and sharpening again their blunted shafts, that they may once more shoot them at the great shield of faith, which is impervious to their puny assaults, for it can quench even the most fiery darts of the devil himself. The modern arrows of scepticism will be broken against that glorious shield, yet they will probably be gathered up by another generation that will follow the present one, and the heretics and objectors in the future will do just as their fathers did before them. I want, at this time, to put to any caviller whom I may be addressing, the question of our Lord to Pilate, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?"

And, first, I ask you to observe that there are many unreasonable prejudices. *Some persons have great prejudices against the Bible.* I will not repeat what they say; but I should like to ask every person who thinks ill of this blessed Book, "Have you read the Bible through, and read it thoroughly? Have you studied it? Are your

objections your own? Come, now; did you make them yourself?" It is almost always found that objections are like the axe the young prophet was using, they are borrowed; and often, they are objections against a Book which has not been read at all, and which has not been allowed to exercise its own influence upon the heart and the judgment of the person who is prejudiced against it to his own hurt. Other people have told men such-and-such things, so they shut the Book, and refuse to look into it for themselves.

There are other people who are *prejudiced against public worship*. You see, I am starting at the very beginning, those matters with regard to religion which are elementary. Of course, we are told that we shut ourselves up on a Sunday in these dreary buildings of ours, and here we sit, in a horrible state of misery, listening to the most awful twaddle that ever was taught, our singing being nothing better than droning, and the whole of our worship being something very terrible! If I were to read to you the descriptions of an English Sabbath which I have sometimes seen in newspapers, they might make you almost weep tears of blood to think that we poor souls should suffer so much as we do; only you know that we are altogether unconscious of any such suffering. We really have been under the notion that we very much enjoyed ourselves while worshipping the Lord in his house. Many of us have the idea that the Sabbath is the happiest day in all the week to us, and that, when we hear the gospel preached, it is sweeter than music to us, and makes our hearts leap within us for very joy. Of course, we are very much obliged to our friends for telling us how dull and how unhappy we are, and for wishing us to be in a better condition. We can only say that, not being enabled to perceive any of these sorrows, we would advise them to retain their pity, and exercise it upon themselves, for they certainly need it far more than we do. To any of you who make remarks of the kind I have indicated, I say,—Do your difficulties concerning public worship really arise out of your attending the house of God,—out of your hearing the gospel preached,—out of your joining in the songs and praises of God's people? Oh, no! it is those people who never come to our services who believe the Sabbath to be dull, the house of God to be dreary, and the preaching of the gospel to be a monotonous sound from which every sensible man would escape. I put the question of my text to every person who is prejudiced against the Bible, and prejudiced against our public worship in God's house, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?"

Sometimes, *the prejudice concerns the preacher*. I will not say that it is so about myself, though I have had in my time more than my fair share of it. "Hear him?" says one; "I would not go across the road to listen to such a fellow." Many have said that, and the preacher, whoever he may be, is condemned without a hearing. If the objector were asked to give a reason for his prejudice, he might answer by quoting the old lines,—

"I do not like you, Dr. Fell;
The reason why, I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,—
I do not like you, Dr. Fell."

I should like to say to everybody who is prejudiced against any servant of Christ, "Sayest thou this of thyself?" Those absurd stories about the preacher,—did you really hear them yourself, or did somebody tell you them? Would you like to be judged by the mere idle tittle-tattle of the street or of the newspapers? And if you would not, then be an honest, reasonable man, and at least give the servant of God a hearing before you condemn him or his message; and, take my word for it, the most-abused preacher is very likely to be the very man whom God will bless the most. Not the one who is most praised, but the one who is most censured by the world, is probably the man who has been most faithful to his Master and to the gospel committed to his charge. At any rate, be honest enough to reply to the question which our Lord put to Pilate, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?"

There is a remark sometimes made, and I fear it is a very common one, "Oh, I would not be a Christian, I would not be religious, for *it makes men so dreadfully miserable!*" Now, friend, sayest thou this of thyself, or did somebody else tell it thee? Come, now, you say that religion is such a miserable thing; have you tried it for yourself? Have you experienced the misery that comes out of prayer,—out of faith,—out of repentance,—out of love to God,—out of being pardoned,—out of having a good hope of heaven? Have you ever proved what that dreadful misery is? I think, if you had ever really tested these things for yourself, your verdict would be the very reverse, and you would join with us in singing the lines that express what many of us most firmly believe about this matter,—

"Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."

Yet you go on repeating that slander upon religion though you cannot prove it to be true, and might easily learn its falseness. Do let me appeal to you. Had you a godly mother? "Yes," you say, "and it was her life that prevents my being altogether an unbeliever." I thought so; but, if I remember her aright, she was a quiet good soul who, in her home, tried to make everybody happy; and though she had not much pleasure in her son, for he was wayward and wilful, yet there was no unkindness on her lip, the law of love always ruled the house. She was a weak and feeble creature, who derived but slender gratification from any of the outward enjoyments of life; but she had a deep, secret spring of peace and joy which kept her calm, and quiet, and happy; and now that she has gone to be with God, she has left a gleam of sunlight still behind in her sweet memory. You did not get from your mother, nor from other godly friends, your belief that religion makes men miserable; and I venture to say that, so far as you have had any actual personal observation of it, you have been inclined to come to quite the opposite verdict, and to confess that, though you do not know how it is, yet, somehow or other, godliness does give, to the people who possess it, peace of mind, and happiness of heart, and usefulness of life.

There is another slander that is spread abroad very widely, and that is, *that the doctrine of the grace of God*—the doctrine which we try to preach from this pulpit,—has no sanctifying effect,—that, on the contrary, *it is likely to lead people into sin*,—that if we preach, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” and do not preach up good works as the way of salvation, it is clear that such teaching will lead people into sin. Clear, is it? It is not so to me; but, my friend, will you answer this question, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?” Is it not a matter of history that there never have been stricter-living men than the Puritans? What is the great quarrel against John Calvin himself but that, when he ruled in Geneva, he was too stern and too exacting in his requirements? It is an odd thing,—is it not?—that these doctrines of grace should, on the one hand, make men too strict as a matter of fact, and yet that the wiseacres who object to them should say that these doctrines are likely to lead into sin those who accept them? It is not found to be so by those who believe them. Let me again appeal to any candid objector. My dear sir, did you ever prove what it is to believe in the great love of God to you,—that, for the sake of his dear Son, out of pure, unmerited grace, he has chosen you, and saved you, and appointed you to eternal life? Did you ever believe that, and then feel, as a natural consequence, that you would go and live in sin? I know that you never did, but that it was quite the reverse. “Here,” said some boys to a companion, “we are going to rob an orchard; come along with us, Jack.” “No,” said he, “my father would not approve of such a thing.” “But your father is very fond of you, and never beats you as our fathers do.” “Yes,” said the boy, “my father loves me very much, and I love him very much, and that is the reason why I am not going to rob the orchard, and so to grieve him.” Now, you believe in the beating of the boys by the rod of the law, do you not? And we, on the other hand, feel that, because God loves us, and will in his infinite mercy continue to love us, therefore we must keep out of sin as much as we possibly can. We cannot do that horrible thing which would grieve his blessed Spirit. So I ask you, as truthful men, not to repeat that old slander concerning the doctrines of grace leading to sin, until you have really had some reason to assert it because of what you yourselves have witnessed in the lives of Christian people. Do not say it again until you can truly say it from your own experience or observation; do not repeat it simply because others tell it to you.

Yes, and there are some who say that *there is no power in prayer*,—that we may pray, if we like, but that we cannot change the purposes of God,—that the laws of nature are fixed and immutable, and, therefore, to pray is a piece of absurdity. “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?” I will speak personally to you. Did you ever try to pray? Did you ever put this matter to the test,—whether God will hear prayer or no? I do not think you can have put it to a fair test, and I would like you to see whether God will or will not hear even your prayer if you cry to him. If any say to me, “God does not hear prayer,” I have scarcely the patience to give them an answer. I live from day to day crying to God

for this or that favour which I receive as certainly and as constantly as ever my sons had their meals when they sat at my table. I knew how to give good gifts to my children, and I know that my Heavenly Father gives good gifts to me. My evidence, of course, is only that of one man, and it may not suffice to convince others, though many of you here could add your testimony to mine; but I should like all objectors just to give prayer a fair trial before they are quite so sure about the inefficacy of it. Let them see whether real prayer, offered in the name of Jesus, will not be heard even in their case. Certain I am that there is not anywhere on the face of the globe a praying man who does not bear this testimony,—that God hears him. And if any say, “We do not pray, and do not believe that God hears prayer,” what evidence have you to bring? You are out of court altogether, for you know nothing about the matter; but the man who does pray, and then says, “God hears me,” is the man to be a witness, and the one who has a right to be heard. I have told you, more than once, what the Irishman said when there were five witnesses to prove that he had committed murder. He said to the judge, “You must not condemn me on their evidence; there are only five people here who saw me do it, but I can bring fifty people who did not see me do it;” but that was no evidence at all; and, in like manner, there are many who say, “You bring a certain number of people, who pray, to prove that God hears them; but we can bring ten times as many, who do not pray, and who do not get heard.” What has that to do with the matter? Where is the evidence? You say it not of yourself, but merely repeat, second-hand, what has been said by others, so often, and so foolishly, that it sickens one to hear it.

It is beginning to be questioned, in many quarters, nowadays, whether there is any real effect produced by prayer, except that of exciting certain pious emotions in the breasts of those who pray. This is a very pretty statement! We ought to be extremely obliged to those superior persons who allow that even so much may be done! I wonder they do not assert that prayer is ridiculous, or hypocritical, or immoral. Their moderation puts us under obligations. And yet I do not know: when I look again at their admission, I thank them for nothing, for they as good as call us fools. Do they think that we perform a useless exercise merely for the sake of exciting pious emotions? We must be grievous idiots if we can receive benefit from a senseless function. We are not willing to whistle to the wind for the sake of the exercise. We should not be content to go on praying to a God who could be proved to be both deaf and dumb. We have still some little common sense left, despite what our judicious friends consider to be our fanaticism. We are sure that we obtain answers to prayer. Of this fact I am certain, and I solemnly declare that I have received of the Lord that which I have asked at his hands. I am not alone in such testimony, for I am associated with multitudes of men and women who bear witness to the same fact, and declare that they sought the Lord, and he heard them. Take care, brethren and sisters, to record all instances of answered prayer, so as to leave this unbelieving generation without excuse. Accumulate the facts, and demonstrate the grand truth. Multiply

the testimonies, till even the philosophers are obliged to admit both the phenomena and the deduction rightly drawn from them.

There is one other gross slander to which I would reply, and that is, a saying that goes round among troubled consciences—that *Christ will not receive sinners*,—that the very guilty cannot be saved,—that Christ can forgive and deliver up to a certain point; but if you get beyond that, he is no longer willing to pardon. Dear hearer, has that foolish and wicked notion entered thy head? Then, I ask thee, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself?" Didst thou ever prove it to be true? Hast thou ever sought his face? Hast thou cried to him for mercy? "Yes," you say, "I have." And then, further, have you thrown yourself at his feet, trusting him to save you, and have you been refused? I know you have not; there was never a sinner yet, who fell down before him, and determined to lie there and perish if he did not speak a word of mercy, to whom the Lord has not, sooner or later, spoken the grace-word which has sent that poor sinner on his way rejoicing. I would at least like you to go and see whether Christ will receive you or not, before you say that he will not do so. Say not that the door of his mercy is shut, but go in while it is still open. If he casts you out, then he will have broken his word, for he has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Do not give him the lie, and say that he will cast you out till you have yourself proved that it is so; and that, I know, will never be the case. I am afraid that there is another being who has been whispering that vile insinuation into your ear, and he is your arch-enemy, who is seeking your destruction, and therefore he has come, and told you this falsehood against the infinitely-loving and gracious Saviour. Believe him not; but come even now, and put your trust in Jesus, and you shall find that he will give to you eternal life.

I have thus examined the question of my text with reference to the opponents of the gospel, and I shall now leave that part of the subject, praying the Holy Spirit to bless it to all whom it may concern.

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to speak briefly, but with much earnestness, to the many here present who are friends of the gospel, but who have only a SECOND-HAND RELIGION, if they have any at all. I want to have a word with you, dear friends, about this matter. You and I have been talking a great deal about Christ. Now, have we been simply quoting what others have said? Have we been making extracts from other people's experience; or is what we have said something that we can say of ourselves, and not what others have told us?

For, brethren, first, *a second-hand testimony for Christ is a powerless thing*. Take a man—as I am afraid is often done,—with no grace in his heart, and send him to Oxford or Cambridge, with the view of making him a parson; teach him the sciences, and languages, and mathematics, and give him a degree. His friends want to get a living for him, and the bishop's chaplain proceeds to examine him. The first question ought to be, Is this young man a Christian? Is he truly converted? Does he know the Lord? Does he understand in his own soul the things he is going to preach to others? For, if he does

not, what good can he do in the Christian ministry? Perhaps he is sent to a school of theology, to learn the various systems of doctrine. He must read the judicious Hooker, he must study Jeremy Taylor, he must take lessons in elocution and rhetoric. Then, possibly, his friends buy him some lithographed sermons that he may read, and they get him some books, that he may make extracts from them to put into the sermons he preaches. Suppose that man is all the while unconverted, suppose that he does not know anything about the working of the grace of God in his own soul, what is the good of him as a teacher of others? No good at all; at any rate, at the best, he may be only as good as one of those newly-invented phonographs which can repeat what is spoken into them. This man can read out what he has selected from other books; but that is all. We will suppose that he is a very decent sort of fellow,—an amiable gentleman, well-instructed, well-behaved, and so on; but all that he has to say is what other people have told him.

But now put into that man's pulpit, only for one Lord's-day, a preacher who has known what it is to feel the burden of sin, and to have it removed by faith in Jesus. Let him begin to speak to the people, in downright earnest, about the pangs and sorrows of true repentance; let him tell them about their need of the new birth, and about his experience of obtaining that great blessing; and how, by sovereign grace, he was brought out of the darkness into the light, and even from death to life. Let that man be moved to speak of the peace of pardon through the precious blood, and of the joys of heaven laid up for all believers, and then the people will wake up, I will warrant you. This is something very different from the preaching to which they have been accustomed, and they will soon feel the power of it.

Yet the Lord sometimes uses even a preacher who does not himself understand the truth he proclaims. I know a man, who went and heard a certain minister preach, or rather, read a sermon, and it was such a good one that the hearer's conscience was smitten by it. The discourse was about the new birth; and, the next morning, the man went off to the clergyman, and said, "Sir, I want you to explain this matter further to me, for I am dreadfully distressed by what you preached last night." What, think you, did this preacher say? He said, "Well, Jonathan, I am sure I never meant to cause anybody any uneasiness; what was it that gave you such trouble?" "Why," replied he, "it was that part of the sermon where you said that we must be born again." So the preacher said, "Well, here is the discourse. You see, by the dates upon it, that I have used it thirteen times before, so I could not have made it with any special view to your case. I am very sorry, indeed, that it caused you any discomfort, and I will never preach it again if it brings people into trouble in this style." That was all the help the poor man could get from the parson, so he went out, and found a true servant of God, who knew the truth himself, and was not a second-hand retailer of it, and, through conversation with him, and prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures, he was brought into peace and liberty. I need hardly tell you that he does not go to hear that second-hand preacher now;

he listens to a far humbler minister, who, nevertheless, preaches what he has tasted and handled of the good Word of life. Now, if any of you are going to be Sunday-school teachers, or street-preachers, do not begin to talk about what somebody else has told you. Go and say what you yourself know, of a heart first broken by the power of the Holy Spirit, and then bound up by the application of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tell out your message, in a living way from the heart to the heart, or else your hearers will feel that there is no power about it, however nicely you put the truth, and however sweetly you describe it. There is all the difference between personal testimony to the truth and a parrot-like repetition of it, that there is between the living and the dead. Let us only bear witness to what we do really know, and then no one will need to ask us what our Lord asked Pilate, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?"

Now, further, the same thing is true *with regard to professors*. We have many friends who come, at different times, to join the church, and their stories greatly vary. Some who come to see me cannot say much, and they think that I shall be very dissatisfied with them because they make a great muddle of their narrative, and there is not much that comes out after all. But the people with whom I am least satisfied are those who reel off their yarn by the yard; they have it all ready to repeat, and everything is arranged as prettily as possible. Yes; and as I listen to it, I know that someone has told them what to say, and they have learned it all for me to hear. But I like far better the testimony that I have to pick out in little bits, but which I know comes fresh from the heart of the trembling convert. Sometimes, it costs the poor soul a tear or a real good cry, and I have to go round about in all manner of ways to get hold of the story at all; but that shows that it is true, and that the man never borrowed it. I like to hear the experience of a believer, when he comes straight out of the world and out of the ways of sin, to confess his faith in Christ. He does not know anything about the terms that Christian people use. He has not learned our phrases; and it is a great delight to hear it all fresh and new. Yet it is always the same story in all the essential parts of it. However strangely he may narrate it, it tallies with that of others in the main points. Take the experience of a Christian man who has been brought up in the sanctuary from his childhood, and extract the pith and marrow of it. Now take the experience of a man who has been a horse-racer, a drunkard, a swearer, but who has been truly converted, and extract the pith of that. Talk to a peer of the realm who has become an heir of the kingdom of heaven, and take the pith of his experience. Now get a chimney-sweep who has been brought to the Lord, and get the pith of his experience; put them all side by side, and you will not know one from the other. There are always the same essential marks,—death, birth, life, food,—Christ in the death, the life, the birth, the food,—repentance, faith, joy, the work of the Spirit of God. But it is very sweet to hear the story told in the many different ways in which the converts tell it. The true child of grace is ever the same in heart, although the outward appearance may continually vary.

But, dear friends, whenever you begin to make a profession of religion, take care that you never profess more than you really possess. Go just as far as you can go yourself, by the grace of God, and do not repeat what others tell you. To borrow another man's experience is dishonest. If it is not mine, how dare I say that it is? It is also very apt to be self-deceptive, for a man may repeat another person's experience until he really thinks he did pass through it himself, just as a man may repeat a lie until it almost ceases to be a lie because he himself gets to believe what at first he knew was not true. That borrowing of the experience of others is usually unavailing with those who have had much to do with men, for we who do know the Lord, and are familiar with his people, very readily trip up those who only repeat what they have learned. Freemasons recognize one another by various grips and signs. A man may, perhaps, find out one of the grips, but he does not learn them all, and at last he gets caught, and people say to him, "You are pretending to be what you really are not." Take, again, a man's handwriting; someone may imitate my writing for a long while, but, at last, he does not copy some peculiar dash, or stroke, or mark, which is characteristic of my style, and those who know say, "That is not Mr. Spurgeon's writing; it is a forgery." So there is a something—a sort of freemasonry—about Christianity. People may learn some of our grips, and signs, and passwords; but, by-and-by, they make a blunder, and we say, "Ah! you are an impostor." They may try to write after the fashion of a child of God, and they may make the pot-hooks, and hangers, and straight strokes; but, as they get on further, there is a something or other that comes out in the long run, which proves that they are only copyists after all. Therefore, I say to you, dear friends,—Do not attempt to repeat what others have told you about experimental godliness, but let your testimony only consist of what you can truly say out of your own heart and soul.

Let this be the case also *with regard to every man, whether he makes a profession of religion or not.* May God grant that all that we think we know, we may really know in our own souls, and not have because we have borrowed it from others! In religion, proxies and sponsors are altogether out of place. I pray you never to be guilty of that horrible blasphemy—for I think that it is nothing less than that,—of standing up before God, and promising that a child shall keep his commandments, and walk in the same all the days of its life. Remember that, in religion, there are certain things that must be personal. For instance, every man must be himself born; another person cannot be born for you. In like manner, "Ye must be born again,"—personally, for yourself. There is no possibility of another person experiencing that new birth for you. If a man lives, he must eat for himself. You cannot take my meals for me; it is I myself who must eat them. And we must eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ by faith, each one for himself or herself; nobody can do it for another. In daily life, each man must be clothed for himself. You may wear silk and satin, you may be dressed in the best broad-cloth; but you cannot be clothed on my behalf, I must be myself dressed, or else go naked. So must each man put on the robe of

Christ's righteousness, or be naked to his shame before God. Every man must repent of his own sin,—make confession of his own sin,—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for himself,—love God for himself,—obey the Lord for himself; and there is no possibility of any other person, by any means, doing this for you. There must be personal godliness, or else there is no godliness at all. So, whenever you feel inclined to say for yourself, "I believe that I am a Christian; I believe this and I believe that;" let this question come home to you, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?"

And, lastly, brethren and sisters in Christ, let me utter a word specially for your ears. *Never get, in your prayers, or in your talk, an inch beyond your actual experience.* Our calling is a very high one; and one of the most serious difficulties in the way of ever attaining its greatest height is the impression that we have reached it when we have not. My own impression is, that some brethren might have been well-nigh perfect if they had not thought that they were so already, but they missed the blessing through that very thought. Many a man might have become wise, but he imagined that he had learned wisdom, so he never really was wise. You know that, if you see a man who thinks that he is wise, you say to yourself, "How very foolish he is!" And you speak truly, too. The doorstep of wisdom is a consciousness of ignorance, and the gateway of perfection is a deep sense of imperfection. Paul was never so nearly perfect as when he cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But if he had sat down, and said, "I have attained, and am already perfect," then would he have been in a fair way of missing the blessing of God. No, dear brothers or sisters, say no more than you can justify. There are many who do that in business; mind that you do not so act in spiritual matters. Look at that shop-window: what a wonderful display! Now go inside the shop; why, there is nothing there! No, for the man has all his goods in the window. You would at once say to yourself, if he wanted to deal with you, "I shall not trust him very deeply." Ah! and do we not know some who, spiritually, have all their goods in the window? It is a grand thing to have a great stock in reserve. Never mind if it is in the cellar, where you cannot yourself see it; it is none the worse for being out of sight.

The great thing for all Christians is to have a good background, something behind that is real; so that, if you pray, or if you speak to another, you will be prepared to back it up. I remember trying to be a blessing to a very shrewd boy in a Sunday-school class when first I knew the Lord. I told him the gospel: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Then he asked me a straight question, "Teacher, have you believed?" I replied, "Yes, I hope so." He said, "Don't you know, teacher? You ought to." "Yes," I answered, "yes, I do know; I have believed in Jesus." "Well, teacher," he enquired next, "have you been baptized?" I replied, "Yes, I have." "Then," said he, "teacher, you are saved." I said, "I hope so." "But," he insisted, "you *are*." Just so, and I found that I must say so, too, and that I must not use even Christ's words unless I meant to back them up by my own consistent

character; otherwise I was throwing suspicion on my Master's veracity. May the Lord bring us up to this point of Christian honesty,—that, when we cannot truthfully say a thing from our own experience, we will be honest enough to resolve, "I shall not say it till I *can* truly say it." When you think of a verse of a hymn, and it is a little in advance of your own position, wait till you come up to that point. There are numbers of hymns that I laid by, in that fashion, years ago. I wished that I could sing them, yet they seemed to stick in my throat, and I could not. But my throat has been cleared a good deal lately, and I have been obliged at last to feel that I must have those very hymns, for they have become true to my soul, and have made my experience a very happy one. Do not be in too much of a hurry in spiritual things any more than in temporal affairs. If you cannot eat meat, stick to your milk. Milk is for babes, so keep to milk till you outgrow it. You will choke with that tough bit of meat; you had better leave it for somebody else. Do not find fault with it; it is good for strong men, they do not want to be always drinking milk. Do not deny the strong man his meat, but let him have as much as he likes of it; as for yourself, if you are a babe in grace, keep to your milk diet. "As newborn babes, desire the unadulterated milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." But, in all your testimony, do not go beyond what is actually true to yourself, and often let my text lay its hand upon your shoulder, and repeat this searching enquiry, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?"

May God grant a rich blessing to you all, dear friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE KING IN PILATE'S HALL.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 12TH, 1903,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 4th, 1884.

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”—John xviii. 37.

OUR Lord was being cross-questioned by an unscrupulous, vacillating, contemptuous Roman official. So, as our blessed Lord and Master did not escape the ordeal of malicious questioning, let no disciple of his imagine that he will escape. “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.” Sooner or later, the day will come when the profession that you have made shall be questioned and tested. To some of Christ's followers, this time of trial comes very soon after their conversion; others are assailed at a later period. The cool, calm, calculating doubter suggests a question about this or that, and everything that can be moved is shaken. Just as Pilate said to Christ, “Art thou a king then?” so will men say to you, “Are you a Christian? Are you really believing in Jesus? Have you been born again? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Are you fully sanctified?” And they will make these enquiries in such a tone of contemptuous ridicule that you will need all your strength, and all your patience, and an increase in your faith, and in all your graces, if you are to witness a good confession, as your Master did before Pontius Pilate.

When such a time comes to you, I cannot suggest to you a better model for your answer than that which your Lord gave to the Roman governor. At first, he did not answer Pilate: “Jesus gave him no answer.” And a large portion of the inquisitive questioning to which we have to submit is not worth answering; nor is it worth while for you and me to go up and down the world fishing for questions, or inviting the objections and cavillings of sceptics, because we think ourselves so exceedingly clever that we are easily

able to answer them. Believe me, you will have quite enough to do if you catch on your shield all the fiery darts that come without your invitation. You will have no need to ask to be led into temptation, or to seek permission to rush into it. Our Saviour invited no questions from Pilate; he did not even condescend to answer all that Pilate had to say to him; and the best thing for a Christian to do, in many of his times of trial, is to say, with David, "I was dumb with silence. I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred."

When the Master did reply, he set us an example that we may safely follow. Observe how he replied,—without any tartness, without even the appearance of anger. He was very courteous towards Pilate; he put what he had to say in a fashion which would commend itself to him. He knew that Pilate's chief jealousy was about his being a king, and he tried to remove it by explaining that his kingdom was not of this world, else would his servants fight for him so that he should not be delivered to the Jews. I cannot conceive of replies, to such a man as Pilate, more suitable, more calculated to have done him good if there had been any soil in Pilate's heart upon which the good seed could have fallen with the hope of growth. I pray that you and I, when we are assailed and questioned, may be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves, giving a reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and fear, answering, not with the object of displaying our own skill or learning, but always with the motive of seeking the good of the questioner, if, peradventure, God may grant unto him repentance that he may come to the knowledge of the truth. I admire, and hold up as an example to you, the exceeding sweetness of our Saviour's replies to his carping critic.

Note, however, how bold he was, as well as wise and gentle: "Thou sayest that I am a king." He does not flinch from admitting the truth, however distasteful it may be to his hearer. If this truth troubles Pilate after our Saviour's explanation that his kingdom is not of this world, he cannot deny the fact that he really is a king, for he must speak the truth come what may of it. I fear that, sometimes, in our endeavours to be sweet in disposition, we have not been strong in principle. "Charity" is a word that is greatly cried up nowadays; but, often, it means that, in trying to be courteous, we have also been traitorous. Our speech has been soft and smooth, but it has not been sincere and true. Did you never catch yourself wishing to trim off the corners of a truth,—or, at least, seeking if you could not omit something that might prejudice your hearer? If so, let me tell you plainly that he who wishes to alter any truth has already begun to lie. Though he may not actually do it, yet the very wish to change the truth in any degree is a proof of perversity of heart which needs to be repented of and forgiven. We have already turned aside from the right path when we do not dare to say what God has taught us. Our Saviour never acted like that; he was always true, transparent, clear, faithful. There was never in him any holding back even in the least degree; so he said to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am a

king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Oh, that we might learn from our Saviour the sacred art of blending Christlike gentleness with holy courage, and Christlike courage with gentleness such as his!

Observe, too,—for it is worthy of notice,—how modestly and unobtrusively our Saviour answered Pilate's questioning. It is an unhappy circumstance that some men seem as if they cannot speak boldly without having somewhat of pride mixed with their courage. Full often, our very virtues lie quite near to the borders of vice. We aim at what is right; but, alas! we go beyond it, or we fall short of it, or hit the target where our shots do not count. Ah, Lord, what imperfect creatures we are! But our Saviour was perfect in every respect. He only answered the questions of Pilate when it was right for him to answer them, and even then he seemed to take the words wherewith to frame his answer out of Pilate's own mouth: "'Thou sayest that I am a king.' It is even as thou hast said." Our gracious Master is very straightforward, yet how modest he is! He seems to hide himself even behind Pilate's words. He does not hide the truth; yet, in a perfectly sinless way, he somewhat conceals himself. I wish we could imitate him in that respect. Even when we are, like Bayard, "without fear, and without reproach," we are very apt, at the same time, to be without any desire for the conflict against evil, or any wish to obtrude ourselves, in the least degree, upon the attention of others, even if a protest would be right from us. We never see any of this false shame in our Saviour; so, if we have at all given way to it in the past, let us never repeat that sin.

The words of Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, are very properly rendered in the Revised Version, "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed *the* good confession." It was more than a good confession that our Lord Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate, so the definite article is rightly used, and "*the* good confession" stands out prominently as an example for all his followers. It is concerning that good confession that I am about to speak as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

I. First, let us ask,—WHAT WAS "THE GOOD CONFESSION" THAT JESUS WITNESSED BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE?

I think the good confession of our Lord was, first, *his avowal of his kingship*: "Thou sayest that I am a king." Dear friends, do not forget that our Saviour was, at that time, a prisoner in bonds, on trial for his life. As far as the eye could see, he appeared to be absolutely in the power of Pilate,—a man who was destitute of any kind of conscience, and who cared nothing what means he employed so long as he could attain his own evil ends. There stands Jesus, a bound prisoner, before one who can order him to be put to death; and the judge contemptuously says to him, "Art thou a king then?" and he answers, with great gentleness, but most decidedly and undoubtedly, "I am a king, even as thou sayest." I think I see Pilate's lip curl; I can imagine the supreme contempt with which he looked upon the miserable victim before him, disowned by his

own countrymen, who had brought him there because, in their hate, they wished to have him put to death; yet he talks about being a king! It may have been a merry jest for Pilate at the moment, but he did not dare to make it one afterwards. His wife would have stopped him had he sought to find amusement in Jesus of Nazareth. At the time, it must all have seemed very strange to him. It takes a great deal of courage for a man to avow that which seems to be improbable; and, indeed, impossible. He knows it is true, but the other man thinks it is a piece of fanaticism. "Ridiculous nonsense," says he; and he scorns the idea with a sardonic grin. It is not easy, then, for a humble-minded spirit just as determinedly to avow it. I believe that there is many a man, who could stand upon a public platform, and announce his convictions to an infuriated crowd, who would not dare to say the same things to a single individual. It took more courage for Christ to speak to Pilate alone as he did, than it has done for many a man to stand and burn at the stake; yet the Saviour did it. Calmly, and deliberately, he avowed the truth, blessed be his holy name! "I am a king," said he, and so he is. In our hearts, we own his sovereignty over us as individuals, and his supremacy over the entire Church. Nay, more, his Father hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as he has given him. He hath said it, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," "and he shall reign for ever and ever," and all loyal hearts cry, "Hallelujah!" It was a good confession for the Nazarene, clothed in the common smock-frock of a Galilean peasant, with gory sweat still upon his brow, with the ropes that bound him still about his wrists, with the howling savagery of his countrymen behind him, to say to Pilate, "I am a king."

Next, Christ's "good confession" was *his announcement of a spiritual kingdom*. Pilate could not comprehend what he meant when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." A spiritual kingdom! Pilate would not have given the smallest Roman coin for such a kingdom as that. Our Saviour's own countrymen did not understand what he meant by a spiritual kingdom, "not of this world." They were looking for a temporal prince, an earthly leader who would deliver them from the Roman yoke; but Jesus asserts that his kingdom, whatever it is, and wherever it is, is a spiritual thing. This is the testimony that we also are trying to bear to-day; and, sometimes, we have to bear it before the very temporal power that thinks the church to be an instrument to be used for its own purposes,—a sort of mental and moral police force to keep people in order, the officers themselves to be kept in order, and dressed, governed, fed, and maintained by Act of Parliament, and not able to lift so much as a little finger should the State forbid them to do so. This is a doctrine which needs some courage to utter it even now; but it is to be spoken, and must be spoken, more and more loudly. Christ's kingdom is not of this world; it borrows no power from the secular arm, and would not accept it if it were offered. It is a

rule of spirit over spirit, of mind over mind, of truth over the souls of men; and that man is a faithful witness for Christ who can unflinchingly bear this testimony even before the greatest and the proudest of the land. Our Saviour did so when he said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Another part of Christ's "good confession" was a *declaration of his life purpose*: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." There is many a man who is pursuing a calling which he would scarcely like to own, and there are others who think that their calling can be best pursued by stealthy, crafty, Jesuitical plans; but it was not so with the Saviour. He boldly declared the purpose for which he had come into the world; why should he conceal it? He who seeks to bear witness to the truth should himself be true enough to avow what the object of his witness is; and the Saviour did so, before Pilate, and wherever he was. All his life long he was a witness to the truth, he was himself the truest man who ever lived. It is beautiful to notice the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, even in small particulars. There is no rhetoric about our Saviour's speech, because rhetoric is too often but a lie. He speaks as simply as a child; there is no attempt at any display of learning in our Saviour's teaching. Because it is all solid truth, and divine revelation, there is no need that he should use the jargon of the schools, or call himself a Rabbi, or doctor. He spake with authority, and you can see how simply, how plainly, how heartily, he did it. There was no particular garb to attract attention to the Saviour, no priestly robes with which to dignify a kind of babyish authority; but he was a man among men, speaking what he knew in the language of the people which they could understand. There was no pomp, or ceremony, or show about his life; and, especially, there was no sham or pretence. He was what he seemed to be, and he seemed to be just what he was. If you look upon any other man, you can see some attempt to hide his deficiencies, or to increase his influence by an appearance of greater strength than actually exists. In the Saviour, you see him altogether as he is. He wears his heart upon his sleeve. He speaks straight on, and never turns aside to crooked ways. He never blushes or stammers; why should he do so? What has he to conceal? His teaching is delivered as from a mountain-top, and men may stand, and gaze; and, the longer they gaze, the better will they see what he wishes them to see. He has no curtain behind which there is something concealed; all is as open as the day. As a truthful man, he was a fit witness to bear testimony to the truth. And what a breaker of idols, what a smasher of all shams, he was! Pharisees, and Sadducees, and Herodians got but short shrift from him. Nothing false could stand before him. Even a scourge of small cords, when it was held in his hands, sufficed to sweep the buyers and sellers from the temple; but when he used the sledge-hammer of denunciation, who could resist him? His fan was in his hand, and he did thoroughly purge his floor. And this was his life purpose,—that he might bear witness to the truth, and he avowed that purpose even before Pontius Pilate.

Our Saviour also witnessed "the good confession" by *his avowal that there is such a thing as positive truth*: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." There is need of just such witness as that to-day. "Now be very careful upon that point," says one; "do you mean to say that there really is such a thing as 'the truth'?" By your leave, dear sir, or without it, I will venture to assert that there is. "That reply is a very bigoted one; because, if there is a doctrine that is 'the truth', then that which is contrary to it is a lie." Precisely so; and by your leave, or without your leave, again I say that it is so, and it must be so in the natural order of things. If this doctrine be true, then that which contradicts it cannot be true. If God has spoken thus, that which is opposed to God, and his truth, is not from him, and cannot stand on the same footing with that which is divinely revealed. It takes a good deal of courage to say that nowadays. If you go into society, you will get three cheers if you declare that you are an Agnostic,—that you do not know anything, you are not sure of anything. Others say that, whatever a man believes, or does not believe, it really does not matter provided he is perfectly sincere; that is to say, if a man sincerely takes prussic acid, it will not kill him; and if he sincerely goes without food, he will not starve; and if he sincerely refuses to breathe, he will do as well as those that do breathe, which is another lie. The statue of Christ was set up among the statues of Plato, and Socrates, and other notable men; and some thought it was an honour to Christ, but it was not. They would crown Christ, so they say, among the great ones of earth. Ah! but they cannot crown him unless they "crown him Lord of all." Our blessed Saviour is honestly intolerant. He says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Because he loves the souls of men, he will not bolster up the fiction of universal charity, and even before the Broad-church or No-church Pilate, he says that he has come to bear witness to the truth; so there is the truth, and that which is contrary to it is not truth.

One other point in our Lord's "good confession" was *his separation of characters*, for he went on to say to Pilate,—and I fear that most of us would have left out that sentence,—"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Do you hear that declaration, Pilate? You are the Roman procurator,—a very great man, and this poor prisoner of yours, whose life is now at your mercy, tells you plainly that every one that is of the truth heareth his voice. Then, Pilate, if you are of the truth, you will have to sit at his feet, and listen to his words, and learn of him. I can well conceive what Pilate thought as he turned on his heel, and contemptuously asked, "What is truth?" He had heard quite enough of such talk as that; he did not want any more of such close dealing. But therein lies the glory of the Master, that he is not content with merely teaching truth, but, in his good confession before Pontius Pilate, he presses it home even upon his judge, and divides and separates between the precious and the vile. So must you and I do, dear

friends, if we are faithful followers of "the faithful Witness." I dare not preach to this congregation as if you were all Christians, for you are not. I dare not deliver even one discourse under the delusion that all my hearers are saved; for, alas! they are not. This is the fault with multitudes of sermons,—that they seem to carry the whole congregation to heaven when, possibly, the major part of those present may be going down to hell. That will not do. Remember what the Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." But if there be no winnowing fan in our hand, to separate the chaff from the wheat, we are not like to Christ, nor has Christ sent us on his service. In this "good confession" of his, we see how clearly and solemnly,—gently, I admit, but still most decidedly,—he made a division and separation of characters, and gave a test by which Pilate could judge himself if he had been willing to do so.

II. The time will not suffice for me to go fully into all the teaching of my text, but I want to ask, in the second place,—TO WHAT TRUTH DID OUR LORD WITNESS?

He said to Pilate that he was born; that proves his humanity. He also said that he came into the world; and that, I think, shows his Divinity as well as his humanity. He came on purpose to bear witness to the truth, and I believe that the life of Christ witnessed, not only to all doctrinal truth, but also to everything that is true, especially to true-heartedness, simplicity, sincerity. His life was a testimony against all guile, craftiness, cunning, concealment; in that sense, it was a testimony to the truth.

But with regard to special truths to which he testified, did not his very coming here, and being born, bear witness to *the grand truth that God is love, and that God loves men?* The Infinite takes upon himself the nature and form of an infant. The Illimitable is encased within a human body. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." We never can have a clearer testimony to the thoughtful care of God to men than we find in the coming of the Son of God as the Son of man, except this,—that, being found in fashion as a man, he proved the love of God to sinners by the tears which he wept over the guilty and perishing, and, best of all, by the blood which he shed for many for the remission of sins. As ye see Christ dying on the accursed tree, say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." He willeth not the death of any, but longs that they should turn unto him and live. The Saviour's death for the guilty proves that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All his life long, the Saviour was bearing witness to this grand truth. Oh, that we may none of us dare to doubt it after he has backed it up by a life of self-abnegation, and a death of sublime self-sacrifice!

He also bore witness, all through his life, to *the spirituality of true religion*. He was always teaching truth like this: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He wore no phylactery, he assumed no airs of an ascetic; even in his eating and drinking, he was like other men, insomuch

that they said of him that he was "a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber,"—a vile charge, without an atom of truth in it. He taught that true religion consisted not in long prayers, but in entering into the closet, and sincerely seeking the Father's face; it was not fasting thrice in the week, but it was truly praying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" it was not giving alms in public, and sounding a trumpet before him, and in secret devouring widows' houses; but it consisted in love to God and love to man. It was the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart that Jesus preached, and he grandly witnessed against all the idolatrous and false forms of faith which, even down to this day, prostitute his blessed name.

In that sad hour, our Lord Jesus was also a wonderful Witness to the enmity of men to God. He in whom there was no roughness or sternness, as there was in John the Baptist, came as the Messenger of love and mercy, for God sent him not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He was the great Householder's Son, who was, "last of all," sent to receive the fruits of the vineyard, but the husbandmen said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." The men of this world were never so base—they never displayed so much of their utter malice against God as when they took his Son, and put him to a cruel and ignominious death. This was the culmination of human guilt. All the adulteries, and murders, and unnatural vices, and accursed blasphemies, that had ever defiled the race of mankind have not so certainly proved it to be a desperately fallen thing as the murder of the Son of God, the Saviour and the Friend of men. This appalling crime of Deicide stands out without a parallel in the history of the universe. There was no guilt in the Lord Jesus for which he deserved to die; yet, with wicked hands, they crucified and slew him.

Our Saviour was also ever a Witness to the great necessity of a new creation, a change of heart, a regeneration. To Nicodemus he said, "Ye must be born again;" and to his disciples, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He also preached the absolute necessity of faith in himself, and did not mince the matter in the least: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." To all this, Jesus steadfastly witnessed in life and in death.

And to this truth also he bore witness, that salvation was to be found only in himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." His teaching was always concerning himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He never hesitated to bear witness to the truth, so it was but natural that part of his "good confession" before Pilate should be this plain declaration, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

III. Now I will try briefly to answer a third question,—WHAT HAD THIS “GOOD CONFESSION” OF JESUS TO DO WITH PILATE?

I answer, first, that *it gave Pilate a reason for acting justly*. It ought to have helped to stir any little conscience that Pilate still had left, and also to allay the jealousy which he may have felt because of the Saviour's royal claims. Our Lord spoke thus out of kindness to Pilate.

I think, however, that the main reason for our Saviour's testimony was that *it gave Pilate an opportunity to learn the truth*. Had his soul been like the good soil, had he really ever been the subject of sovereign grace, he would have said to Jesus, “I will gladly hear what this truth is if thou wilt tell it to me.” He would, at least, have spared time enough to hear from his strange prisoner what this truth was. There must have been an unusual force about our Saviour's few short sentences that ought to have convinced even Pontius Pilate of his evident sincerity. Those eyes, so gentle, yet so piercing, must have looked Pilate through and through. The tones of his voice must have been very different from anything to which Pilate had been accustomed in the courts of Nero. Jesus spoke as no other man had ever spoken in Pilate's hall before; and had there been anything hopeful about him, he would have said, “Good Master, tell me what that truth is to which thou bearest witness.”

And I say to you, who are not converted, if you desire to be right with God, you will want to know what this truth is for which the Lord Jesus lived and died. And when you do know it, if there is the right principle in your heart, then you will believe it; and, believing it, you will be assuredly saved. There is such life-giving truth in the Saviour's teaching that you have but to hear it, and turn it over in your mind, and weigh it with the best judgment that you have, to be convinced that it is most certainly true. So I put it to you, if it be true, will you not believe it? Believing it, will you not yield to it, and let it reign over your whole being, for it is truth from the mouth of the King? It is the sceptre in the hand of King Jesus, with which he rules over the hearts of all his loyal subjects.

IV. Now, to finish, I have to ask,—WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH OURSELVES?

It has something to do with every one of us, whether we own Christ or not. First, it suggests to our hearts this question,—*Are we of the truth?* For, if we are of the truth, we shall hear Christ's voice. It is the voice of the King eternal, immortal, invisible. He is the King of truth, and he rules over truthful minds. Coming to be the chief Witness to all truth, he really occupies the throne of truth. Now, dear friends, are we of the truth? For, if we are not, we shall not accept Christ; but if we are, we shall be glad to have him as our King. I ask any man here, who has hitherto refused Christ, whether he is not conscious of something missing from his life. Are you not sometimes half inclined to believe in Jesus? Do you not have to do violence to your conscience by what you call reason, but by what I venture to

say is a most unreasonable travesty of all good reasoning? If you would but let that reason of yours go its own way, and follow the track of truth, I believe that, ere long, by God's grace, you would be sitting at the Saviour's feet, and learning of him.

The next thing that this testimony of Christ has to do with us is this. If, on our behalf, he witnessed "the good confession" for the truth before Pontius Pilate, then it behoves you and me, not only to believe, but to *bear witness to the truth*. Brothers and sisters in Jesus, this looks to me to be but a small thing for us to do. If the Son of God has come into this world on our behalf, and has not been ashamed to call us brethren, and to espouse our cause even at the cost of his life, I say that it looks to me to be but a small thing that he should ask of us that, if with our heart we believe in him, we should with our mouth make confession of him;—that, if we believe in him, we should also be baptized in his name, for it is his will that we should **make an open confession** before men if we really are his disciples.

There are new fashions in theology, and new gods lately come up, and new christs, and all manner of nonsense and novelty; but I am a follower of the old Christ, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; and I glory in being a fool for Christ's sake if it be a foolish thing to follow the Man of Nazareth, the Christ of Calvary, who died as the Substitute for all who believe in him; that, by the shedding of his precious blood, he might reconcile them unto God for ever.

I appeal to some, who I believe do really love my Lord and Master, but who are, like Saul of old, hiding away out of sight. Are you never going forth to fight for your King? Will you still continue in the ways of the world, and yet profess to be a lover of the Lord? Cowards that you are, come out boldly for Jesus! If you are on Christ's side, avow it. There never was a cause that better deserved to be openly confessed than his. If Christ be God, follow him; but if Satan be God, serve him. If the world be worth your love, give your love to the world, and say so, and do not come sneaking in among Christians as if you belonged to them. But if the Lord Jesus Christ be worthy of your love, give it to him, and say that you have done so. Come to the front, unite with his people, share the scorn that falls upon them; and whenever any man wishes to set Christ in the pillory, say to him, "Put me there, too, for I am one with him, and have taken up his cause." When he comes,—and he soon will come in all the glory of his Father and of his holy angels, he who has denied him before men he will deny before the assembled universe; but he who has confessed him before men, him will he confess in the presence of his Father and of his holy angels. May that be my lot, and yours, dear friends, without a single exception, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVIII. 28—40; AND PSALM II.

John xviii. Verse 28. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment:*

That is to say, Pilate's hall. Pilate, at that time, was probably residing in one of the old and sumptuous palaces of Herod, there holding his court during the time of the Passover.

28. *And it was early;*

They were very eager to prove their enmity to Christ; they had spent the night, and the earliest moments of the dawn, in examining their illustrious prisoner, condemning him, and abusing him, and now they were off to Pilate.

28. *And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.*

What could defile such wretches as these? Yet they were afraid of ceremonial defilement, though neither afraid nor ashamed to imbrue their hands in the blood of Jesus.

29. *Pilate then went out unto them,*

He loathed and detested them, yet, for his own evil purposes, he would yield to their wishes and whims.

29, 30. *And said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.*

As much as to say, "You may take that for granted. We would not have brought him if he had not done wrong. You need not examine into the matter; we have already heard the evidence, and convicted him, and so saved you all the trouble of trying him; we only bring him here for you to condemn him."

31. *Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.*

"That is your way of doing such things, but it is not a method into which we shall fall. Our law does not condemn a man before it hears the evidence against him. I am not going to be your tool, to put this man to death without hearing what is laid to his charge, and the proofs of his guilt. If you want that done, you must do it yourselves."

31. *The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:*

"You Romans have taken from us the power of life and death; and we want him put to death." There was a clear confession that nothing short of Christ's death would satisfy them.

32. *That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.*

Crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish method of capital punishment, so God overruled the wanton wickedness of the worst of men for the accomplishment of his own eternal purposes, without, however, diminishing their responsibility and guilt in the least degree. It was "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" that Christ was put to death, yet it was "with wicked hands" that they took him, and crucified him.

33. *Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?*

He did not look much like it. There was little enough about his appearance or his apparel to suggest the idea of royalty.

34, 35. *Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?*

I can imagine him throwing all the scorn and contempt possible into the question. It was characteristic of the Romans, as we learn from the works of their great writers, that they utterly despised and detested the Jews.

35—37. *Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

We might have expected that he would have said, "I came into the world that I might be a king." But he explains that, as a Witness to the truth, he was a King.

38. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

He did not want an answer. He merely thought it such an unnecessary piece of trifling to talk about truth, he himself had so slight an idea of what the word might mean, that, when he had said, "What is truth?" "he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all." That was the truth about the Truth, from the lips of a man who cared nothing about truth, yet who was compelled to bear this testimony, "I find in him no fault at all."

39. *But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*

Now, Pilate may have thought, if Christ was their King, they would certainly prefer him to a thief and a robber; so he was putting before himself an opportunity of escaping from judging Christ, and before them a test as to whether there really was in them any liking for the Christ, or any possibility of his becoming their King.

40 *Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

Psalm ii. Verses 1, 2. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,*

This raging company of the Jews was but a specimen of the universal opposition which there is to the reign of Christ; for it is not alone in Israel, but among the heathen, and among all people, that there is this opposition to the Christ of God.

3. *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*

The bands of Jehovah, and the bands of the Christ, his Anointed.

4, 5. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.*

His word, it seems, vexes them; there is no need of sword or javelin. The weapons of God's warfare are his words.

6—12. *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

JESUS, THE KING OF TRUTH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 19TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”—John xviii. 37.

THE season is almost arrived when by the custom of our fellow-citizens we are led to remember the birth of the holy child Jesus, who was born “king of the Jews.” I shall not, however, conduct you to Bethlehem, but to the foot of Calvary; there we shall learn, from the Lord’s own lips, something concerning the kingdom over which he rules, and thus we shall be led to prize more highly the joyous event of his nativity.

We are told, by the apostle Paul, that our Lord Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. It was a good confession as to the manner of it, for our Lord was truthful, gentle, prudent, patient, meek, and yet, withal, uncompromising, and courageous. His spirit was not cowed by Pilate’s power, nor exasperated by his sneers. In his patience he possessed his soul, and remained the model witness for the truth—both in his silence and in his speech. He witnessed a good confession also, as to the matter of it; for, though he said but little, that little was all that was needful. He claimed his crown rights, and, at the same time, declared that his kingdom was not of this world, nor to be sustained by force. He vindicated both the spirituality and the essential truthfulness of his sovereignty. If ever we should be placed in like circumstances, may we be able to witness a good confession too! We may never, like Paul, be made to plead before Nero; but, if we should, may the Lord stand by us, and help us to play the man before the lion! In our families, or among our business acquaintances, we may have to meet some little Nero, and answer to some petty Pilate; may we then also be true witnesses. O that we may have grace to be prudently silent or meekly outspoken, as the matter may require, in either case being faithful to our conscience and our God! May the sorrowful visage of Jesus, the faithful and true witness, the Prince of the kings

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of the earth, be often before our eye, to check the first sign of flinching, and to inspire us with dauntless courage!

We have before us, in the words of the text, a part of our Saviour's good confession touching his kingdom.

I. Note, first of all, that **OUR LORD CLAIMED TO BE A KING.** Pilate said, "Art thou a king, then?" asking the question with a sneering surprise that so poor a being should put forth a claim to royalty. Do you wonder that he should have marvelled greatly to find kingly claims associated with such a sorrowful condition? The Saviour answered, in effect, "It is even as thou sayest, I am a king." The question was but half earnest; the answer was altogether solemn: "I am a king." Nothing was ever uttered by our Lord with greater certainty and earnestness.

Now, notice, that our Lord's claim to be a king was made without the slightest ostentation or desire to be advantaged thereby. There were other times when, if he had said "I am a king," he might have been carried upon the shoulders of the people, and crowned amid general acclamations. His fanatical fellow countrymen would gladly have made him their leader at one time; and we read that they would have "taken him by force and made him a king." At such times he said but little about his kingdom, and what he did say was uttered in parables, and explained only to his disciples when they were alone. Little enough did he say in his preaching concerning his birthright as the Son of David and a scion of the royal house of Judah; for he shrank from worldly honours, and disdained the vain glories of a temporal diadem. He who came in love to redeem men, had no ambition for the gewgaws of human sovereignty. But now, when he is betrayed by his disciple, accused by his countrymen, and in the hands of an unjust ruler; when no good can come of it to himself; when it will bring him derision rather than honour; he speaks out plainly and replies to his interrogator, "Thou sayest that I am a king."

Note well the clearness of our Lord's avowal; there was no mistaking his words: "I am a king." When the time has come for the truth to be spoken, our Lord is not backward in declaring it. Truth has her times most meet for speech, and her seasons for silence. We are not to cast our pearls before swine, but when the hour has come for speech we must not hesitate, but speak as with the voice of a trumpet, giving forth a certain sound, that no man may mistake us. So, though a prisoner given up to die, the Lord boldly declares his royalty, though Pilate would pour derision upon him in consequence thereof. O, for the Master's prudence to speak the truth at the right time, and for the Master's courage to speak it when the right time has come. Soldiers of the cross, learn of your Captain.

Our Lord's claim to royalty must have sounded very singularly in Pilate's ear. Jesus was, doubtless, very much careworn, sad, and emaciated in appearance. He had spent the first part of the night in the garden in an agony; in the midnight hours he had been dragged from Annas to Caiaphas, and from Caiaphas to Herod; neither at day-break had he been permitted to rest, so that, from sheer weariness, he must have looked very unlike a king. If you had taken some poor ragged creature in the street, and said to him, "Art thou a king,

then?" the question could scarcely have been more sarcastic. Pilate, in his heart, despised the Jews as such, but here was a poor Jew, persecuted by his own people, helpless and friendless; it sounded like mockery to talk of a kingdom in connection with him. Yet never earth saw truer king! None of the line of Pharaoh, the family of Nimrod, or the race of the Cæsars, was so intrinsically imperial in himself as he, or so deservedly reckoned a king among men by virtue of his descent, his achievements, or his superior character. The carnal eye could not see this, but to the spiritual eye it is clear as noon-day. To this day, pure Christianity, in its outward appearance, is an equally unattractive object, and wears upon its surface few royal tokens. It is without form or comeliness, and when men see it, there is no beauty that they should desire it. True, there is a nominal Christianity which is accepted and approved of men, but the pure gospel is still despised and rejected. The real Christ of to-day, among men, is unknown and unrecognised as much as he was among his own nation eighteen hundred years ago. Evangelical doctrine is at a discount, holy living is censured, and spiritual-mindedness is derided. "What," say they, "This evangelical doctrine, call you it the royal truth? Who believes it now-a-days? Science has exploded it. There is nothing great about it; it may afford comfort to old women, and to those who have not capacity enough for free thought, but its reign is over, never to return." As to living in separation from the world, it is called Puritanism, or worse. Christ in doctrine, Christ in spirit, Christ in life—the world cannot endure as king. Christ chanted in cathedrals, Christ personified in lordly prelates, Christ surrounded by such as are in king's houses, *he* is well enough; but Christ honestly obeyed, followed, and worshipped in simplicity, without pomp or form, they will not allow to reign over them. Few now-a-days will side with the truth their fathers bled for. The day for covenanting to follow Jesus through evil report and shame appears to have gone by. Yet, though men turn round upon us, and say, "Do you call your gospel divine? Are you so preposterous as to believe that your religion comes from God and is to subdue the world?"—we boldly answer; "Yes!" Even as beneath the peasant's garb and the wan visage of the Son of Mary we can discern the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father! so beneath the simple form of a despised gospel we perceive the royal lineaments of truth divine. We care nothing about the outward apparel or the external housing of truth; we love it for its own sake. To us, the marble halls and the alabaster columns are nothing, we see more in the manger and the cross. We are satisfied that Christ is the king still where he was wont to be king, and that is not among the great ones of the earth, nor among the mighty and the learned, but amongst the base things of the world and the things which are not, which shall bring to nought the things that are, for these hath God from the beginning chosen to be his own.

Let us add, that our Lord's claim to be a king shall be acknowledged one day by all mankind. When Christ said to Pilate, according to our version, "Thou sayest that I am a king," he virtually prophesied the future confession of all men. Some, taught by his grace, shall in this

life rejoice in him as their altogether lovely King. Blessed be God, the Lord Jesus might look into the eyes of many of us, and say, "Thou sayest that I am a king," and we would reply, "We do say it joyfully." But the day shall come when he shall sit upon his great white throne, and then, when the multitudes shall tremble in the presence of his awful majesty, even such as Pontius Pilate, and Herod, and the chief priests, shall own that he is a king! Then to each of his astounded and overwhelmingly convinced enemies he might say, "Now, O despiser, thou sayest that I am a king," for to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord!

Let us remember, here, that when our Lord said to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am king," he was not referring to his divine dominion. Pilate was not thinking of that at all, nor did our Lord, I think, refer to it: yet, forget not that, as divine, he is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We must never forget that, though he died in weakness as man, yet he ever lives and rules as God. Nor do I think he referred to his mediatorial sovereignty, which he possesses over the earth for his people's sake; for the Lord has all power committed unto him in heaven and in earth, and the Father has given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as are given him. Pilate was not alluding to that, nor our Lord either, in the first place; but he was speaking of that rule which he personally exercises over the minds of the faithful, by means of the truth. You remember Napoleon's saying, "I have founded an empire by force, and it has melted away; Jesus Christ established his kingdom by love, and it stands to this day, and will stand." That is the kingdom to which our Lord's word refers, the kingdom of spiritual truth in which Jesus reigns as Lord over those who are of the truth. He claimed to be a king, and the truth which he revealed, and of which he was the personification, is, therefore, the sceptre of his empire. He rules by the force of truth over those hearts which feel the power of right and truth, and therefore willingly yield themselves to his guidance, believe his word, and are governed by his will. It is as a spiritual Lord that Christ claims sovereignty among men; he is king over minds that love him, trust him, and obey him, because they see in him the truth which their souls pine for. Other kings rule our bodies, but Christ our souls, they govern by force, but he by the attractions of righteousness; theirs is, to a great extent, a fictitious royalty, but his is true, and finds its force in truth.

So much, then, upon Christ's claims to be a king.

II. Now, observe, secondly, that OUR LORD DECLARED THIS KINGDOM TO BE HIS MAIN OBJECT IN LIFE. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." To set up his kingdom was the reason why he was born of the virgin. To be King of men, it was necessary for him to be born. He was always the Lord of all; he needed not to be born to be a king in that sense, but to be king through the power of truth, it was essential that he should be born in our nature. Why so? I answer, first, because it seems unnatural that a ruler should be alien in nature to the people over whom he rules. An angelic king of men would be unsuitable; there could not exist the sympathy which is the cement of a spiritual empire. Jesus, that he might govern by force of love and truth alone, became of one nature

with mankind; he was a man among men, a real man—but a right noble and kingly man, and so a King of men.

But, again, the Lord was born that he might be able to save his people. Subjects are essential to a kingdom; a king cannot be a king if there be none to govern. But all men must have perished through sin, had not Christ come into the world and been born to save. His birth was a necessary step to his redeeming death; his incarnation was necessary to the atonement.

Moreover, truth never exerts such power as when it is embodied. Truth spoken may be defeated, but truth acted out in the life of a man is omnipotent, through the Spirit of God. Now, Christ did not merely speak the truth, but he *was* truth. Had he been truth embodied in an angelic form, he had possessed small power over our hearts and lives; but perfect truth in a human form has royal power over renewed humanity. Truth embodied in flesh and blood has power over flesh and blood. Hence, for this purpose was he born. So when ye hear the bells ringing out at Christmas, think of the reason why Jesus was born; dream not that he came to load your tables and fill your cups; but in your mirth look higher than all earth-born things. When you hear that in certain churches there are pompous celebrations and ecclesiastical displays, think not for this purpose was Jesus born. No; but look within your hearts, and say, for this purpose was he born: that he might be a King, that he might rule through the truth in the souls of a people who are by grace made to love the truth of God.

And then he added, "For this cause came I into the world;" that is, he came out of the bosom of the Father that he might set up his kingdom, by unveiling the mysteries which were hid from the foundation of the world. No man can reveal the counsel of God, but one who has been with God; and the Son who has come forth of the ivory palaces of gladness, announces to us tidings of great joy! For this cause also came he into the world, from the obscure retirement of Joseph's workshop, where, for many years he was hidden like a pearl in its shell. It was needful that he should be made known, and that the truth to which he witnessed should be sounded in the ears of the crowd. Since he was to be a King, he must leave seclusion, and come forth to do battle for his throne; he must address the multitudes on the hill-side; he must speak by the sea-shore; he must gather disciples, and send them forth by two and two to publish on the housetops the secrets of mighty truth! He came not forth because he loved to be seen of men, or courted popularity; but for this purpose—that, the truth being published, he might set up his kingdom. It was needful that he should come out into the world and teach, or truth would not be known, and consequently could not operate. The sun must come forth, like a bridegroom out of his chamber, or the kingdom of light will never be established; the breath must come forth from the hiding-place of the winds, or life will never reign in the valley of dry bones. During three years, our Lord lived conspicuously, and emphatically "came into the world." He was seen of men so closely as to be beheld, looked upon, touched, and handled. He was intended to be a pattern, and therefore, it was needful that he should be seen. The life of a man who lives in absolute retirement may be admirable for himself and acceptable with God, but

it cannot be exemplary to men : for this cause the Lord came forth into the world, that all he did might influence mankind. His enemies were permitted to watch his every action, and to endeavour to entrap him in his speech, by way of test ; his friends saw him in privacy, and knew what he did in solitude ; thus his whole life was reported—he was observed on the cold mountain-side at midnight, as well as in the midst of the great congregation. This was permitted to make the truth known, for every action of his life was truth, and tended to set up the kingdom of truth in the world.

Let us pause here. Christ is a king, a king by force of truth in a spiritual kingdom ; for this purpose was he born ; for this cause came he into the world. My soul, ask thyself this question:—Has this purpose of Christ's birth and life been answered in thee ? If not, what avails Christmas to thee ? The choristers will sing, "Unto us a child is born ; unto us a Son is given." Is that true to thee ? How can it be unless Jesus reigns in thee, and is thy Saviour and thy Lord ? Those who can in truth rejoice in his birth are those who know him as their bosom's Lord, ruling their understanding by the truth of his doctrine ; their admiration by the truth of his life ; their affections by the truth of his person. To such he is not a personage to be portrayed with a crown of gold and a robe of purple, like the common theatrical kings of men ; but one brighter and more heavenly, whose crown is real, whose dominion is unquestionable, who rules by truth and love ! Do we know this King ?

This question may well come home to us, for, beloved, there are many who say, "Christ is my King," who know not what they say, for they do not obey him. He is the servant of Christ who trusts in Christ, who walks according to Christ's mind, and loves the truth which Jesus has revealed : all others are mere pretenders.

III. But now I must pass on. Our Lord, in the third place, REVEALED THE NATURE OF HIS ROYAL POWER. I have already spoken on that, but I must do so again. We should have thought the text would have run thus : "Thou sayest that I am a king ; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should establish my kingdom." It is not so in words, but so it must mean, for Jesus was not incoherent in his speech. We conclude that the words employed have the same meaning as that which the context suggests, only it is differently expressed. If our Lord had said, "That I might establish a kingdom," he might have misled Pilate ; but when he availed himself of the spiritual explanation, and said that his kingdom was truth, and that the establishment of his kingdom was by bearing witness to the truth, then, though Pilate did not understand him—for it was far above his comprehension—yet, at any rate, he was not misled.

Our Lord, in effect, tells us that truth is the pre-eminent characteristic of his kingdom, and that his royal power over men's hearts is through the truth. Now, the witness of our Lord among men was emphatically upon real and vital matters. He dealt not with fiction, but with facts ; not with trifles, but with infinite realities. He speaks not of opinions, views, or speculations, but of infallible verities. How many preachers waste time over what may be or may not be ! Our Lord's testimony was pre-eminently practical and matter-of-fact, full of

verities and certainties. I have sometimes, when hearing sermons, wished the preacher would come to the point, and would deal with something that really concerned our soul's welfare. What concern have dying men with the thousand trivial questions which are flitting around us? We have heaven or hell before us, and death within a stone's-throw; for God's sake do not trifle with us, but tell us the truth at once! Jesus is king in his people's souls, because his preaching has blessed us in the grandest and most real manner, and set us at rest upon points of boundless importance. He has not given us well-chiselled stones, but real bread. There are a thousand things which you may not know, and you shall be very little the worse for not knowing them; but O, if you do not know that which Jesus has taught, it shall go ill with you. If you are taught of the Lord Jesus, you shall have rest for your cares, balm for your sorrows, and satisfaction for your desires. Jesus gives sinners who believe in him the truth which they need to know; the assurance of sin forgiven through his blood, favour ensured by his righteousness, and heaven secured by his eternal life.

Moreover, Jesus has power over his people because he testifies not to symbols, but to the very substance of truth. The Scribes and Pharisees were very fluent upon sacrifices, offerings, oblations, tithes, fastings, and the like; but what influence could all that exert over aching hearts? Jesus has imperial power over contrite spirits, because he tells them of his one real sacrifice and of the perfection which he has secured to all believers. The priests lost their power over the people because they went no further than the shadow, and sooner or later all will do so who rest in the symbol. The Lord Jesus retains his power over his saints because he reveals the substance, for grace and truth are by Jesus Christ. What a loss of time it is to debate upon the fashion of a cope, or the manner of celebrating communion, or the colour suitable for the clergyman's robes in Advent, or the precise date of Easter. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Such trifles will never aid in setting up an everlasting kingdom in men's hearts. Let us take care lest we also set great store by externals, and miss the essential, spiritual life of our holy faith. Christ's kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!

The power of King Jesus in the hearts of his people lies much in the fact that he brings forth unalloyed truth, without mixture of error. He has delivered to us pure light and no darkness; his teaching is no combination of God's word and man's inventions; no mixture of inspiration and philosophy; silver without dross is the wealth which he gives his servants. Men taught of his Holy Spirit to love the truth, recognise this fact and surrender their souls to the royal sway of the Lord's truth, and it makes them free, and sanctifies them; nor can anything make them disown such a sovereign, for as the truth lives and abides in their hearts, so Jesus, who is the truth, abides also. If you know what truth is, you will as naturally submit yourselves to the teachings of Christ as ever children yield to a father's rule.

The Lord Jesus taught that worship must be true, spiritual, and of the heart, or else it would be nothing worth. He would not take sides with the temple at Gerizim or that on Zion, but he declared that the time was come when those who worshipped God would worship him

in spirit and in truth. Now, regenerate hearts feel the power of this, and rejoice that it emancipates them from the beggarly elements of carnal ritualism. They accept gladly the truth that pious words of prayer or praise are vanity, unless the heart has living worship within it. In the great truth of spiritual worship, believers possess a Magna Charta, dear as life itself. We refuse to be again subject to the yoke of bondage, and cleave to our emancipating king.

Our Lord taught, also, that all false living was base and loathsome. He poured contempt on the phylacteries of hypocrites and the broad borders of the garments of oppressors of the poor. With him, ostentatious alms, long prayers, frequent fasts, and the tithe of mint and cummin, were all nothing when practised by those who devoured widows' houses. He cared nothing for white-washed sepulchres and platters with outsides made clean, he judged the thoughts and intents of the heart. What woes were those which he denounced upon the formalists of his day! It must have been a grand sight to have seen the lowly Jesus roused to indignation, thundering forth peal on peal his denunciations of hypocrisy. Elias never called fire from heaven one half so grandly. "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," is the loudest roll of heaven's artillery! See how, like another Samson, Jesus slays the shams of his age, and piles them heaps upon heaps to rot for ever. Shall not he who teaches us true living be king of all the sons of truth? Let us even now salute him as Lord and King.

Besides, beloved, our Lord came not only to teach us the truth, but a mysterious power goes forth from him, through that Spirit which rests on him without measure—which subdues chosen hearts to truthfulness, and then guides truthful hearts into fulness of peace and joy. Have you never felt when you have been with Jesus, that a sense of his purity has made you yearn to be purged of all hypocrisy and every false way? Have you not been ashamed of yourself when you have come forth from hearing his word, from watching his life, and, above all, from enjoying his fellowship—quite ashamed that you have not been more real, more sincere, more true, more upright, and so a more loyal subject of the truthful King? I know you have. Nothing about Jesus is false or even dubious; he is transparent—from head to foot he is truth in public, truth in private, truth in word, and truth in deed. Hence it is that he has a kingdom over the pure in heart, and is vehemently extolled by all those whose hearts are set upon righteousness.

IV. And now, in the fourth place, our Lord DISCLOSED THE METHOD OF HIS CONQUEST. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, *that I should bear witness for the truth.*" Christ never yet set up his kingdom by force of arms. Manomet drew the sword, and converted men by giving them the choice of death or conversion; but Christ said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into its sheath." No compulsion ought to be used with any man to lead him to receive any opinion, much less to induce him to espouse the truth. Falsehood requires the rack of the Inquisition, but truth needs not such unworthy aid; her own beauty, and the Spirit of God, are her strength. Moreover, Jesus used no arts of priestcraft, or tricks of superstition. The foolish are persuaded of a dogma, by the fact that it is promulgated by

a learned doctor of high degree, but our Rabboni wears no sounding titles of honour; the vulgar imagine that a statement must be correct if it emanates from a person who wears lawn sleeves, or from a place where the banners are of costly workmanship, and the music of the sweetest kind: these things are arguments with those who are amenable to no other; but Jesus owes nothing to his apparel, and influences none by artistic arrangements. None can say that he reigns over men by the glitter of pomp, or the fascination of sensuous ceremonies. His battle-axe is the truth; truth is both his arrow and his bow, his sword and his buckler. Believe me, no kingdom is worthy of the Lord Jesus but that which has its foundations laid in indisputable verities; Jesus would scorn to reign by the help of a lie.

True Christianity was never promoted by policy or guile, by doing a wrong thing, or saying a false thing. Even to exaggerate truth is to beget error, and so to pull down the truth we would set up. There are some who say, "Bring out one line of teaching, and nothing else, lest you should seem inconsistent." What have I to do with that? If it be God's truth, I am bound to deliver it all, and to keep back none of it. Policy, like a sailing vessel, dependant on the wind, tacks about hither and thither; but the true man, like a vessel having its motive power within, goes straight onward in the very teeth of the hurricane. When God puts truth into men's souls, he teaches them never to tack or trim, but to hold to truth at all hazards. This is what Jesus always did. He bore witness to the truth, and there left the matter; being guileless as a lamb.

Here it will be fit to answer the question, "What truth did he witness to?" Ah, my brethren, what truth did he *not* witness to? Did he not mirror all truth in his life? See how clearly he set forth the truth that God is love. How melodious, how like a peal of Christmas bells, was his witness to the truth that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." He also bore witness that God is just. How solemnly he proclaimed that fact! His flowing wounds, his dying agonies rang out that solemn truth, as with a knell which even the dead might hear. He bore witness to God's demand for truth in the inward parts; for he often dissected men and laid them bare, and opened up their secret thoughts and discovered them to themselves, and made them see that only sincerity could bear the eye or God. Did he not bear witness to the truth that God had resolved to make for himself a new people and a true people? Was he not always telling of his sheep who heard his voice, of the wheat which would be gathered into the garner, and of the precious things which would be treasured up when the bad would be thrown away? Therein he was bearing witness that the false must die, that the unreal must be consumed, that the lie must rust and rot; but that the true, the sincere, the gracious, the vital, shall stand every test, and outlast the sun. In an age of shams, he was always sweeping away pretences and establishing truth and right by his witness. And now, beloved, this is the way in which Christ's kingdom is to be set up in the world. For this cause was the church born, and for this end came she into the world, that she might set up Christ's kingdom by bearing

witness to the truth. I long, my beloved, to see you all witness-bearers. If you love the Lord, bear witness to the truth. You must do it personally; you must also do it collectively. Never join any church whose creed you do not entirely and unfeignedly believe, for if you do you act a lie, and are, moreover, a partaker in the error of other men's testimonies. I would not for a moment say anything to retard Christian unity, but there is something before unity, and that is, "truth in the inward parts" and honesty before God. I dare not be a member of a church whose teaching I knew to be false in vital points. I would sooner go to heaven alone than belie my conscience for the sake of company. You may say, "But I protest against the error of my church." Dear friends, how can you consistently protest against it when you profess to agree with it, by being a member of the church which avows it? If you are a minister of a church, you do in effect say before the world, "I believe and teach the doctrines of this church;" and if you go into the pulpit and say you do not believe them, what will people conclude? I leave you to judge that. I saw a church tower the other day, with a clock upon it, which startled me by pointing to half-past ten when I thought it was only nine; I was, however, quite relieved when I saw that another face of the clock indicated a quarter past eight. "Well," thought I, "whatever time it may be, that clock is wrong, for it contradicts itself." So if I hear a man say one thing by his church-membership and another by his private protest, why, whatever may be right, he certainly is not consistent with himself.

Let us bear witness to the truth, since there is great need of doing so just now, for witnessing is in ill repute. The age extols no virtue so much as "liberality," and condemns no vice so fiercely as bigotry, *alias* honesty. If you believe anything and hold it firmly, all the dogs will bark at you. Let them bark: they will have done when they are tired! You are responsible to God, and not to mortal men. Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and he has sent you to do the same; take care that you do it, offend or please; for it is only by this process that the kingdom of Christ is to be set up in the world.

Now, the last thing is this. Our Saviour, having spoken of his kingdom and the way of establishing it, DESCRIBED HIS SUBJECTS: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." That is to say, wherever the Holy Spirit has made a man a lover of truth, he always recognises Christ's voice and yields himself to it. Where are the people who love the truth? Well, we need not enquire long. We need not Diogenes' lantern to find them, they will come to the light; and where is light but in Jesus? Where are those that would not seem to be what they are not? Where are the men who desire to be true in secret and before the Lord? They may be discovered where Christ's people are

discovered ; they will be found listening to those who bear witness to the truth. Those who love pure truth, and know what Christ is, will be sure to fall in love with him and hear his voice. Judge ye, then, this day, brethren and sisters, whether ye are of the truth or not ; for if you love the truth, you know and obey the voice which calls you away from your old sins, from false refuges, from evil habits, from everthing which is not after the Lord's mind. You have heard him in your conscience rebuking you for that of the false which remains in you ; encouraging in you that of the true which is struggling there. I have done, when I have urged on you one or two reflections.

The first is, beloved, Dare we avow ourselves on the side of truth at this hour of its humiliation ? Do we own the royalty of Christ's truth when we see it every day dishonoured. If gospel truth were honoured everywhere, it would be an easy thing to say "I believe it ;" but now, in these days, when it has no honour among men, dare we cleave to it at all costs ? Are you willing to walk with the truth through the mire and through the slough ? Have you the courage to profess unfashionable truth ? Are you willing to believe the truth against which science, falsely so-called, has vented her spleen ? Are you willing to accept the truth although it is said that only the poor and uneducated will receive it ? Are you willing to be the disciple of the Galilean, whose apostles were fishermen ? Verily, verily, I say unto you, in that day in which the truth in the person of Christ shall come forth in all its glory, it shall go ill with those who were ashamed to own it and its Master.

In the next place, if we have heard Christ's voice, do we recognise our life-object ? Do we feel, "For this end were we born, and for this cause came we into the world, that we might bear witness to the truth ?" I do not believe that you, my dear brother, came into the world to be a linendraper, or an auctioneer, and nothing else. I do not believe that God created you, my sister, to be merely and only a sempstress, a nurse, or a housekeeper. Immortal souls were not created for merely mortal ends. For this purpose was I born, that, with my voice in this place, and everywhere else, I might bear witness to the truth. You acknowledge that : then I beg you, each one, to acknowledge that you have a similar mission. "I could not occupy the pulpit," says one. Never mind that : bear witness for the truth where you are, and in your own sphere. O waste no time or energy, but at once testify for Jesus.

And now, last of all, do you own Christ's superlative dignity, beloved ? Do you see what a King, Christ is ? Is he such a King to you as none other could be ? It was but yesterday a prince entered one of our great towns, and they crowded all their streets to welcome him—yet he was but a mortal man. And then at night

they illuminated their city, and made the heavens glow as though the sun had risen before his appointed hour. Yet what had this prince done for them? Loyal subjects were they, and that was the reason of their joy. But O, beloved, we need not ask, "What has Christ done for us?"—we will ask, "What has he not done for us?" Emmanuel, we owe all to thee! Thou art our new creator, our Redeemer from the lowest pit of hell! In thyself resplendent and altogether lovely, thy beauties command our adoration! Thou hast lived for us, thou hast bled for us, thou hast died for us; and thou art preparing a kingdom for us, and thou art coming again to take us to be with thee where thou art! All this commands our love. All hail! all hail! Thou art our King, and we worship thee with all our soul!

Beloved, I beseech you love Christ, and live for him while you can. Work while opportunity serves. While I have been laid aside, and able to do nothing, the great sorrow of my heart has been my inability to do him service. I heard my brethren shouting in the battle-field, and I saw my comrades marching to the fight, and I lay like a wounded soldier in the ditch, and could not stir, save that I breathed a prayer that you might all be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. This was my thought: "Oh, that I had preached better while I could preach, and lived more for the Master while I could serve him!" Don't incur such regrets in the future by present sluggishness, but live now for him who died for you!

If any present in this assembly have never obeyed our King, may they come to trust in him to-night; for he is a tender Saviour, and is willing to receive the biggest and blackest sinner who will come to him. Whosoever trusts in him, will never find him fail; for he will save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. May he bring you to his feet, and reign over you in love. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxv.

OUR LORD'S FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 12TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Pilate saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”—John xviii. 38.

I SHOULD like, if God spares us, to present to you on Sabbath mornings the full story of our Saviour's sufferings. We began last Lord's-day by going with him to the hall of Caiaphas, and it was a sadly solemn time when we beheld the Prince of Peace a prisoner, heard him falsely accused and unjustly condemned, and then saw him abused, till servants and abjects did spit in his face and make a mockery of him. I hope that you will not be wearied with this subject. If so, it will be the fault of the preacher, for the subject is ever full and fresh: or if the preacher be not to blame, there will be something of censure due to his hearers. If we do grow tired of the story of the cross it will be a sad indication of secret soul-sickness, and it will be well to observe the symptom and hasten to the great Physician for healing. To true saints in a healthy condition there is no place more attractive than the place of our Lord's passion, where he accomplished the glorious work of our redemption. They love to linger along that *Via Dolorosa* which leads from Gethsemane to Golgotha; let us linger with them.

When I stand and view my Lord, like the bush in Horeb, burning but not consumed, I hear a voice saying unto me, “The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Nothing is more holy than the person of our divine Master; it is, therefore, well to be with him. The anguish which he endured when he devoted his person as a sacrifice for us is holy too, and so it is well to be with him in his sufferings. His sorrows have a most sanctifying influence upon all who consider them with believing love. I am persuaded that if we lived more in the atmosphere of the cross sin would lose its power, and every grace would flourish. When we draw very near to him and have fellowship with him in his sufferings we raise a hue and cry against the sin which slew him, and resolve to be revenged upon it by departing from it ourselves, and by warring against it whenever we see it in others. The cross is that holy implement with which we make war with sin till it be utterly destroyed. Blessed and holy, then, are the thoughts which are aroused by our great sacrifice.

Nor is it only so; but the medicine which brings us health is in itself a joy.

“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
In the sinner's dying Friend.”

Here is no noise as of them that make merry over their wine, no shout of them that triumph, no song of them that feast; but here is a grave, sweet melody as of hearts that have found rest. At the cross we find a substantial joy, a far-reaching satisfaction, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Here, ye restless ones, is the cure of restlessness: here shall you say, “O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise.” I shall not, therefore, make any excuse, even if for weeks to come I should lead you to the place of dragons where your Lord was sore broken, and help you to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism. May the Spirit of God come upon and open our eyes to read the sacred heart of him whose sorrows are unrivalled,—sorrows borne for love of us.

Let us go to the narrative at once with loving and lowly carefulness. Our Lord was condemned by the chief priests for blasphemy, because he declared himself to be the Son of God, and told them that they should hereafter see him coming in the clouds of heaven to be their judge. Rending his garments, the high priest said, “What need have we of any further witness? Ye have heard his blasphemy.” When the morning light had come, and they had gone through the formality of a set trial by daylight, having really condemned him in the night, they led Jesus away to Pilate. According to tradition, he was led with a rope about his neck, and his hands bound; and I can fully believe in the tradition when I remember the words of Isaiah: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.” It was a strangely sad procession which moved through Jerusalem a little after six in the morning. Those men of the Sanhedrim in all their pomp and power surrounding this one poor victim, whom they were about to deliver to the Gentiles with the one design that he might be put to death! Those wicked men of pride were as the dogs of whom the Psalmist sang when the hind of the morning was his tender theme.

When they came to the house of the Roman governor, they would not themselves enter within its doors. It is said to have been one of the many magnificent palaces which Herod the Great built for himself; the architecture was gorgeous, the floors were inlaid with choice marbles, and all the chambers were richly gilded and furnished with Oriental splendour. Into the great hall these scrupulous hypocrites would not enter because they must by no means be defiled by the touch of a Gentile, for they had already commenced to keep the Passover. So they waited in the courtyard, and Pilate condescended to come out to them and learn the pressing business which brought them there so early in the morning. The Roman governor was proud, and cruel, and abhorred the Jews; but still, knowing their fanaticism and the readiness with which they broke loose at Passover times, he stood at his palace-gate and heard their demands. He soon ascertained that they had brought him a prisoner, evidently a poor man, and in personal

appearance emaciated, weary, and suffering. About him there was a mysterious dignity combined with singular gentleness, and Pilate for this and other reasons evidently took a singular interest in him. Fixing his gaze first upon the extraordinary prisoner, he turned to the angry priests and demanded, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"

The one object of the priests in bringing Jesus to Pilate was to get him put to death; for when Pilate told them to go and judge him according to their law, they replied that they would gladly do so, but that the power of life and death had been taken from them, implying that nothing but his death would content them. They were, however, very anxious at this stage to lay the responsibility of his death upon the Romans, for the fear of the people was still upon them, and if they could secure his death by Pilate, then they might in after days protest that they merely handed him over to the Roman governor and could not foresee that he would be handled so roughly. They had not yet bribed the populace to cry, "Crucify him," and they were willing to be on the safe side should the people make an uproar on his behalf. Humanly speaking, they could have put him to death themselves, for he was entirely in their power, and they frequently forgot the Roman law and slew men in riotous fury, as when they stoned Stephen. They had frequently attempted to stone our Lord himself, so that they were not always so mindful of Roman law. They might have taken his life on this occasion, but they were led by a mysterious impulse to desire that the actual responsibility of the deed should rest on Pilate. Further on they were willing to join with the fickle throng in sharing the guilt of his blood, but as yet they would fain throw it upon others. During their great festivals if they took innocent blood, their hypocrisy made them wish to do it by forms of law and by an alien hand. To do this they must bring an accusation, for no Roman ruler would condemn a man till an accusation had been made.

We shall, this morning, consider *the two accusations* that they brought, and after that we shall hear *the verdict of acquittal* which Pilate gave in the language of the text: "I find in him no fault at all."

I. The first accusation, if you will turn to the chapter and read the thirtieth verse, was that he was A MALEFACTOR. "They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." He was said to be a factor, or doer of that which is evil; a person of such a mischievous life that he ought not to live.

Upon which we remark, first, that *it was a novel charge*. It was hot from their mint; for when he stood before Caiaphas nothing was said of any evil that he had *done*, but only of evil that he had spoken. They charged him with saying this and that, but not with doing any evil deed. The accusation of evil speaking had broken down, and they did not venture upon it a second time, because they knew very well that Pilate did not care what the man had said; all he would attend to would be some actual breach of law by act and deed. The Romans were a practical people, and so when Pilate led our Lord into the audience chamber he said to him, "What hast thou *done*?" He did not say to him, "What hast thou taught or preached?" but, "What hast thou done?" For this reason, the priests brought forward this

newly-invented accusation and totally unfounded charge that he was a bad doer, which might mean little or much, as the hearer chose to interpret it,—malice is seldom specific in its charges. The accusation of being a malefactor grew out of their malevolence, and not out of any action of our Lord's perfect life. One is surprised that even hate should be so blind as to assail his perfections. Whatever men may think of our Lord as a teacher, candour demands that they admire his example and award it the highest meed of honour.

Observe, the priests herein brought against our Lord *a charge which they did not attempt to sustain*. How craftily they evaded the task of supplying proof! They brought no witnesses, their suborned perjurers were left behind; they even forbore from specific charges, but the general statement that he was a malefactor was supported only by their reputation. "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee," as much as to say, "You must take it for granted that he is guilty, or we would not say so. Here is our high priest: can it be supposed that such a gem of an individual would bring a false accusation? We also are the chief priests and the scribes, and teachers of Israel: can it be imagined that persons of our station and sanctity could by any possibility have brought an innocent person before you to be condemned!" This style of argument I have heard even in these days: we are expected to give up the faith because scientists condemn it, and they are such eminent persons that we ought to accept their dicta without further delay. I confess I am not prepared to accept their infallibility any more than that which hails from Rome. The Roman governor was not to be overridden by priests, neither are we to be led by the nose by pretendedly learned men. "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." Oh, the hypocrisy of this speech! They had tried to bring witnesses, and no witness had been found. They had suborned false witnesses, but these had so differed in their testimony that the whole thing broke down. They, therefore, go upon another tack, and put their own names at the back of the indictment, as if that were quite enough, and enquiry need go no further. I think I see the scornful glance of Pilate as he bade them judge him themselves if that was their style of justice; as for him, he must hear an accusation or dismiss them to do their own pleasure if they dare. He knew that through envy they had brought Jesus unto him, and he loathed the hypocrites as he heard the wretched syllables sibillating from their sanctimonious lips.

They could not have sustained the charge, and so far they were wise in not attempting the impossible. They might be foolhardy enough to wrest his words, but they hesitated before the task of attacking his deeds. Before his awful holiness they were for the moment out of heart, and knew not what slander to invent. O Lord, we marvel that any men should find fault with thee, for thou art altogether lovely, and there is in thee no spot for falsehood to light upon. But I want to call your attention to this remarkable fact, that although this charge of being a malefactor was a grievous one, a trumped up one, and unsustained by any evidence, yet *it was never denied by the Lord Jesus Christ*. It was useless to deny it before the priests. He had already challenged them to find fault with his life, saying, "I spake openly to the

world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." His appeal had been unavailing, for it was as useless to argue with them as for a lamb to enter into controversy with a pack of wolves eager to devour. But there might have been some use, one would think, in his answering to Pilate, for Pilate was evidently very favourably impressed with his prisoner; and if the Saviour had deigned to give a full account of his life, and to prove that instead of being a malefactor he had gone about doing good, might he not have escaped? The answer is this: our Lord had come on earth on purpose to be the substitute for guilty men, and so when he was called a malefactor, although it was not a truthful charge, yet he patiently bore the shame of it, as it is written, "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was willing to stand in the transgressor's place, and when they put him there he did not stir from it. "He is dumb; he openeth not his mouth." He says nothing because, though in him is no sin, he has taken our sin upon himself. The question that Pilate put, "What hast thou done?" was one which Jesus might have grandly answered—"What have I done? I have fed the hungry, I have healed the sick, I have raised the fallen, I have restored the dead. What have I done? I have lived a self-sacrificing life, caring nothing for myself or my own honour. I have been the vindicator of God and the friend of man. What have I done? Certainly nothing wherefore they could put me to death, but everything why they should accept me as their Leader and their Saviour." We hear not a word of this. The exculpation would have been complete, but it was not spoken. He might have baffled his enemies as he had aforetime vanquished those who came to take him, so that they went back to their masters, saying, "Never man spake like this man." He might have cleared himself before the Roman procurator and by coming forth in triumph, he might have escaped from their teeth; but because he would stand in our stead, therefore when men imagined mischievous things against him he was as a deaf man, and as a dumb man he opened not his mouth. Let us adore and bless him for his gracious condescension, his matchless grace in standing in our stead.

Yet further, our Lord willed that by being counted as a transgressor by Pilate he might die the death appointed for malefactors by the Roman law. If the Jews had put our Lord to death for blasphemy, it would have been by stoning; but then, none of the prophecies that went before concerning the Messiah spoke of his being dashed to the ground by stones. The death ordained for him was crucifixion. John says in the eighteenth chapter at the thirty-second verse, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die." What was that saying? Is it not the saying in the twelfth chapter of John's gospel at the thirty-second verse, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." Being lifted up from the earth on the cross was a death which could only come from the Romans; the Jews, as I have said before, executed men by stoning: therefore he must be condemned by the Romans that his own words may be fulfilled. He had spoken

even more expressly in a passage recorded by Matthew, in the twentieth chapter at the seventeenth verse, where he had declared how he should die. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." In order that the word which he had spoken might be fulfilled, our blessed Master refused to plead before Pilate anything in answer to the question, "What hast thou done?" He stands as a transgressor, to die a transgressor's death; wherefore for ever blessed be his adorable name for his voluntary endurance of penalty for our sakes.

When I think of that word "malefactor," another word leaps to my lips directly. Call him not malefactor, but **BENEFACTOR**. What a benefactor must he be who in order to benefit us allows himself to be branded as a "malefactor"! Only think that he who at this moment sits in the centre of adoring angels should have been called "malefactor;" that he from whose inexhaustible store of goodness all the saints in heaven and on earth are fed should yet be called "malefactor;" that he who never thought of harm to men, but whose very soul is love, whose every word and thought has been kindness towards this fallen race, should yet be called "malefactor." O earth, how couldst thou bear so grave a lie against the infinite goodness of the Son of God! And yet, for ever blessed be his name, he does not hurl back the charge, for that would have been to ruin us. He meekly bears the scandal for our sakes.

Should not this sweeten every title of reproach that can ever fall upon us? What if they call us ill names! They called the Master of the home "malefactor," can they call us anything worse? Shall we look for honour where our Captain found nothing but shame? Wherefore let it be our glory to bear shame and reproach for Jesus' sake. So much for the first accusation.

II. Secondly, when the priests and scribes found that merely calling him a malefactor was not sufficient, these wretched men changed their tactics, and, according to Luke, they charged him with setting up to be **A KING**. They said that he wrought sedition, that he forbade to pay tribute unto Cæsar, and made himself out to be a king. These were three great lies, for Jesus had preached peace, and not sedition; his example was submission, not rebellion; his spirit was that of a servant, not that of a turbulent party leader. He had never said that men were not to pay tribute to Cæsar; on the contrary, he had said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and submitted himself to every ordinance of authority. He had never in their sense set himself up to be a king; if he had done so, many who were now his accusers might have been his partisans. The charge against Jesus of setting up to be a king in the sense in which they desired Pilate to understand them *was utterly false*, for when the multitude had been fed, they would have taken him and made him a king, but he hid himself. Nay, so far from wishing to be a king, when one said to him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me," he said, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you." He

put aside any approach to interference with the reigning powers. His accusers must have known that if he had willed he had power at his back to have supported his claims, even as he said to Pilate, that, if he had been a king of a worldly dominion, his servants would have fought for him. His followers had been brave and courageous, and enthusiastic, and they would, no doubt, have given no end of trouble both to the Jews and to the Romans if their leader had claimed a temporal sovereignty. But our Lord had made Peter put up his sword into its sheath, and healed the wound which he had given. All his life long he had preached peace and love, and a kingdom which is righteousness and peace. He was no rival to Cæsar, and they knew it.

And please to notice that this charge of Christ being a king *did not come from the governing power*. When Pilate asked our Lord, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" our Saviour wisely replied, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did another tell thee it of me? Have you any reason to think that I am a leader of sedition? As the governor of this nation you have to watch carefully, for the people are seditious; have you ever seen or heard anything of me that looks like an attack on your authority? Have you anything of your own knowledge that would lead you to bring a charge against me?" Pilate, knowing nothing whatever against him, and indeed scorning the idea that he knew anything about the Jewish people, whom he detested, replied haughtily, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and your own rulers have brought this charge against you, not I." A great point was gained when Pilate said this; the charge was shown to be a mere invention, since the eagle eye of the Roman procurator had never seen the slightest ground for it.

It was a frivolous charge on the very face of it. How could that harmless, forsaken man be a peril to Cæsar? What had the Roman legions to fear from that solitary sufferer? He was too meek and pure to threaten warfare and strife in the domain of Tiberius. Look at him, and realize the absurdity of the situation. Moreover, it would seem a strange thing that the Jewish people should bring before the Roman governor their own king. Is this the way that subjects treat their monarchs? If he be a leader of sedition he does not seem to have succeeded with his countrymen, for the heads of the people are seeking his death. There could be upon the face of it no chance of danger whatever from rebellion which was so summarily put down by the Jews themselves. If they had not been besotted by their rage, they would themselves have shrunk from so absurd a position.

But yet I want you to note very carefully that *the Lord never denied this charge* in the sense in which he chose to understand it. He first explained what he meant by his being a king, and when he had explained it then he openly confessed that it was even so.

First, I say, *he explained what he meant by being a king*, and notice carefully that he did not explain it away. He said, "My kingdom," and also when Pilate said, "Art thou a king then?" he said, "Thou sayest that I am a king." He was there and then a real king, and he avowed it without reserve. We are constantly told that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom, and this saying is true; but I would have you take heed that you do not spirit away his kingdom as if it

were only a pious dream. Spiritual or not, the kingdom of Christ on earth is real and powerful. It is real none the less, but all the more, because it may fitly be called spiritual. Jesus is even now a king. He said, "I am a king." Some say that his kingdom is not yet, but is reserved for the latter days; but I aver that he is a king to-day, and that even now Jehovah hath set him as king upon the holy hill of Zion. I bless God that he hath translated us "Into the kingdom of his dear Son." "Thou art the king of glory, O Christ." When I say, "Thy kingdom come," I do not mean that it may begin to be set up on earth, but that it may continue to be set up in new places, may be extended and grow, for Jesus has at this very moment a kingdom upon the face of the earth, and they that know the truth belong to it, and recognise him as the royal witness by whom the kingdom of truth has been founded and maintained. You remember the remarkable saying which is attributed to Napoleon Buonaparte in his later days at St. Helena: "I have founded a kingdom by force, and it has passed away; but Jesus founded his empire upon love, and therefore it will last for ever." Verily, Napoleon spoke the truth—Jesus, the right royal Jesus, is Master of innumerable hearts to-day. The world knoweth him not, but yet he has a kingdom in it which shall ere long break in pieces all other kingdoms. True and loyal hearts are to be found among the sons of men, and in them his name still wakes enthusiasm, so that for him they are prepared to live and die. Our Lord is every inch a king, he has his throne of grace, has his sceptre of truth, his officers who, like himself, witness to the truth, and his armies of warriors who wrestle not with flesh and blood, and use no carnal weapons, but yet go forth conquering and to conquer. Our Lord has his palace wherein he dwells, his chariot in which he rides, his revenues, though they be not treasures of gold and silver, and his proclamations, which are law in his church. His reigning power affects the destiny of the world at this present moment far more than the counsels of the five great powers: by the preaching of the truth his servants shape the ages, and set up and cast down the thrones of earth. There is no prince so powerful as Jesus, and no empire so mighty as the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord also said that his kingdom came not from this world; for that, I take it, is the more correct translation of the passage: "My kingdom is not of this world." It came not from this world; it is a substantial kingdom, but it did not spring from the same sources as the kingdoms of the world, neither is it supported, maintained, or increased by the same power as that which the kingdoms of the world depend upon. Christ's kingdom does not depend upon the force of arms: he would have his followers lay these weapons all aside. Christ's kingdom does not depend, as earthly kingdoms too often do, upon craft, policy, and duplicity. It used to be said that an ambassador was a gentleman who was sent abroad to lie for the good of his country, and I fear it might still describe full many an ambassador. What is the science of diplomacy but the art of deceit? When statesmen are thoroughly honest, and are guided by principle, they are generally suspected, and an outcry is raised that the interests of the country will be sacrificed. But there is no diplomacy in Christ's rule; everything like crooked policy is of the devil, and not of Christ. He comes to

bear witness to the truth, and it is by the truth, not by force nor by craft, that his throne is established among the sons of men, and therefore it is not from this world.

To be a king is indeed so little wrong in the sight of Jesus that it is the ultimate purpose of his coming to earth. He came to save men, did he not? Yes, but still he says, "For this purpose was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"; which is another way of saying, "that I might be a king." This is his ultimatum. Christ is a teacher that he may be a king; Christ is an exemplar that he may be a king; Christ is a Saviour that he may be a king; this is the great end and object that he hath in his life, his death, his resurrection, and his second coming,—that he may set up a kingdom among the sons of men to the glory of God. Oh that this great object of his mission might be furthered in our time, and consummated speedily in the long-promised age of gold.

The Master tells us that the main force and power of his kingdom lies in the truth. He came to be a King, but where is his sceptre? The truth. Where is his sword? It cometh out of his mouth: he bears witness to the truth. Where are his soldiers? They are men of truth. Jesus Christ leads on a band of whom he says, "And ye are my witnesses." His kingdom consists in witnessing to the truth, and who are they that become his subjects? Why, those that are of the truth, men who, hearing the truth, know the joyful sound and accept it, and feel its power.

Dear hearers, let each one of us ask himself, "Do I belong to his kingdom? Will I have this man to reign over me? Do I desire to get rid of everything in myself that is not true? Am I anxious to put down around me everything that is false and wicked? Do I wish to uphold God's laws, for they are truth? Do I desire to spread the principles of love and kindness, for they are truth? Am I willing to learn, and so become the disciple of the greatest of all teachers, and then, am I willing to bear witness to what I have learned, and so spread the sway of truth? If so, then I am of his kingdom. I know that I address many who desire in their hearts to-day that Christ and his truth may triumph, and they little mind what becomes of themselves. Let but his gospel spread and the principles of righteousness prevail; and as for us, let us live or die, it shall be a matter of small concern. O King, live for ever, and we shall find our life in thy life, and glory in promoting thy glory, world without end. Such a spirit is of the truth, and we may assure ourselves that Jesus is our King.

Our Lord having explained his meaning, confessed that he was a King. This is that to which Paul refers when he says, "The Lord Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." He did not draw back and say, "I am no King." Pilate might have delivered him then; but he spake boldly concerning his blessed, mysterious, and wonderful kingdom, and therefore it was not possible that he should be set free. This, indeed, was his accusation written over his cross, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

Poor Pilate, he did not understand our Lord, even as the men of this world understand not the kingdom of Christ. He said to him, "What is truth?" and without waiting for a reply he went out to the Jews.

Ah, brethren, let us never ourselves deny that Jesus is a king; but we shall deny it if we do not live according to his bidding. Oh you that claim to be Christ's, but do not live according to Christ's laws, you practically deny that he is a king. I dread the men who say, "We believe, and therefore we are saved," and then do not live in holiness; for these divide our Lord's offices, setting up his priesthood and denying his kingship. Half a Christ is no Christ—a Christ who is a priest but never a king is not the Christ of God. Oh brethren, live as those who feel that every word of Jesus is law, and that you must do what he bids you, as he bids you, and because he bids you; and so let all men know that unto you Jesus is both Lord and God.

III. I conclude by noticing THE ACQUITTAL which Pilate gave to our Lord Jesus. He had heard the charge of being a malefactor, to which the prisoner pleaded nothing; he had heard the charge of his being a king, which the prisoner had most satisfactorily explained; and now Pilate coming out to the people said, "I find in him no fault at all." Pilate, thou hast well spoken. Thy verdict is typical of the verdict of all who have ever *examined* Christ. Some have examined him with an unfriendly eye, but in proportion as they have been candid in the observation of facts, they have been struck with his life and spirit. It is a very rare thing to hear even the infidel rail at the character of Jesus; in fact, some of the foremost sceptics as to our Lord's teaching have been remarkably impressed with admiration of his life. No character like that of Jesus is to be seen in history, nay not even in romance. If anyone says the four gospel are forgeries, let him try to write a fifth, which shall be like the other four. Why, you cannot add an incident to the life of Christ; its details are unique; the fancy cannot imagine a fresh incident which could be safely joined on to that which is recorded. Every critic would cry out, "This is not genuine." The life of Jesus is a roll of cloth of gold, of the manufacture of which the art is utterly lost. His spotless character stands alone and by itself, and all true critics are compelled to say they find no fault at all in him.

Let me add that this verdict of Pilate is the verdict of all that have ever *associated* with Christ. One disciple who was with Christ betrayed him, but he spoke nothing against him. Nay, the last witness of Judas before he hanged himself was this, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." If there had been a fault in Jesus, the traitor would have spied it out; his unquiet conscience would have been glad enough to find therein a sedative, but even he was compelled to say, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" is the challenge of Jesus, to which there is no reply.

Some of us have *lived with Christ spiritually*. In the course of his providence he has brought some of us very low by sickness, or by bereavement, or loss. Everyone saved by our Lord has come under the discipline of his house, for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Now, what is the verdict of all here present who know Jesus, our king? For my part, I find no fault at all in him: He is everything that is lovely. He is all my salvation and all my desire. Do you not think that out of the millions of Christians who have lived hoping in Christ some one

would have told us if it is his habit to disappoint his people? Out of so many believers who dwell with him surely some one or other of them, when they came to die, would have told us if he is not all that he professes to be. Would not some one or other have confessed, "I trusted in Christ and he has not delivered me; it is all a delusion"? Surely, out of the many we have seen depart we should have found some one or two that would have let out the secret, and have said, "He is a deceiver. He cannot save, he cannot help, he cannot deliver." But never one dying believer throughout the ages has spoken ill of him, but all have said, "We find no fault at all in him."

Mark you, that will be the verdict of everyone among you all. If any of you reject Christ, when you shall stand at his judgment-seat to be condemned because you believe not on him, and when that withering word, "Depart, ye cursed!" shall consign you to your everlasting portion, you shall then be obliged to say, "I find no fault at all *in him*." There was no failure in his blood, the failure was in my want of faith; no failure in his Spirit—the failure was in my obstinate will; no failure in his promise—the failure was that I would not receive him; there was no fault at all in him. He never spurned me. He never refused to hear my prayers. If my Sabbaths were wasted, it was no fault of his; if I defied the gospel, it was no fault of his; if I have perished, my blood is at my own door. I find no fault at all in him." From all parts of creation shall go up one general attestation to his perfection. Heaven and earth and hell shall all join the common verdict, "We find no fault at all in him."

I will send you away when I give you three practical words to think of. The first is this:—Beware of an external religion, for the men that called Jesus malefactor and falsely accused him were very religious people, and would not go into Pilate's hall for fear of polluting themselves. They were strong in rituals, but weak in morals. None are so inveterate against the principles of the gospel as those whose religion consists in form and ceremony but does not affect their hearts. I charge you rend your hearts and not your garments. Follow Christ spiritually; follow Christ in your very souls, or else sacraments will be your ruin, and even in trying to keep yourselves from ceremonial defilement you will be defiling yourselves with hypocrisy.

The next thing is to charge you, dear friends, and to charge myself also, to shun all proud worldliness like that of Pilate. Pilate treats the whole matter cavalierly; he is a proud and haughty Roman; he hates the people whom he governs, and though he has a conscience, and at the first he shows a tenderness towards his prisoner, yet his chief end and aim was to keep his office and amass money, and therefore innocent blood must be spilt. He must please the Jews, even if he murder the "Just One." This selfish worldliness in which a man makes his gold and himself his god always treats religion with contempt. The man minds the main chance, and sneeringly cries, "What is truth?" He knows what money is and what power is, but what is truth? It is a dream, a folly to him, and he despises it. There are persons around us now, clever time-serving men, with grand notions of their own abilities, and to them Jesus and his gospel are matters for old women, servant girls, and what they call a Puritan crew. Such topics

are not for gentlemen of thought, culture, and understanding, like their high and mighty selves. "What is truth?" say they. They are rather favourably inclined to religion, that is to say, they do not persecute, but they despise, which in some respects is worse. They say, "We are agnostics; we have no particular views; we are large-hearted, and let every man think as he chooses, but still there is nothing in it; it is all matter of opinion. One man says this is the truth, and another says that is the truth, and how are we to know? The fact is, there is no such thing as fixed truth at all.

**"For differing creeds let graceless zealots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."**

This is this great man's conclusion of the matter, and yet it so happens that this gentleman's life is not in the right at all, and therefore on his own showing he has not much joy of his pretty rhyme. I think I see him as he turns on his heel with, "What is truth?" Let him be a warning to you. Come not near to such arrogant trifling. Be always foolish enough to be willing to judge candidly. Be so little clever as to be willing still to learn. Be so little certain of your own infallibility that you will at least hear reason, and will enquire whether these things be so. Alas, I fear that through worldly pride many will have it said of them, as it is said of the Roman governor every day in the creed: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate." Oh, how many times has Christ suffered under just such people as Pontius Pilate!

Last of all, let us all submit ourselves to Jesus our King. Wayworn and weary, emaciated and broken down, with his face more marred than that of any man, yet let us bow before him and say, "All hail, thou King of the Jews. Thou art our King for ever and ever." If we are willing thus to acknowledge him as our King in his shame and derision, he will by-and-by honour us when he cometh in the glory of the Father, and all his holy angels with him. Then shall he cause it to be seen that he hath made us who follow him to be kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xviii. 28—40;
Psalm ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 431, 360.

BARABBAS PREFERRED TO JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16TH, 1864, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."—John xviii. 40.

THE custom of delivering a prisoner upon the day of the passover was intended no doubt as an act of grace on the part of the Roman authorities towards the Jews, and by the Jews it may have been accepted as a significant compliment to their passover. Since on that day they themselves were delivered out of the land of Egypt, they may have thought it to be most fitting that some imprisoned person should obtain his liberty. There was no warrant however in Scripture for this, it was never commanded by God, and it must have had a very injurious effect upon public justice, that the ruling authority should discharge a criminal, some one quite irrespective of his crimes or of his repentance; letting him loose upon society, simply and only because a certain day must be celebrated in a peculiar manner. Since some one prisoner must be delivered on the paschal day, Pilate thinks that he has now an opportunity of allowing the Saviour to escape without at all compromising his character with the authorities at Rome. He asks the people which of the two they will prefer, a notorious thief then in custody, or the Saviour. It is probable that Barabbas had been up, till that moment, obnoxious to the crowd; and yet, notwithstanding his former unpopularity—the multitude, instigated by the priests, forget all his faults, and prefer him to the Saviour. Who Barabbas was, we cannot exactly tell. His name, as you in a moment will understand, even if you have not the slightest acquaintance with Hebrew, signifies "his father's son," "*Bar*" signifying "son," as when Peter is called Simon Bar-jonas, son of Jonas; the other part of his name "*Abbas*," signifying "father"—"*abbas*" being the word which we use in our filial aspirations, "Abba Father." Barabbas, then, is the "son of his father;" and some mysticists think that there is an imputation here, that he was particularly and specially a son of Satan. Others conjecture that it was an endearing name, and was given him because he was his father's darling, an indulged child; his father's boy, as we say; and these writers add that indulged children often turn out to be imitators of Barabbas, and are the most likely persons to become injurious to their country, griefs to their parents, and curses to all

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about them. If it be so, taken in connection with the case of Absalom, and especially of Eli's sons, it is a warning to parents that they err not in excessive indulgence of their children. Barabbas appears to have committed three crimes at the least: he was imprisoned for murder, for sedition, and for felony—a sorry combination of offences, certainly; we may well pity the sire of such a son. This wretch is brought out and set in competition with Christ. The multitude are appealed to. Pilate thinks that from the sense of shame they really cannot possibly prefer Barabbas; but they are so bloodthirsty against the Saviour, and are so moved by the priests, that with one consent—there does not appear to have been a single objecting voice, nor one hand held up to the contrary—with a marvellous unanimity of vice, they cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas," though they must have known, since he was a *notable* well-known offender, that Barabbas was a murderer, a felon, and a traitor.

This fact is very significant. There is more teaching in it than at first sight we might imagine. Have we not here, first of all, in this act of the deliverance of the sinner and the binding of the innocent, a sort of type of that great work which is accomplished by the death of our Saviour? You and I may fairly take our stand by the side of Barabbas. We have robbed God of his glory; we have been seditious traitors against the government of heaven: if he who hateth his brother be a murderer, we also have been guilty of that sin. Here we stand before the judgment-seat; the Prince of Life is bound for us and we are suffered to go free. The Lord delivers us and acquits us, while the Saviour, without spot or blemish, or shadow of a fault, is led forth to crucifixion. Two birds were taken in the rite of the cleansing of a leper. The one bird was killed, and its blood was poured into a basin; the other bird was dipped in this blood, and then, with its wings all crimson, it was set free to fly into the open field. The bird slain well pictures the Saviour, and every soul that has by faith been dipped in his blood, flies upward towards heaven singing sweetly in joyous liberty, owing its life and its liberty entirely to him who was slain. It comes to this, Barabbas must die or Christ must die; you the sinner must perish, or Christ Immanuel, the Immaculate, must die. He dies that we may be delivered. Oh! have we all a participation in such a deliverance to-day? and though we have been robbers, traitors, and murderers yet we can rejoice that Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us?

The transaction has yet another voice. This episode in the Saviour's history shows that in the judgment of the people, Jesus Christ was a greater offender than Barabbas; and, for once, I may venture to say, that *vox populi* (the voice of the people), which in itself was a most infamous injustice, if it be read in the light of the imputation of our sins to Christ, was *vox Dei* (the voice of God). Christ, as he stood covered with his people's sins, had more sin laid upon him than that which rested upon Barabbas. In him was no sin; he was altogether incapable of becoming a sinner: holy, harmless, and undefiled is Christ Jesus, but he takes the whole load of his people's guilt upon himself by imputation, and as Jehovah looks upon him, he sees more guilt lying upon the Saviour, than even upon this atrocious sinner, Barabbas. Barabbas goes free—innocent—in comparison with the tremendous weight which

rests upon the Saviour. Think, beloved, then, how low your Lord and Master stooped to be thus *numbered with the transgressors*. Watts has put it strongly, but, I think, none too strongly—

“His honour and his breath
Were taken both away,
Join'd with the wicked in his death,
And made as vile as they.”

He was so in the estimation of the people, and before the bar of justice, for the sins of the whole company of the faithful were made to meet upon him. “The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” What that iniquity must have been, no heart can conceive, much less can any tongue tell. Measure it by the griefs he bore, and then, if you can guess what these were, you can form some idea of what must have been the guilt which sunk him lower before the bar of justice than even Barabbas himself. Oh! what condescension is here! The just One dies for the unjust. He bears the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Yet, again, there seems to me to be a third lesson, before I come to that which I want to enforce from the text. Our Saviour knew that his disciples would in all ages be hated by the world far more than outward sinners. Full often the world has been more willing to put up with murderers, thieves, and drunkards, than with Christians; and it has fallen to the lot of some of the best and most holy of men to be so slandered and abused that their names have been cast out as evil, scarcely worthy to be written in the same list with criminals. Now, Christ has sanctified these sufferings of his people from the slander of their enemies, by bearing just such sufferings himself, so that, my brethren, if you or I should find ourselves charged with crimes which we abhor, if our heart should be ready to burst under the accumulation of slanderous venom, let us lift up our head and feel that in all this we have a comrade who has true fellowship with us, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who was rejected when Barabbas was selected. Expect no better treatment than your Master. Remember that the disciple is not above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they call them of his household; and if they prefer the murderer to Christ, the day may not be distant when they will prefer even a murderer to you.

These things seem to me to lie upon the surface; I now come to our more immediate subject. First, we shall consider *the sin as it stands in the Evangelical history*; secondly, we shall observe that *this is the sin of the whole world*; thirdly, that *this sin we ourselves were guilty of before conversion*; and fourthly, that *this is, we fear, the sin of very many persons who are here this morning*: we shall talk with them and expostulate, praying that the Spirit of God may change their hearts and lead them to accept the Saviour.

I. A few minutes may be profitably spent in CONSIDERING, THEN, THE SIN AS WE FIND IT IN THIS HISTORY.

They preferred Barabbas to Christ. The sin will be more clearly seen if we remember that *the Saviour had done no ill*. No law, either of God or man, had he broken. He might truly have used the words of Samuel—“Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken?”

or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." Out of that whole assembled crowd there was not one who would have had the presumption to accuse the Saviour of having done him damage. So far from this, they could but acknowledge that *he had even conferred great temporal blessings upon them.* O ravening multitude, has he not fed you when you were hungry? Did he not multiply the loaves and fishes for you? Did he not heal your lepers with his touch? cast out devils from your sons and daughters? raise up you paralytics? give sight to your blind, and open the ears of your deaf? For which of these good works do ye conspire to kill him? Among that assembled multitude, there were doubtless some who owed to him priceless boons, and yet, though all of them his debtors if they had known it, they clamour against him as though he were the worst trouble of their lives, a pest and a pestilence to the place where he dwelt. *Was it his teaching that they complained of?* Wherein did his teaching offend against morality? Wherein against the best interests of man? If you observe the teaching of Christ there was never any like it, even judged of by how far it would subserve human welfare. Here was the sum and substance of his doctrine, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." His precepts were of the mildest form. Did he bid them draw the sword and expel the Roman, or ride on in a ruthless career of carnage, and rapine? Did he stimulate them to let loose their unbridled passions? Did he tell them to seek first of all their own advantage and not to care for their neighbour's weal? Nay, every righteous state must own him to be its best pillar, and the commonwealth of manhood must acknowledge him to be its conservator; and yet, for all this, there they are, hounded on by their priests, seeking his blood, and crying, "Let him be crucified! let him be crucified!" *His whole intent evidently was their good.* What did he preach for? No selfish motive could have been urged. Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. The charity of a few of his disciples alone kept him from absolute starvation. Cold mountains, and the midnight air, witnessed the fervour of his lonely prayers for the multitudes who now are hating him. He lived for others: they could see this; they could not have observed him during the three years of his ministry without saying, "Never lived there such an unselfish soul as this;" they must have known, the most of them, and the rest might have known, had they enquired ever so little, that he had no object whatever in being here on earth, except that of seeking the good of men. For which of these things do they clamour that he may be crucified? For which of his good works, for which of his generous words, for which of his holy deeds will they fasten his hands to the wood, and his feet to the tree? With unreasonable hatred, with senseless cruelty, they only answer to the question of Pilate, "Why, what evil hath he done?" "Let him be crucified! let him be crucified!" The true reason of their hate, no doubt, lay in the natural hatred of all men to perfect goodness. Man feels that the presence of goodness is a silent witness against his own sin, and therefore he longs to get rid of it. To be too holy in the judgment of men is a great crime, for it rebukes their sin. If the holy man has not the power of words, yet his life is one loud

witness-bearing for God against the sins of his creatures. This inconvenient protesting led the wicked to desire the death of the holy and just One. Besides, the priests were at their backs. It is a sad and lamentable thing, but it is often the case that the people are better than their religious teachers. At the present moment the laity of the Church of England, as a whole, have honest consciences, and would have their Prayer Book revised to-morrow if their voices could be heard. But their clerics care far too little about truth, and are not very particular how they swear, or with whom they associate. So long as their Church can be kept together, Father Ignatius shall be heard in their assemblies, although Christ's call to the Church to purify herself, awakens only resentment and ill-will. No matter that the throats of certain clergymen were exercised in hissing for a moment at the apparition of the bold Anglican monk, he is one of themselves, a brother of their own order, and their Church is responsible for all that he does. Let them come out and separate themselves, and then we shall know that they abhor this modern popery; but so long as they sit in the same assembly and are members of the same Church, the sin is theirs, and we shall not cease to denounce both it and them. If Evangelical clergymen remain in communion with Papists, now that they come out in their full colours, I will cease to say that they violate their consciences, but I shall doubt whether they have any consciences at all. Brethren, it is still the case that the people are better than their teachers. This people would not have crucified Christ had not the clergy of the day, the priests, the endowed ministers, cried out, "Let him be crucified!" He was the Dissenter, the heretic, schismatic, the troubler in Israel. He it was who cried aloud against the faults of their Establishment. He it was who could not be put down, the *ignorant* man from Galilee, who would continue to clamour against them, the mischief-maker, and therefore "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!" Anything is good enough for the man who talks about reform, and advocates changes in established rules." No doubt bribery also was used in this case. Had not Rabbi Simon paid the multitude? Was there not a hope of some feast after the passover was over to those who would use their throats against the Saviour? Beside, there was the multitude going that way; and so if any had compassion they held their tongue. Often they say that "Discretion is the better part of valour;" and truly there must be many valorous men, for they have much of valour's better part, discretion. If they did not join in the shout, yet at least they would not incommode the others, and so there was but one cry, "Away with him! away with him! It is not fit that he should live." What concentrated scorn there is this fortieth verse. It is not "this Jesus," they would not foul their mouths with his name, but this *yellow*—"this devil," if you will. To Barabbas they give the respect of mentioning his name; but "this—" whom they hate so much, they will not even stoop to mention. We have looked, then, at this great sin as it stands in the history.

II. But now let us look, in the second place, AT THIS INCIDENT AS SETTING FORTH THE SIN WHICH HAS BEEN THE GUILT OF THE WORLD IN ALL AGES, AND WHICH IS THE WORLD'S GUILT NOW.

When the apostles went forth to preach the gospel, and the truth

had spread through many countries, there were severe edicts passed by the Roman Emperors. Against whom were these edicts framed? Against the foul offenders of that day? It is well known that the whole Roman Empire was infested with vices such as the cheek of modesty would blush to hear named. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a most graphic picture of the state of society throughout the entire Roman dominions. When severe laws were framed, why were they not proclaimed against these atrocious vices? It is scarcely fit that men should go unpunished who are guilty of crimes such as the apostle Paul has mentioned, but I find no edicts against these things—I find that they were borne with and scarcely mentioned with censure; but burning, dragging at the heels of wild horses, the sword, imprisonment, tortures of every kind, were used against whom think you? Against the innocent, humble followers of Christ, who, so far from defending themselves, were willing to suffer all these things, and presented themselves like sheep at the shambles, willing to endure the butcher's knife. The cry of the world, under the persecutions of Imperial Rome, was "Not Christ, but Sodomites, and murderers, and thieves—we will bear with any of these, but not with Christ; away with his followers from the earth." Then the world changed its tactics; it became nominally Christian, and Antichrist came forth in all its blasphemous glory. The Pope of Rome put on the triple crown, and called himself the Vicar of Christ; then came in the abomination of the worship of saints, angels, images, and pictures; then came the mass, and I know not what, of detestable error; and what did the world say? "Popery for ever!" Down went every knee, and every head bowed before the sovereign representative of Peter at Rome. The Church of Rome was equal in sin to Barabbas; nay, I do but compliment Barabbas when I mention him in the same breath with many of the popes, for their character was foul and black right through and through, till even those who superstitiously looked upon them as infallible in their office, could not defend their personal characters. The world chose the harlot of Rome, and she who was drunk with the wine of her abominations had every eye to gaze upon her with admiration, while Christ's gospel was forgotten, buried in a few old books, and almost extinguished in darkness. Since that day the world has changed its tactics yet again; in many parts of the earth Protestantism is openly acknowledged, and the gospel is preached, but what then? Then comes in Satan, and another Barabbas, the Barabbas of mere ceremonialism, and mere attendance at a place of worship is set up. "Yes, we are orthodox; so orthodox, so sound. Yes, we are religious, strictly religious; we attend our meeting-house, or go to our Church. We are never absent. We attend every form, but we have no vital godliness; we have not been born again; we have not passed from death unto life." However, this will do; so long as we are as good as our neighbours, and keep the outward rite, the inward does not matter. This which is a foul robbery of God's glory, this which murders men's souls, is the Barabbas of the present age. An outward name to live is set up, and is received by those who are dead; and many of you now present are quite easy and content, though you have never felt the quickening Spirit of God: though you have never been washed in the atoning blood, yet you are satisfied because you take a seat in some place of worship; you give

your guinea, your donation to an hospital, or your subscription to a good object, forgetting and not caring to remember that all the making clean of the outside of the cup and the platter will never avail, unless the inward nature be renewed by the Spirit of the living God. This is the great Barabbas of the present age, and men prefer it before the Saviour.

That this is true, that the world really loves sin better than Christ, I think I could prove clearly enough by one simple fact. You have observed sometimes Christian men inconsistent, have you not? The inconsistency was nothing very great, if you had judged them according to ordinary rules of conduct. But you are well aware that a worldly man might commit any sin he liked, without much censure; but if the Christian man commits ever so little, then hands are held up, and the whole world cries, "Shame!" I do not want to have that altered, but I do want just to say this: "There is Mr. So-and-So, who is known to live a fast, wicked, gay life; well, I do not see that he is universally avoided and reprobated, but on the contrary, he is tolerated by most, and admired by some." But suppose a Christian man, a well-known professor, to have committed some fault which, compared with this, were not worth mentioning, and what is done? "Oh! publish it! publish it! Have you heard what Mr. So-and-So did? Have you heard of this hypocrite's transgression?" "Well, what was it?" You look at it: "Well, it is wrong, it is very wrong, but compared with what you say about it is nothing at all." The world therefore shows by the difference between the way in which it judges the professedly religious man, and that with which it judges its own, that it really can tolerate the most abandoned, but cannot tolerate the Christian. Of course, the Christian never will be altogether free from imperfections; the world's enmity is not against the Christian's imperfections evidently, because they will tolerate greater imperfections in others; the objection must therefore be against the man, against the profession which he has taken up, and the course which he desires to follow. Watch carefully, beloved, that ye give them no opportunity; but when ye see that the slightest mistake is laid hold of and exaggerated, in this you see a clear evidence that the world prefers Barabbas to the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the world will change its various modes of dealing, but it will never love the Church better than it does now. We do not expect to see the world lifted up to become more and more absorbed into the Church. The union of the world with the Church was never the object of our religion. The object of Christ is to gather to himself a people from among men; it is not the lifting up of all, but the calling out of the some, the making of men to differ, the manifestation of his special and discriminating grace, the gathering together of a people whom he has formed for himself. In this process morality is promoted, men are civilised and improved, but this is only indirectly God's object, and not his immediate end; the immediate end of the gospel being the salvation of the people whom he has ordained unto eternal life, and who, therefore, in due season are led to believe in him. The world, to the end of the chapter, will be as much at enmity with true believers as ever it was. Because "ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you," this will be as true when Christ shall come as at the present moment. Let us expect it; and when we meet with

scorn and persecution, let us not be surprised as though some strange thing had happened unto us.

III. I come in the third place, and O for some assistance from on high, to observe that THE SIN OF PREFERRING BARABBAS TO CHRIST WAS THE SIN OF EVERY ONE OF US BEFORE OUR CONVERSION.

Will you turn over the leaves of your diary, now, dear friends, or fly upon the wings of memory to the hole of the pit whence you were digged. Did you not, O you who live close to Christ, did you not once despise him? What company did you like best? Was it not that of the frivolous, if not that of the profane? When you sat with God's people, their talk was very tedious; if they spoke of divine realities, and of experimental subjects, you did not understand them, you felt them to be troublesome. I can look back upon some whom I know now to be most venerable believers, whom I thought to be a gross nuisance when I heard them talk of the things of God. What were our thoughts about? When we had time for thinking, what were our favourite themes? Not much did we meditate upon eternity; not much upon him who came to deliver us from the misery of hell's torments. Brethren, his great love wherewith he loved us was never laid to heart by us as it should have been; nay, if we read the story of the crucifixion, it had no more effect upon our mind than a common tale. We knew not the beauties of Christ; we thought of any trifle sooner than of him. And what were our pleasures? When we had what we called a day's enjoyment, where did we seek it? At the foot of the cross? In the service of the Saviour? In communion with him? Far from it; the further we could remove from godly associations the better pleased we were. Some of us have to confess with shame that we were never more in our element than when we were without a conscience, when conscience ceased to accuse us and we could plunge into sin with riot. What was our reading then? any book sooner than the Bible: and if there had lain in our way anything that would have exalted Christ and extolled him in our understandings, we should have put by the book as much too dry to please us. Any three-volume heap of nonsense, any light literature; nay, perhaps, even worse would have delighted our eye and our heart; but thoughts of *his* eternal delight towards us—thoughts of his matchless passion and his glory now in heaven, never came across our minds, nor would we endure those who would have led us to such meditations. What were our aspirations then? We were looking after business, aiming at growing rich, famous for learning or admired for ability. Self was what we lived for. If we had some regard for others, and some desire to benefit our race, yet self was at the bottom of it all. We did not live for God—we could not honestly say, as we woke in the morning, "I hope to live for God to-day;" at night, we could not look back upon the day, and say, "We have this day served God." He was not in all our thoughts. Where did we spend our best praise? Did we praise Christ? No; we praised cleverness, and when it was in association with sin, we praised it none the less. We admired those who could most fully minister to our own fleshly delights, and felt the greatest love to those who did us the worst injury. Is not this our confession as we review the past? Have I not read the very history of your life? I know I have of my own. Alas! for those dark days, in which our besotted soul went after any evil, but would not follow

after Christ. It would have been the same to-day with us, if almighty grace had not made the difference. We may as well expect the river to cease to run to the sea, as expect the natural man to turn from the current of his sins. As well might we expect fire to become water, or water to become fire, as for the unrenewed heart ever to love Christ. It was mighty grace which made us to seek the Saviour. And as we look back upon our past lives, it must be with mingled feelings of gratitude for the change, and of sorrow that we should have been so grossly foolish as to have chosen Barabbas, and have said of the Saviour, "Let him be crucified!"

IV. And now I shall come to the closing part of the sermon, which is, THAT THERE ARE DOUBTLESS MANY HERE WHO THIS DAY PREFER BARABBAS TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Let me first state your case, dear friends. I would describe it honestly, but at the same time so describe it that you will see your sin in it; and while I am doing so, my object will be to expostulate with you, if haply the Lord may change your will. There are many here, I fear, who prefer sin to Christ. I may say, without making a guess, I know that there are those here who would long ago have been followers of Christ, but that they preferred drunkenness. It is not often, it is not every day, it is not even every week, but there are occasions when they feel as if they must go into company, and as a sure result they return home intoxicated. They are ashamed of themselves—they have expressed as much as that; they have even gone so far as to pray to God for grace to overcome their habit; but after being the subject of convictions for years, they have hitherto made no advance. It did seem once as if they had conquered it. For a long time there was an abstinence from the fault, but they have gone back to their folly. They have preferred the bestial degrading vice—shall I say bestial? I insult the beasts, for they are not guilty of such a vice as this—they prefer this degrading vice to Christ Jesus. There stands drunkenness, I see it mirrored before me with all its folly, its witlessness, its greed and filth; but the man chooses all that, and though he has known by head knowledge something concerning the beauty and excellency of Christ, he virtually says of Jesus, "Not this man, but drunkenness."

Then there are other cases, where a favourite lust reigns supreme in their hearts. The men know the evil of the sin, and they have good cause to know it; they know also something of the sweetness of religion, for they are never happier than when they come up with God's people; and they go home sometimes from a solemn sermon, especially if it touches their vice, and they feel, "God has spoken to my soul to-day, and I am brought to a standstill." But for all that, the temptation comes again, and they fall as they have fallen before. I am afraid there are some of you whom no arguments will ever move; you have become so set on this mischief, that it will be your eternal ruin. But oh! think you, how will this look when you are in hell—"I preferred that foul Barabbas of lust to the beauties and perfections of the Saviour, who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost!" and yet this is the case, not of some, but of a great multitude who listen to the gospel, and yet prefer sin to its saving power.

There may be some here, too, of another class, who prefer *gain*. It has come to this: if they become truly the Lord's people, they cannot

do in trade what they now think their trade requires them to do; if they become really and genuinely believers, they must of course become honest. But their trade would not pay, they say, if it were conducted upon honest principles; or it is such a trade, and there are some few such, as ought not to be conducted at all, much less by Christians. Here comes the turning-point. Shall I take the gold, or shall I take Christ? True, it is cankered gold, and gold on which a curse must come. It is the fool's pence, may be it is gain that is extorted from the miseries of the poor; is money that would not ever stand the light because it is not fairly come by; money that will burn its way right through your souls when you get upon your death-beds; but yet men who love the world, say, "No, not Christ, give me a full purse, and away with Christ." Others, less base or less honest, cry, "We know his excellence, we wish we could have him, but we cannot have him on terms which involve the renunciation of our dearly-beloved gain." "Not this man, but Barabbas."

Others say, "I fain would be a Christian, but then I should lose so many of my acquaintances and friends. For the matter of what it comes to, my friends are not much good to me; they are such friends as are fondest when I have most money to spend with them; they are friends who praise me most when I am oftenest at the ale-house, when I am seen plunging deepest into their vices. I know they do me mischief, but," says the man, "I could not venture to oppose them. One of them has such a glib tongue, and he can make such telling jokes, I could not bear to have him down upon me; and there is another, I have heard him give Christians such stinging names, and point at their faults in such a sarcastic manner, I could not run the gauntlet of his tongue; and therefore, though I fain would be a Christian, yet I will not." That is the way you prefer to be a serf, a slave to the tongue of the scorner, sooner than be a free man, and take up the cross and follow Christ. You prefer, I say, not merely by way of allegory, but as matter of fact, you prefer Barabbas to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I might thus multiply instances, but the same principle runs through them all. If anything whatever keeps you back from giving your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are guilty of setting up an opposition candidate to Christ in your soul, and you are choosing "not this man, but Barabbas."

Let me occupy a few minutes with pleading Christ's cause with you. Why is it that you reject Christ? Are you not conscious of the many good things which you receive from him? You would have been dead if it had not been for him; nay, worse than that, you would have been in hell. God has sharpened the great axe; justice, like a stern woodman, stood with the axe uplifted, ready to cut you down as a cumberer of the ground. A hand was seen stopping the arm of the avenger, and a voice was heard saying, "Let it alone, till I dig about it and dung it." Who was it that appeared just then in your moment of extremity? It was no other than that Christ, of whom you think so little that you prefer drunkenness or vice to him! You are this day in the house of God, listening to a discourse which I hope is sent from him. You might have been in hell—think one moment of that—shut out from hope, enduring in body and soul unutterable pangs. That you are not there, should make you love and bless him, who has said,

“Deliver him from going down into the pit.” Why will you prefer your own gain and self-indulgence to that blessed One to whom you owe so much. Common gratitude should make you deny yourself something for him who denied himself so much that he might bless you. Do I hear you say that you cannot follow Christ, because his precepts are too severe? In what respect are they too severe? If you yourself were set to judge them, what is the point with which you would find fault? They deny you your sins—say, they deny you your miseries. They do not permit you, in fact, to ruin yourself. There is no precept of Christ which is not for your good, and there is nothing which he forbids you which he does not forbid on the principle that it would harm you to indulge in it. But suppose Christ’s precepts to be ever so stern, is it not better that you should put up with them than be ruined? The soldier submits implicitly to the captain’s command, because he knows that without discipline there can be no victory, and the whole army may be cut in pieces if there be a want of order. When the sailor has risked his life to penetrate through the thick ice of the north, we find him consenting to all the orders and regulations of authority, and bearing all the hardships of the adventure, because he is prompted by the desire of assisting in a great discovery, or stimulated by a large reward. And surely the little self-denials which Christ calls us to will be abundantly recompensed by the reward he offers; and when the soul and its eternal interests are at stake, we may well put up with these temporary inconveniences if we may inherit eternal life. I think I hear you say that you would be a Christian, but there is no happiness in it. I would not tell you a falsehood on this point, I would speak the truth if it were so, but I do solemnly declare that there is more joy in the Christian life than there is in any other form of life; that if I had to die like a dog, and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian. You shall appeal to the very poorest among us, to those who are most sick and most despised, and they will tell you the same. There is not an old country woman shivering in her old ragged red cloak over a handful of fire, full of rheumatism, with an empty cupboard and an aged body, who would change with the very highest and greatest of you if she had to give up her religion; no, she would tell you that her Redeemer was a greater comfort to her than all the luxuries which could be heaped upon the table of Dives. You make a mistake when you dream that my Master does not make his disciples blessed; they are a blessed people who put their trust in Christ. Still I think I hear you say, “Yes, this is all very well, but still I prefer *present* pleasure.” Dost thou not in this talk like a child; nay, like a fool, for what is present pleasure? How long does that word “present” last? If thou couldst have ten thousand years of merriment I might agree with thee in a measure, but even there I should have but short patience with thee, for what would be ten thousand years of sin’s merriment compared with millions upon millions of years of sin’s penalty. Why, at the longest, your life will be but very short. Are you not conscious that time flies more hurriedly every day? As you grow older, do you not seem as if you had lived a shorter time instead of longer? till, perhaps, if you could live to be as old as Jacob, you would say, “Few and evil have my days been, for they appear fewer as they grow more numerous.” You know that this life is but a span, and is soon over. Look to the graveyards, see how they

are crowded with green mounds. Remember your own companions, how one by one they have passed away. They were as firm and strong as you, but they have gone like a shadow that declineth. Is it worth while to have this snatch space of pleasure, and then to lie down in eternal pain? I pray you to answer this question. Is it worth while to choose Barabbas for the sake of the temporary gain he may give you, and give up Christ, and so renounce the eternal treasures of joy and happiness which are at his right hand for evermore? I wish that I could put these questions before you as they ought to be put. It needs the earnest seraphic voice of Whitfield, or the pleading tongue of Richard Baxter, to plead with you, but yet I think I talk to rational men; and if it be a matter of arithmetic, it shall need no words of mine. I will not ask you to take your life at the longest that you expect it to be—at eighty, say—crowd it full of all the pleasures you can imagine; suppose yourself in good health; dream yourself to be without business cares, with all that heart can wish; go and sit upon the throne of Solomon if you will, and yet what will you have to say when it is all over? Looking back upon it, can you make more of it than Solomon did, when he said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”—“All is vanity and vexation of spirit”? When you have cast up that sum, may I ask you to calculate how much you will have gained, if, in order to possess this vanity, you have renounced eternal happiness, and have incurred everlasting woe? Do you believe the Bible? You say, “Yes.” Well, then, it must be so. Many men profess to be believers in Scripture, and yet, when you come to the point as to whether they do believe in eternal woe and eternal joy, there is a kind of something inside which whispers, “That is in the Book—but still it is not real, it is not true to us.” Make it true to yourselves, and when you have so done it, and have clearly proved that you must be in happiness or woe, and that you must here either have Barabbas for your master, or have Christ for your Lord, then, I say, like sane men, judge which is the better choice, and may God’s mighty grace give you spiritual sanity to make the right choice; but this I know, you never will unless that mighty Spirit who alone leads us to choose the right, and reject the wrong, shall come upon you and lead you to fly to a Saviour’s wounds.

I need not, I think, prolong the service now, but I hope you will prolong it at your own houses by thinking of the matter. And may I put the question personally to all as you separate, whose are you? On whose side are you? There are no neutrals; there are no betweenites: you either serve Christ or Belial; you are either with the Lord or with his enemies. Who is on the Lord’s side this day? Who? Who is for Christ and for his cross; for his blood, and for his throne? Who, on the other hand, are his foes? As many as are not for Christ, are numbered with his enemies. Be not so numbered any longer, for the gospel comes to you with an inviting voice—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” God help thee to believe and cast thyself upon him now; and if thou trustest him, thou art saved now, and thou shalt be saved for ever. Amen.

OUR LORD BEFORE HEROD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.”—Luke xxiii. 8, 9.

AFTER Pilate had declared to the chief priests and scribes that he found no fault at all in Jesus, they were afraid that their victim would escape, and therefore their fury was raised to the highest pitch, and they cried out the more vehemently against him. In the course of their outcries they made use of the word “Galilee;” going, as it seems to me, a little out of their way in order to drag in the name: “He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.” Galilee was a region held in very great contempt, and they mentioned it to cast a slur upon our Lord, as if he were a mere boor from among the clowns of Galilee. To Pilate they thought that the mention of the name would, perhaps, act like the proverbial red rag held before an infuriated bull; for he appears to have been troubled by seditious persons from that province. We all remember that they were Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. The Galileans were reputed to be an ignorant people, apt to be led astray by impostors, and so enthusiastic that they ventured their lives against the Romans. The priests would not only cast contempt upon Jesus, whom they were wont to call the Galilean, but also excite the prejudices of Pilate, so that he might condemn him to die as one of a nest of rebels.

They were mistaken, however, in the consequences of their device, for Pilate caught at the word “Galilee” directly. That province was not immediately under his rule; it was under the sway of the tetrarch Herod Antipas, and therefore he thought within himself, “I can kill two birds with one stone: I can get rid of this troublesome business by sending this prisoner to Herod, and I can also greatly gratify the king by showing him this attention.” Pilate had quarrelled with Herod, and now for some purpose of his own he resolved to patch up a friendship by pretending great deference to his sovereign powers by sending one of his subjects to be tried by him. Pilate, therefore, asked, “Is this man a Galilean?” and when they told him that he was so,—for he was so

by repute, his birth at Bethlehem having been wilfully ignored,—then Pilate at once commanded that he be led to Herod, for Herod was in his palace at Jerusalem attending the Passover festival.

See, then, my brethren, our divine Master conducted in his third march of sorrow through Jerusalem. First, he was led from the garden to the house of Annas, then he was conducted through the streets from the hall of Caiaphas to the judgment hall of Pilate, and now by Pilate's orders he is led a third time by the angry crowd of priests through the streets to the palace of Herod, there to await his fourth examination. Certain of the old writers delight to remark that as there were four evangelists to do honour to our Lord, so were there four judges to do him shame. Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. We are on safer ground when we observe with the early church the coalition of the heathen and the Jews: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

This morning I shall endeavour to set forth this portion of the sad narrative under two heads, which will be these: *Herod before Jesus*, and *Jesus before Herod*.

I. I call your attention first to HEROD BEFORE JESUS, because you must know something of his character, something of the meaning of his questions, before you can rightly understand the sorrow which they caused to Jesus our Lord and Master.

This Herod Antipas was the son of the old Herod the Great, who had put to death the babes at Bethlehem in the hope of destroying the King of the Jews. He was a chip of the old block, but still he was several degrees baser than his sire. There was nothing of the grandeur of his father about him: there was the same evil disposition without the courage and the decision. He did not in some things out-Herod Herod, for in certain points he was a more despicable person. Herod the Great may be called a lion, but our Lord very descriptively called this lesser Herod a fox, saying, "Go and tell this fox." He was a man of dissolute habits and frivolous mind; he was very much under the sway of a wicked woman, who destroyed any little good there might have been in him: he was a lover of pleasure, a lover of himself, depraved, weak, and trifling to the last degree. I almost grudge to call him a man, therefore let him only be called a tetrarch.

This petty tetrarch had once been the subject of religious impressions. These Herods all more or less felt the influence of religion at times, though they were by no means benefited thereby. The impressions made upon his conscience by John did not last with Herod. They were at first powerful and practical, for we are informed that "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." I suppose he reformed many matters in his kingdom, and cast off perhaps some of his grosser vices; but when at last John began to denounce him for having taken his brother's wife to be his paramour, while yet the brother lived, he cast his reprover into prison, and then you remember how, with reluctance, Herod, to please his mistress, beheaded John in prison. Mark this: probably there is no

more dangerous character living than a man who has once come under religious influences so as to be materially affected by them, and yet has broken loose and cast off all fear of God. He has done despite to his conscience so violently that henceforth he will know few qualms. In such a man is fulfilled the saying of our Lord "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The mind of Herod Antipas was in the condition of the chamber which has been swept and garnished, for his life had been somewhat reformed, but the unclean spirit with the terrible seven had come back to his old den, and now he was a worse man by a great deal than he had ever been before. The dog returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. This Herod was an Idumæan, that is to say, one of the descendants of Esau, an Edomite, and though he had professedly become a Jew, yet the old blood was in him, as it is written concerning Edom, "He did pursue his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity." The true Jacob stood before one of the seed of Esau, a tetrarch, profane and worldly like his ancestor, and scant was the pity which he received. Esau was descended from Abraham according to the flesh, but with Jacob was the covenant according to the spirit: it bodes no good to the spiritual seed when it comes even for a moment under the power of the carnal seed. We see how the child of the flesh takes to mocking, while the child according to promise is called to patience.

Herod was in such a state of mind that he furnishes me with a typical character which I would use for the instruction and admonition of you all. He is a type of some who frequently come to this Tabernacle, and go to other places of worship occasionally,—people who were once under religious impressions, and cannot forget that they were so, but who will never be under any religious impressions again. They are now hardened into vain curiosity: they wish to know about everything that is going on in the church and kingdom of Christ, but they are far enough from caring to become part and parcel of it themselves. They are possessed with an idle curiosity which would lift the golden lid of the ark, and intrude behind the veil. They like to gather together all the absurd stories which are told about ministers and to retail all the odd remarks that were ever made by preachers for centuries. All the gossip of the churches is sure to be known to them, for they eat up the sins of God's people as they eat bread. It is not likely that their knowledge of religious things will be of any use to them, but they are ever eager after it; the church of God is their lounge, divine service is their theatre, ministers are to them as actors, and the gospel itself so much play-house property. They are a sort of religious Athenians, spending their time in nothing else than in hearing some new thing: hoping that perhaps some singular and unexpected discourse may be delivered in their hearing which they can retail in the next company where they would raise a laugh. To them preaching is all a farce, and,

worked up with a few falsehoods of their own, it makes excellent fun for them, and causes them to be regarded as amusing fellows. Let them look at Herod, and see in him their leader, the type of what they really are or may soon become.

First, let us see *idle curiosity at its best*. Look here, sirs, and then look in a glass and trace the likeness.

To begin with, we find that Herod's curiosity had been created in him by his having heard many things concerning Jesus. How did he come to hear of him? His great deeds were common talk: all Jerusalem rang with the news of his miracles and wondrous words. Herod, a convert to the Jewish faith, such as he was, took interest in anything that was going on among the Jews, and all the more so if it touched upon the kingdom, for the jealousy which set his father in a rage was not altogether absent in his son. No doubt also he had heard of Christ from John. John would not long have preached to Herod without using his own grand text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." I am sure that, though he was a preacher of righteousness, he had not left off being the herald of the coming Saviour, and so from the stern lips of the great Baptist Herod had heard concerning the King of the Jews, and something concerning his kingdom. When John was dead Herod heard still more of Christ, so that, astonished with what was being done, he said, "This is John the Baptist whom I have beheaded: he is risen from the dead." Jesus became a kind of nightmare to his conscience: he was disturbed and alarmed by what he heard that the prophet of Nazareth was doing. Besides that, there was one in his household who doubtless knew a great deal about the Saviour; for in Herod's court was the husband of a woman who ministered unto the Lord of her substance. The lady's name was Joanna, and her husband was Chuza, Herod's steward—I suppose Herod's butler and manager of his household. From Chuza he could readily have learned concerning Jesus, and we may be sure that he would enquire, for the fear of the great prophet was upon him. Thus Herod's curiosity had been excited about our Lord Jesus Christ for a considerable time, and he longed to see him. I am not sorry when this happens to any of my hearers: I am right glad that they should hear something about the Lord from his friends, something about him from his ministers, and from those of us whose highest glory it is that, though we are not worthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes, yet it is all our business here below to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" So these rumours, this talk, these admonitions, had begotten in Herod's mind the desire that his eyes should light on Jesus; so far, so good. Often men at this day come up to the house of prayer that they may hear the preacher; not because they want to be converted, not because they have any idea of ever becoming followers of Jesus, but because they have heard something about true religion which excites their curiosity, and they would know what it is all about; they are fond of curiosities of literature, and so they would study curiosities of religion, oddities of oratory, and things remarkable of a theological kind.

It is said of Herod, in consequence of this curiosity, that he rejoiced to see Jesus. It is said that he was "exceeding glad." What a hopeful state to be in! May we not expect great things when a man sees Jesus

and is exceeding glad? As I read this passage to myself, I thought, Why, the language might well describe a child of God; our text might fitly be spoken concerning ourselves; let me read it line by line, and remark upon it. "When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad;" so were the apostles when Jesus manifested himself to them; for it is written, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." What other sight could bring to a true believer such joy? "For he was desirous to see him." Are we not? Are not all his people longing for that blessed vision which will make their heaven throughout eternity? "For he was desirous to see him of a long season." This is also true of us: our hearts are weary with watching, and our eyes fail for the sight of his face. "Why tarries he?" we cry. "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." "Because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him." This, also, is our hope: we would both see and feel some gracious miracle,—upon our eyes, that they may be opened; or upon our hands, that we may have greater power in the Master's work; or upon our feet, that we may run in the ways of obedience; and especially upon our hearts, that we may be ever soft and tender, pure and gracious, to feel the mind of God. Yes, these words read very prettily indeed; but yet, you see, the meaning was not the high and spiritual one which we could put into them, but the low and grovelling one, which was all that Herod could reach. He was "exceeding glad;" but it was a frivolous gladness, because he hoped that now his curiosity would be satisfied. He had Jesus in his power, and he hoped now to hear some of the oratory of the prophet of whom men said, "Never man spake like this man." He hoped to see him work a miracle, even he, of whom the record was, "He hath done all things well." Could not the great prophet be induced to multiply loaves and fishes? Might he not persuade him to heal a blind beggar, or make a lame man leap as a hart? Would not a miracle make rare mirth in Herod's palace, and cause a new sensation in the mind of the worn-out debauchee? If, for instance, a corpse were dug up, and Jesus would restore it to life, it would be something to tell of when next the king sat down to a drinking bout with Herodias and her like. When each was trying to exceed the other in telling strange tales Herod would match them all! In this style many people come to hear the gospel. They want to have an anecdote of their own about a notorious preacher, and if they do not see something ludicrous, or hear something striking, they will invent a tale, and swear that they heard it and saw it, though the lie might well choke them. They act thus because they come to hear for nothing but to feed their hungry curiosity. None carry this to such an extreme as those who did at one time feel a measure of the power of the word of God, but have shaken it off. These are the mockers whose bands are made strong; these are the idlers who turn even the testimony of the Lord into food for mirth. Still, at the first blush, there is something that looks very hopeful about them, and we are pleased that they exhibit such gladness when Christ is set forth before them.

One ill sign about Herod was the fact that his conscience had gone to sleep after having for awhile troubled him. For a little he had been

afraid of Jesus, and trembled lest John had risen from the dead ; but that fear had subsided, and superstition had given way before his Sadducean scepticism. He hoped that Jesus would perform some wonderful thing in his presence ; but he had lost all dread of the Just and Holy One. He was a man of vain mind : the man whom he feared one day he murdered the next, and he whom he welcomed with gladness, he hurried off with derision. There was left to Herod no feeling towards Jesus but the craving after something new, the desire to be astonished, the wish to be amused. I think I see him now, sitting on his throne, expectant of wonders, like the trifler that he was. "Now we shall see," saith he, "now we shall see what we shall see ! Perhaps he will deliver himself by sheer force ; if he walked the sea, he will probably fly away in the air. Perhaps he will render himself invisible, and so pass away through the midst of the chief priests. I have heard that many a time when they would have stoned him or cast him down from the brow of a hill, he departed, gliding through their midst : perhaps he will do the same this morning." There sits the cunning prince, divining what the wonder will be ; regarding even displays of divine power as mere showman's tricks, or magician's illusions.

When Jesus was set before him he began to ask him questions : "Then he questioned with him in many words." I am glad the questions are not recorded : they could have done us no good ; and, besides, our modern Herods nowadays are great masters of the art, and need not that any man teach them. We need not to be furnished with the old-fashioned quibbles and questions ; for the supply is quite equal to our requirements. Fools can ask more questions in ten minutes than wise men are able to answer in fifty years. I say we do not want the old questions, but I daresay they would run somewhat in this line, "Are you that King of the Jews whom my father strove to slay ? How came you to be a Nazarene ? Have you been a miracle-worker, or is it all legerdemain or necromancy ? John told me something about you ; did you deceive him, or is it true ? Have you raised the dead ? Can you heal the sick ?" Trying all the while to excite him to work a miracle, he raised doubts and chopped logic volubly, for the text suggestively mentions his "many words." The curious in religion are generally very apt at question-asking ; not that they want Christ, not that they want heaven, not that they want pardon of sin, not that they want any good thing ; but still they would like to know everything that is dark and mysterious in theology ; they would like to have a list of the difficulties of belief, a catalogue of the curiosities of spiritual experience. Some men collect ferns, others are learned upon beetles, and these persons pry into church life, its doctrines, pursuits, aims, and infirmities,—especially the latter. They could write a book upon orthodox England and unorthodox England, and dwell with unction upon mental vagaries. It furnishes them with something new, and adds to their store of information, and so they spare no prying questions ; for they would analyze manna from heaven, and distil the tears of Christ : nothing is sacred to them ; they put Scripture on the rack, and cavil at the words of the Holy Ghost.

Thus have I set forth idle curiosity in its better stage. Now let us pass on and see how Jesus treated this curiosity, considering it under the

head of IDLE CURIOSITY DISAPPOINTED. "He questioned with him in many words, but he answered him nothing!" If Herod had wanted to believe, Jesus would have been ready enough to instruct; if Herod had possessed a broken heart, Jesus would have hastened with tender words to bind it up; if Herod had been a candid enquirer, if his doubts had been sincere and true, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, would have been delighted to speak with him. But Jesus knew that Herod would not believe in him and would not take up his cross and follow him; and therefore he would not waste words on a heartless, soulless profligate. Had he not said to his own disciples, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine"? He saw in this man one so mean, cunning, cowardly, and heartless, that he viewed him as a fox to be let alone rather than a lost sheep to be sought after. He was a tree twice dead, and plucked up by the roots. All the Master did was to maintain an absolute silence in his presence; and, let him question as he might, "he answered him nothing."

Observe, my brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world to be a performer: he did not leave his glory to earn the wondering approbation of men; and as Herod regarded him as a mere wonder-worker, and would have turned his court into a theatre wherein Jesus should be the chief actor, our Lord very wisely held his peace and did nothing at all. And sometimes his ministers might be wise if they were silent too. If they know that men have no desire to learn, no spiritual wish or aspiration, I say they might be wise if they held their tongue altogether. I have sometimes admired George Fox, who, on one occasion, when the crowd had gathered round him, expecting him to deliver some fiery address, stood still by the space of two hours while they clamoured that he would speak. Never a word did they get from him. He said he would furnish them of words; for words were all they wanted, and not the power of the Spirit. Probably they recollected his silence better than they would have remembered his most vehement discoursing. Sometimes silence is all that men deserve, and the only thing which in any probability will impress them. As the Lord Jesus was no performer, he did not gratify Herod, but answered him not a word.

Moreover, be it recollected that Herod had already silenced the Voice, and no marvel that he could not hear the Word. For what was John? He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." What was Jesus but the Word? He that silences the Voice may well be denied the Word. Had not his shallow soul been moved,—I was about to say, to its depths, such depths as they were? Had he not been admonished by one of the greatest of the children of men? For among them that were born of women there had not then been a greater than John the Baptist. Had not a burning and shining light shone right into his very eyes? And if he refused to hear the greatest of the sons of men, and to see the brightest light that God had then kindled, it was but right that the Saviour should refuse him even a ray of light, and let him perish in the darkness which he had himself created. Ah, sirs, you cannot trifle with religious impressions with impunity. God thinks it no trifle. He who has once been moved in his

soul and has put away the heavenly word from him, may fear that it will be said of him, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man. Ephraim is joined to idols : let him alone." May not some conscience here, if it has but a little life in it, be alarmed at the memory of former rejections of the gospel, frequent quenchings of the Spirit, repeated trappings upon the blood of Jesus ? If God never speaks to you again in the way of mercy, you have no right to expect that he should do so ; and if from this day to the day of judgment the Lord should never give you another word of mercy, who shall say that you have been treated harshly ? Have you not deserved it at his hands as Herod had done ?

Furthermore, recollect that Herod might have heard Christ hundreds of times before if he had chosen to do so. Jesus was always to be found by those who desired to listen to him. He did not go sneaking about Galilee, or holding secret conventicles in holes and corners. He ever spake in the synagogue, and Herod might have gone there ; he spake in the street or by the seashore, or on the mountain side, and Herod might have gone there. Jesus stood out boldly before the people, and his teaching was public and free ; if Herod had wished to hear him, he might have done so times beyond number : therefore now, having despised all these opportunities, the Saviour will not furnish him with another, which he would have treated in the same manner. He answers him nothing, and by so doing answered him terribly. Beware how you waste opportunities. Dear hearers, beware how you waste your Sabbaths. There may come a day when you would give a thousand worlds for another Sabbath, but it shall be denied you. There may come a day when you would count out all your wealth to have another invitation to Christ, but it will be denied you ; for you must die, and the voice of mercy will never ring in your ears again. They that will not when they may, shall not when they would. Many will knock after the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door ; but when he shutteth, no man openeth. The door was shut on Herod.

Observe, that our Master had good reason for refusing to speak to Herod this time, over and above what I have mentioned ; because he would not have it supposed that he yielded to the pomp and dignity of men. Jesus never refused an answer to the question of a beggar ; but he would not gratify the curiosity of a king. Herod dreams that he has a right to ask whatever impertinent questions he may choose to invent ; but Jesus knows nothing of men's rights in such a matter : it is all grace with him, and to him the prince upon the throne is not an atom better than the peasant in the cottage, and so when Herod in all his pride and glory thinks full sure that Christ will pay deference to him and, perhaps, will pay him court to win his favour, Jesus disregards him. He wants nothing of the murderer of John the Baptist. Had Herod been the poorest and most loathsome leper throughout all Judea, had he been the meanest mendicant in the street, who was lame or blind, his voice would at once have been heard by the Lord of mercy ; but he will not answer the prince who hopes for homage at his hands, nor feed the idle wishes of a crafty reprobate. What favour did he want at Herod's hand ? He had not come to be set free ; he had come to die, and therefore his face is set like a flint, and, with heroic courage, he answers him not a word.

Now, then, you have seen frivolous curiosity at its best, and you have seen it disappointed, as it generally is to this day. If people come to hear the gospel out of this frivolous curiosity, they usually retire saying, "Really, I do not see anything in it. We have heard nothing eloquent, nothing profound, nothing outrageous." Just so; there is nothing in the gospel to please the luxurious, though everything to bless the poor. Jesus answered Herod nothing, and he will answer you nothing if you are of Herod's order. It is the doom of triflers that they should get no answer from the gospel: neither the Scriptures, nor the ministry, nor the Spirit of God, nor the Lord Jesus will speak with them.

What was the result of this disappointment upon Herod? *Idle curiosity curdles into derision.* He thinks the man is a fool, if not an idiot, and he says so, and begins to deride him. With his men of war he mocks him, and "set him at naught," which signifies to make nothing of him. He calls his soldiers and says, "Look at this creature: he will not answer a word to what I have to say: is he bereft of his senses? Rouse him up, and see." Then they mock and laugh and jest and jeer. "Here," says Herod, "he calls himself a king! Bring out one of my shining white robes, and put it on him: we will make a king of him." So they put it about his blessed person, and again heap contumely upon him. Was it not strange—this decking him in a gorgeous robe of dazzling white? The mediæval writers delight to dwell on the fact that Herod arrayed our Lord in white and afterwards Pilate clothed him in red. Is he not the Lily of the valley and the Rose of Sharon? Is he not matchlessly white for innocence, and then gloriously red in his atoning blood? Thus, in their very mockery, they are unconsciously setting forth to us both his spotless holiness and his majestic royalty. When they had insulted to their full, they sent him back to Pilate, kicking him from foot to foot at their pleasure, as if he were a football for their sport. Then our Lord made his fourth sorrowful march through the streets of the city over which he had wept.

That is what idlers in the long run do with Christ; in their disappointment they grow weary of him and his gospel, and they cry, "Put him away; there is nothing in him, nothing of what we looked for, nothing to satisfy curiosity, nothing sensational; take him away." Away goes Jesus, never to return; and that is the end of Herod, and the end of a great many more.

II. My time is nearly gone; but bear with me while for a few minutes I try to set forth JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD. Although no blows are recorded, I greatly question whether our Divine Master suffered anywhere more than he did in the palace of Herod. You and I, perhaps, apprehend most easily the woe of the coarser sufferings when they scourged him and when they plaited the crown of thorns and put it upon his head, but the delicate and sensitive mind of our Master was, perhaps, more touched by what he suffered in the palace of Herod than by the rougher torture. For, first, here is a man fully in earnest for the salvation of our souls, and in the midst of his grievous passion he is looked upon as a mountebank and a mere performer, who is expected to work a miracle for the amusement of an impious court. How it cuts an earnest man to the quick when he finds

that, let him do what he may, people do not sympathise with him in earnestness, but are coolly criticizing his style, or imitating his mannerisms, or admiring his expressions as matters of literary taste. It is heart-breaking when your ardour makes you self-forgetful to find others pecking at trifles, or making your efforts into a kind of show. The Christ must have been wounded in his very soul when he was treated as a mere performer, as if he had left the Father's bosom and was about to give himself to death, and yet was aiming to amuse or to astonish. I know how it saddens my Lord's servants when they preach their very hearts out to bring men to repentance, and the only result is to elicit the remark that "his arguments were very telling, and that pathetic passage was very fine." There is a thorn in such chill words to pierce deeper than the crown of thorns: horrible indifference smites like the Roman scourge.

Then to think of our Lord's being questioned by such a fop as Herod! A man of earnest and intense soul, living for one thing only, and that the redemption of mankind, is here worried by the foolish questions of a man of the world. Were you ever in an agony of bodily pain yourself, and did some frivolous person call upon you and begin to torture you with the veriest inanities and absurdities? Have you not felt that his chatterings were worse than the pain? It must have been so with Jesus. When the ridiculous must needs question the sublime the result is misery. With the bloody sweat yet damp upon his brow, and with the accursed spittle still defacing his blessed countenance, the Man of Sorrows must be tortured by the drivellings of a heartless idler. With his heart all bowed down under a sense of the awful penalty of sin, the great Substitute for sinners must be molested by the petty small talk and ribald jests of the meanest of mankind. Solving eternal problems, and building up an everlasting temple unto the living God, he must be twitted by a vainglorious tetrarch, tormented and tortured by foolish questions fit only to be asked of a mountebank. We think the cross itself was not a worse instrument of torture than the haughty tongue of this debauched monarch.

Then the ribaldry of the whole thing must have tortured our Lord. The whole of them gathered round about him with their hoarse laughter and coarse jests. He has become a by-word and a proverb to them. When you are merry you can enjoy merriment; but when the heart is sad laughter is wretchedly discordant, and embitters your grief. Now this one laughs, and then another sneers; while a third thrusts out the tongue, and they are all uproariously jovial. In harmony they are all making nothing of him, though with awful earnestness he is lifting the world out of the slough of despair, and hanging it in its place again among the stars of glory. Jesus was performing more than Herculean labours, and these little beings, like so many gnats and flies, were stinging him. Small things are great at torturing, and these worthless beings did their utmost to torment our Lord. Oh, the torture of the Master's spirit!

Remember, it was no small sorrow to our Lord to be silent. You tell me that he appears majestic in his silence. It is even so; but the pain of it was acute. Can you speak well? Do you love to speak for the good of your fellow men, and do you know that when you speak full often

your words are spirit and life to those who hear you? It will be very hard to feel compelled to refuse them a good word. Do not imagine that the Lord despised Herod as Herod despised the Lord. Ah, no! The pity of his soul went out to this poor frivolous creature who must needs make sport of the Saviour's sufferings, and treat the Son of the Highest as though he were a court fool, who must play before him. The Saviour's infinite love was breaking his heart; for he longed to bless his persecutor, and yet he must not speak, nor give forth a warning word. True, there was little need for words, for his very presence was a sermon which ought to have melted a heart of stone; but yet it cost the Saviour a mighty effort to keep down the flood-gates and hold in the blessed torrents of his holy speech, which would have flowed out in compassionate pleadings. Silent he must be; but the anguish of it I can scarcely tell. Sometimes to be permitted to speak a word is the greatest comfort you can have. Have you never been in such a state that if you could cry out, it would have been a relief to you? What anguish, then, to be forced to be as a dumb man! What woe to be forced to be silent with all these mockers about him, and yet to be pitying them all! As a man might pity a moth that flies into the flame of the candle, and will not be delivered, so did our Lord pity these creatures. How sad that they could make sport of their own damnation, fling the salvation of God to the ground, and tread it down as swine tread down their husks. Oh, it grieved the Master's heart; it moved his soul to its very centre.

Think of the utter contempt that was poured upon him. I do not judge that this was the bitterest of his woes, for their contempt was an honour to him; but yet it was one ingredient of his cup of mingled wormwood and gall, that they should so despise him as to clothe him in a white robe, and mock his kingship, when on that kingship their only hope was hung. They "set him at nought," that is, put him down as nothing, jeered and jested at him, and if there was nothing even about his manhood which they could respect, they invented ways by which they could pour scorn upon him. Luke is the gospel of the man; if you want to read about Jesus in his manhood, read Luke; and here you will see how his very manhood was trampled in the mire by these inhuman creatures, who found their joy in despising him.

See, then, your Lord and Master, and let me put two or three questions to you. Do you not think that this peculiar silence of Jesus was a part of his anguish, in which he was bearing the punishment for your sins of the tongue? Ah me, ah me! Redeemed of the Lord, how often have you misused your speech by wanton words! How often have we uttered murmuring words, proud words, false words, words of despite to holy things; and now our sins of the tongue are all coming upon him, and he must stand silent there and bear our penalty.

And is it not possible that when they put the gorgeous robe upon him, he was bearing your sins of vanity, your sins of dress and pride, when you made yourselves glorious to behold, and arrayed yourselves in gorgeous robes and glittering apparel? Know ye not that these things are your shame? For had you had no sin, you would have needed none of these poor rags; and may not the Christ in white and red be bearing your sins of folly? And do you not think that when

they were making him nothing, and despising him, he was then bearing our sins, when we set him at nought—our words of despite and derision when, perhaps, in our ungodly days we, too, made sport of holy things, and jested at the word of God? Ah me, I think it was so, and I ask you to look at him, and say as you see him there, "It is not Herod after all; it is my tongue, my vanity, my trifling with holy things, which caused him this exquisite torture. Lord Jesus, substitute for me, let all these transgressions of mine be put away once for all by thy meritorious passion."

Finally, we read that Herod and Pilate were made friends from that day, and I do hope if there are any here that are true-hearted Christians if they have had any ill-will towards one another they will think it a great shame that Herod and Pilate should be friends, and that any two followers of Jesus should not be friends at the sight of the suffering Master. As for those two foxes, Pilate and Herod, they were tied tail to tail that day by our great Samson. Our Lord has often been a point of union for wicked men, not by his intent and purpose, but because they have joined together to oppose him. I have often smiled in my heart to see how superstition and scepticism will march together when they are anxious to oppose the gospel. Then the Sadducee says, "Give me your hand, dear Pharisee; we have a common interest here, for this man would overturn us all." The gospel is the mortal enemy both of the sceptical Sadducee and the superstitious Pharisee, and so they lay aside their differences to assail it. Now, then, if the wicked unite before our Lord Jesus when he wears the white robe, should not his people much more be united, especially when they remember that he said, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." I charge you by your homage to him you call Master and Lord, if you have any difference of any sort with any Christian brother, let not yon sun go down till you have ended it by hearty love for Jesus' sake. Let it be seen that Christ is the great uniter of all those who are in him. He would have us love one another even as he has loved us, and his prayer is that we may be one. May the Lord hear that prayer, and make us one in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiii. 4—15;
and Proverbs viii.

SETTING JESUS AT NOUGHT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 11TH, 1886,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 2nd, 1888.

“And Herod with his men of war set him at nought.”—Luke xxiii. 11.

It is your Lord whom Herod set at nought! Once worshipped of angels and all the heavenly host, he is made nothing of by a ribald regiment. In himself “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person”; but now set at nought by men not worthy of the name. Soon to reassume all his former glory with the Father, and to descend in infinite splendour to judge the earth in righteousness, and reign as King of kings; and yet here he is set at nought! It is a sight of horror and of shame. How could angels bear to see it? This paltry prince and his rough retinue made nothing of him who is All in all; they treated him as beneath their contempt. The veriest objects flouted him. The meanest soldier in the petty army of a petty princelet made unholy mirth of heaven’s high Lord and earth’s Redeemer. What a sorrowful and shameless business! May we be helped to sorrow over it! These wretches were of our race. May we mourn because of him! When the thorns of grief and repentance are at our breast, may God grant that they may act as lancets to let out the foul blood of our pride, for we, too, are partakers in this tremendous crime, since our sin involved our Saviour in the necessity of bearing this barbarous scorn.

Herod himself set him at nought. In this loathsome being I see the most likely person to think nothing of the Lord Jesus. Let me just say a word or two about this member of a detestable family, that I may see whether his like can be found here to-night. I will not give you any history of this Herod. It is not worth while. This “fox” is not worth unearthing. The page of history is stained by the Herodian name. I will give you enough concerning him to help you to answer the question—Are you like him? Have you set Christ at nought?

No. 2,051.

I. This shall be our first enquiry: WHO IS THE MOST LIKELY PERSON TO SET OUR LORD AT NOUGHT?

Herod was a man who had once heard the Word of God; yes, heard it with a measure of attention, and apparent benefit. We read, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." According to the margin, Herod "kept him or saved him"—preserving him from those who would have laid violent hands upon him. But he broke away from his respectful regard of John, and now that Jesus stands before him, his memory of the Baptist does not restrain him from mocking the Baptist's Lord. He had silenced that eloquent tongue, and now he had no care to listen to anything which might further bestir his conscience. We often find that the greatest despisers of Christ are those who formerly were hearers and readers of his Word, but have turned from it. An apostate Methodist is a scoffer: a runaway Baptist is an infidel. It looks as if men must have some knowledge of the truth to be able to fight against it in the most malicious way. The viper must be warmed in the man's bosom that he may have strength to bite him. Is not this a wretched business? Am I talking to any here who, not so many years ago, were regular attendants upon a faithful ministry, but who have grown weary of it, and given it up? I do not know what reason you give; but I suppose the real reason is, that you love the world better than Christ, and so you have left his people and his Word. It troubles your conscience that you have done so, and now you try to conceal your uneasiness by picking holes in your former minister, and finding fault with the truths which he preached to you. I know the tricks and manners of apostates. Wanting an opiate for your consciences, you invent a fault in the gospel, or try to disbelieve it altogether. What an unhappy thing that the hopeful hearer should decline into a hopeless despiser! Herod heard John, but he ridiculed Jesus. See to what unconverted hearers may come!

If I look at Herod again, I see in him a man who, after hearing the Word faithfully preached, *had distinctly done violence to his conscience.* He heard John until John came home to him about the woman with whom he was living in an incestuous union. Herodias would have killed John at once; and though Herod did not dare to go so far as that, yet he shut him up in prison. A filthy lust must not be rebuked: Herod imprisons his reprover. He knew that John was right, and he trembled at his rebuke; but he could not give up his sin, and so he put the servant of God in a dungeon. He was held fast, as many a man before and since has been held fast, by an evil woman. She demanded of him that at the very least the man of God should be cast into prison. How dare he speak against what the prince chose to do? How dare a peasant censure so great a man as Herod about his personal life? So, instead of bowing before the supreme authority of right, and listening to the voice of truth as uttered by the Lord's Elijah, he must needs exercise his royal power, and lay his reprover by the heels. The man who could do this was in training for the more daring act of setting the Lord Jesus at nought. First despise the man, and then the Master. First do violence to

your better self, and then scoff at godliness. My friend, do you remember that night when you distinctly decided for the devil? Do you recollect when, after having the evil set before you, and seeing it, and counting the cost, you decided to continue in it? Then you turned with bitterness upon the honest reprover whose rebuke you had aforesaid endured. Perhaps it was your wife upon whom you turned with anger. What hard words you said to her for the gentle remark she ventured to make! It was an effort for you. You gave conscience an awful wrench; and therefore you put yourself into a passion, and talked like an injured man. Or was it your brother? It may be you quitted his society in order to be free from his remarks. Was it your child, or your friend? You could not put them in prison; but you were determined that you would not bear any more of their protests. You abused and silenced them; not because you thought they were wrong, but because they made you feel that *you* were wrong. By all this you have prepared yourself to set the Lord at nought; and we cannot wonder that you do so.

This man also *had yielded to sinful companions, and had committed a gross sin as the result of it*, for when Herodias danced, and he promised to give her whatsoever she desired, she asked the head of John the Baptist in a charger; and he, not liking to break his word in the presence of the assembled guests, and not willing to stand out against the woman with whom he lived in unhallowed intercourse, yielded, and the Baptist's head was taken from his shoulders. Ah, well! you may not have sinned quite in that way; but you, too, once had better thoughts and higher aims. Your companions were too many for you, and drove all good out of you. I do not mention this that you may dare to cast the blame upon others of that which was really your own act and deed. If there had been a spark of true manhood in you, you would have resisted the suggestion of those enemies in the garb of friends. But you are soft and plastic, like wax, in the hand of evil; instead of being, as you ought to be, like granite towards evil, and like wax towards good. You now feel as if you had gone too far to turn back. You are now fixed in an evil estate. A black sin seems to bar the way to repentance. Truly, even now you will be welcomed to the bosom of mercy, but you are not anxious enough for it. It is a long lane that has no turning, but you seem to have got into such a lane, and you are driven along it by evil forces. This is the man that thinks nothing of Christ—the man who thinks so much of drinking and dancing, and of the companions which such things have brought around him. Of course he does not think anything of Christ, for his ways would take from him these vile associates. How should he value the holy Jesus? Will swine ever think much of pearls? It is vain that we set before you beauties for which you have no eyes, hopes for which you have no heart. Jesus cannot be valued by a man of Herod's sort, who puts so high a value upon the opinion of those who sit with him at his banquets.

Once more: the man who thinks nothing of Christ is the man that *means to go on in sin*, even as Herod did. The die was cast; his mind was made up for evil. He would be very glad to hear Christ: he has no objection still to go to a place of worship and listen to a

preacher. He would be very pleased to see a miracle: he would join in a revival, for he would be glad to enjoy something sensational, but he does not mean to give up the sin in which he lives, nor the company which eggs him on in it. He does not mean to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye. Not he! He is too fond of the vice, too much ensnared and bird-limed by his passions; and so, as he gives his heart to his lust, he takes away his heart from Christ; nay, he treats religion with derision, because it is opposed to his bent and inclination. What a sad thing! I generally find, when man speaks against the Lord Jesus, that if you follow him home, he would rather not have you go indoors, for fear his inner life should be known. He does not want you to see the skeleton in the cupboard. I have so often met with this fact in actual life, that when I have heard a man speak bitterly of my Master, I have formed my opinion, and have not been wrong. A little enquiry has revealed so much that I have said, "It is not at all surprising that such a man should speak evil of Christ. It is as natural to such a man to talk against Christ as for a dog to bark." When a bad fellow once praised Socrates, that philosopher said, "I wonder what I can have been doing amiss, that such a man should speak well of me." If lustful lips praised the Saviour, one might begin to be afraid; but when they denounce and deride him, we feel that it is the only homage which vice can pay to purity.

This, then, is the man who sets Jesus at nought. I wonder whether he is here to-night! Possibly it is a woman who is doing this. Women fall into precisely the same evils as men from their own side of the house, and the same remarks apply to both sexes. You who once were hearers, you who once were impressed, you who did wilful violence to conscience, you who persist in sin, you who are the slaves of evil company, and dare not do right for the life of you, for fear of ridicule—you are the kind of people of whom Herod was a sad specimen: you set Jesus at nought.

II. Having tried to find out Herod, let us now answer a second question—ON WHAT GROUND DID HE SET OUR LORD AT NOUGHT?

Men have some reason or other for their acts, although often those reasons are most unreasonable. Before we consider the unhallowed reasons for this great crime, let us do homage to the name of the Son of God. O Lord Jesus, even in thy lowest humiliation thou art worthy of all reverence. To thy friends thou art all the more dear and the more honoured because thou wast greatly despised. Thou, bound and brought a prisoner before the tetrarch, art free to rule our hearts. Thou wert charged with sedition, but we fall at thy blessed feet, and proclaim thee King of kings!

Herod sets him up as the butt of his ridicule, and makes nothing of him. As Herbert puts it—

"Herod and all his bands do set me light,
Who teach all hands to war, fingers to fight,
And only am the Lord of hosts and might.
Was ever grief like mine?"

I suppose that part of the reason why he and his men of war made nothing of our Lord was *because of his gentleness and patience*. Our

Lord had no sword, and none of the temper of men who wear weapons. His visage was not like the face of a man of war: it was marred with grief, but not with anger; worn with sorrow, but not with battle. He was the lamb and not the lion, the dove and not the eagle, and therefore the fighting men despised him. If he had any weapons they were his tears and his almighty love; but these the Herodian ruffians utterly despised. All unarmed he stood before them, and when he was reviled he reviled not again. You know how men of muscular strength and physical bravado value men by their thews and bones, and think nothing of those who are feeble in arm and body. The Saviour, in his emaciation and faintness, must have seemed a poor creature to these hectors. The Christian religion teaches us to be meek and gentle, to forgive injuries, and even to give up our own rights rather than to inflict wrong. Such precepts savour of cowardice to the blustering world. Non-resistance they cannot hear of. They do not like the word "Forgive." "Surely," say they, "a worm will turn?" Thus they think so little of Christ that they prefer an earthworm's example to that of the Lord. The sweet savour of gentle forbearance, which the spirit of Jesus breathes into the hearts of his people, is by many held in contempt. They call it cant and hypocrisy, because it is so alien to their nature, so inconsistent with their ideas of manly conduct.

Furthermore, our Lord was ridiculed by Herod because *he refused to gratify his curiosity and amuse his love of sensation*. The wicked Herod virtually said to the holy Jesus, "Come, work us a miracle. We hear that thou didst deliver from death, now release thyself from our hands. We hear that thou didst multiply loaves and fishes, and feed multitudes, give us a banquet here. Thou canst do all things, so report says of thee—come, do some little thing that we may see and believe. Did not Moses work miracles before Pharaoh? Work a miracle before us." There stands our Lord, with all power in his hands, but he will not lift a finger for his own deliverance and Herod's amusement. O blessed Jesus, it is the same still, thou wilt not dazzle nor amuse, and therefore men prefer any charlatan to thee.

Herod then begins to question him. He asks him this, and that, and the other, with many a jest rolled in between; but he receives no answer. He who answered blind beggars when they cried for mercy is silent to a prince who only seeks to gratify his own irreverent curiosity. Then the men-at-arms laugh at their silent victim. "Why," they say, "the man is dumb. Either he can say nothing for himself, or he is obstinate and ill-mannered. He speaks not when he is spoken to. Has he lost his wits?" Thereupon they multiply their profane jests, and make nothing of the silent One. I do not doubt that often men turn away from the faith because their curiosity is not gratified, and they see nothing marvellous in it. A gospel for the age! A brand new gospel every year might suit them; but the old is stale: they know all about it, and sneer at it. Plain gospel is too plain for them. They desire adornment, or at least mystery, and the pomp which veils the unknown. They would rather go where there are gorgeous ceremonies, and mutterings in an unknown tongue amid the smoke of incense and the harmony of music. The simple gospel of "Believe

and live" does not suit them; for it seems fit only for the poor and unintellectual: thus they set Jesus at nought.

Moreover, the royal claims of Jesus excited their scorn. I think I hear the "Aha! aha! aha!" of Herod as he said, "Call *him* a King? You could find such kings as this in every street of Jerusalem. Talk of a kingdom for him! Go to the pool of Bethesda, and fetch up some poor wretch who lies waiting there for the moving of the water, and call him a king! King? What hosts art at thy command? What kingdom dost thou govern? What laws canst thou make? Here! Put the white robe upon him. Let him at least look like a monarch. Yes, that old robe will do! Is he not every inch a King?" Then the soldiery took up the jest! How bitterly, how derisively did they make his royalty the football of contempt! Thus to-day the world makes nothing of the royalty of King Jesus. A nominal king he may be, but as a real king they will not have him. Those who would be in the dust before the meanest princelet have no esteem for him. There is no pomp about the pure religion of Jesus; there is no glory of philosophy about his teaching; and so they set him and his cause at nought. Ah, me! what will a rebellious people do in the day when he appeareth to claim his throne and punish sedition?

Then, too, *they denied his prophetic office.* "Look!" said Herod, "he will not speak. I have asked him twenty questions, and he will not answer one of them. This is a pretty prophet! John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, but this man has no voice at all. A dumb prophet! Why, he is mute as a fish, and has nothing to say for himself." With such unhallowed merriment did Herod and his men of war set the Lord at nought. How they provoked him! But he stands in the majesty of his self-government, quiet to the end. Here was an omnipotence which restrained the lips of omnipotence. It was a wondrous power, that Godlike patience which enabled indignant holiness to withhold its word of condemnation. The prophet proved his commission by his silence; and yet he provoked their scorn, so that they set him at nought. At this time, because the Christian faith is silent upon a great many questions, certain men deride it. When men come to it with captious questions they receive no answer, and they are irritated thereby. When they idly demand a miracle, and it does not yield to their desires, they have fresh jeers for it. "You preach up the faith of Christ as the only true and divine religion: let us see it work wonders. Where are your miracles? We have asked you fifty questions about the past and the future, and you do not reply; where is the ground for your boastings?" Thus they make nothing of Christ, and disdain his claim to teach with authority.

Those, I suppose, were the grounds upon which Herod, and such as Herod, make light of Christ. Poor grounds they are, and such as will fail to justify them before the bar of God.

III. Now, dear friends, let us consider, HOW DO MEN NOW SET OUR LORD AT NOUGHT? Herod is dead and buried, and there is no sort of reason why we should not let him rot into oblivion. I therefore speak to you, and try to discover whether you are setting Christ at nought. I fear there are such. Who are they?

Some set him at nought, for *they will not even consider his claims.*

“Oh,” say they, “we have plenty else to think about besides religion. What is there in it which will fill our pockets? There is nothing at all in it worth a moment’s attention.” How do they know? They do not know. Nothing in it? God gives his own Son to die for guilty men, and there is nothing in it! The highest thoughts of God are set forth in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you do not think it worth while even to consider what God has therein revealed? A man goes to a bookstall, and turns over a book. It is a novel: he reads a page, and would like to buy it. But suppose it is a book upon the glories of Christ. Does he read then? Does he wish to buy it? No, it is one of those dry theological books, and he shuts it up. He will make no bid for a volume on so dull a subject. He would like to know of Alexander the Great or even of Tom Thumb, but for the world’s Redeemer he cares nothing. He makes nothing of Christ. Do I not convict some here present to-night? They have never set apart one solitary hour in their lives to the honest and candid consideration of the claims of Jesus, the divine Saviour. If it be so, you have indeed made Christ very cheap; and if you perish for lack of him, your blood be on your own heads! If this be the medicine that will heal your disease, and you huff at it, and will not even hear of the cures it has wrought, who is to blame if you perish? Who is to save the man who will not listen when salvation is put before him? Yet the great mass of our fellow citizens are of this kind. In London there are millions who make so little of Christ that they will not even come to hear what his ministers have to say about him, nor read their Bibles, nor show the least interest in the matter. In many a house in London Mahomet is practically as much esteemed as Jesus. Ah me!

There are *many others who prefer their business to Jesus*. They would not mind giving some little attention to the Lord Jesus, but then they are too busy just now. They say that they really cannot afford the time. O my busy hearer! you will have to find time to die before long: why not think of that solemn certainty? You are very busy, and yet you find time to eat. Have you no time to feed your soul? You find time to put on your dress, have you no time to dress your souls? You seek out the surgeon when you are ill; have you no time to seek out a Saviour for your sin-sick soul? Ah! it is not that: you have the time, but you have not the heart.

Others prefer amusements to the Lord Jesus. “Well,” says one, “we must have recreation. In my spare time I like a game.” I know that. I am not for denying you healthy recreation, but everything should be in order, and I claim first place for Jesus Christ and his salvation. What! is it not worth while to give up a sport to seek Jesus? Do you think a game of cards more important than seeking the pardon of your sin? An evening at the theatre or the music-hall; do you really think so little of Jesus that you can live without him, and satisfy your mind with these poor things? Can you suffer the paltry amusements of the world to stand before the Lord Jesus? Yet it is so with some of you: I wish it were not. My Master’s blood and righteousness, the salvation of a soul from hell, the preparing of a heart for heaven—these are laid away in the lumber-room, to allow the childish pleasures of a vain world to engross your thoughts. You will know better one day. God

grant you may learn wisdom while yet it may be of use to you. Too late! What awful words! May you even now feel that if the Son of God has lived and died for men, it is of the first importance that you put business and pleasure in their proper places, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Another sort of persons make nothing of Christ, because *they profess to see nothing profound and philosophical in the faith* which he has revealed. These are the Greeks, to whom the doctrine of the cross is foolishness. O foolish Greeks! These wise men will not hear some of us because we can be understood of the people. "Anybody can understand you," say they, "you speak after the manner of the crowd, and what you say is simple enough to be clear to the most ignorant. We like something deeper, something too profound to be readily grasped. We are above common-place people, and need something more intellectual and philosophical." A man of note once said to me, "Why do you keep on preaching to those thousands at Newington? Preach so that the mob will leave you, and the *élite* will support you." To whom I answered, that if one man's soul was of less value than another, his was of the least value who could talk so slightly of others. Those who make no pretence to culture, are often far more sensible people than those who affect superiority. The man who thinks that he is intellectual, and talks in that fashion, is a miserable snob, and has scarcely a soul at all. When a man despises the multitude, he deserves to be despised himself. But, my dear sir, if the salvation of Christ be very simple, and very plain, is it not so much the better? Have you not enough of philanthropy to make you feel that if you could have a gospel only for the *élite*, it would be a matter of deep regret? Is not a gospel for the multitude the thing to be desired? Do you not desire the vast mass to be saved? I hope you do. But I fear you make nothing of Christ when you despise his gospel because you imagine that it is not deep enough and philosophical enough for you. The most profound science in the world is the science of the cross! Christ himself is the highest wisdom, for he is the wisdom of God.

Others make nothing of the Lord because *they confide in themselves*. They think themselves quite good enough without a Saviour. If they are not quite perfect, they believe that they can make themselves so, and be saved without an atoning sacrifice, or a new heart, or union to Christ. They are doing their best, and they make no doubt whatever that they will find their way to heaven as well as others. Do you thus think? You are in grave error. There was a learned Romanist who once ventured to say that if salvation could only be had on terms of free grace, he would not have it. Do you know what happened? Why, he did not have it: that was all. And that is what will happen to you. If you will not have salvation as a free gift of grace, without any merit wherewith to purchase it, then you must go without it, and perish in your sin; for the terms of free grace will never be altered to suit the pride of the human heart. If any man sets up his righteousness in the place of Jesus Christ, the sin-removing Lamb, why then he has made nothing of Christ, and the Lord will make less than nothing of him. Alas! that any man should be so profane as to think

himself so good that he does not need God's grace and the atoning blood! Such pride insults the Lord Christ, and will bring sure destruction upon the man who is guilty of it.

I have no doubt that there are many also who make nought of Christ because *they have no conscience whatever as to his present claims upon them.* O dear sirs, if you did but know his kindness to the sons of men, even to his enemies, and how he sought them with his tears, and then bought them with his blood, you would feel forced to love him.

"Sure Christ deserves the noblest place
In every human heart."

Truly know Jesus, and you must love him. But some men do not think that they owe him anything, or are in any need of him. It is nothing to such that he died, for they did not require his death to save them: in their judgment they are not lost. Those who are of this mind will leave this Tabernacle to-night, and will go back to the world just as they came in, practically saying, "Whether Jesus lived or whether he died, and whatever he did or was, I care nothing, for I owe him nothing." And yet you owe him everything. You had not been here to-night if it were not for the mercy which has spared you, and which has come to you through him. The axe would have had you down long ago but for his intercession. There had been no gospel to set before you to-night if it had not been for the death agony of the Lord Jesus. You owe the very opportunity of hearing the gospel, and the opportunity of accepting it to his dying love. Oh, that you had a conscience which would make you just towards Jesus! Oh, that you felt that you were bound to love him and live for him, because of all that he has done for guilty men!

As they have no conscience of his claims upon them, so many *have no fears concerning the day of his appearing.* Whether you believe it or not, Jesus, as your Judge, is at the door. He said, years ago, "Behold, I am coming quickly." He is still coming, and must soon arrive to commence the last dread session of justice. What matters it how many more years may elapse? They will fly like the wind. The day will come when heaven and earth shall be ablaze. The thick darkness will lower down,

"And, withering from the vault of night,
The stars shall pale their feeble light."

The hour will come when the earth and sky will rock and reel, and pass away, rolled up like a worn-out vesture. Then shall the trumpet ring out exceeding loud and long—"Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment!" How will you endure that voice which shall disturb the stillness of the sepulchre? "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!" How it will peal forth! None of you will be able to resist the call. From your beds of dust you will start up amazed to a terrible awakening. From the sea, from the land, from the teeming cemetery, from the lonely grave, men will rise, and all of them stand before Christ! In that day you will see nothing but the great white throne, and him that sits upon it. You will be unable to close

your eyes, or to turn your gaze elsewhere. There will he sit, and you will know him by his scars.

“How resplendent shine the nail-prints!
Every eye shall see him move.”

Still shall the trumpet thrill out the summons, “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!” And you must come, whether you will or not; and if you have despised the Lord as Saviour, you will tremble before him as Judge. You will then hear his voice, which in itself is sweeter than the harps of heaven, but to the ungodly it will be more full of thunder than the crash of tempest—“Depart! Depart! Depart!” O my hearer, what will then become of you? The prospect is terrible: but you have no concern about it. To die, to rise, to be judged, to be condemned: you take no account of it. Like Herod, you set him at nought. How dare you do so? How dare you despise the great Judge? Ah, my Lord, have mercy upon them! Have mercy upon them now, and turn them from doing to thee and to themselves this grievous wrong of making nothing of the Lord of all. They set him at nought!

This is very heavy preaching to me. If it is as painful to you to hear as to me to speak, you will be glad when I have done. I pray that these solemn words may long remain upon your hearts. Oh, that they might bring you to Jesus at once by the power of the Holy Ghost!

IV. But I close with this: WHAT DO BELIEVERS SAY ABOUT THEIR LORD? Herod made nothing of him: what do we make of him?

Well, we say, first, that *we mourn and lament that there ever was a time when we ourselves made nothing of the glorious One*. It is many years ago with some of us; but we cannot forget it, nor cease to bewail it. There were a certain number of years in our lives in which it was nothing to us that Jesus should die. O my dear hearers, perhaps some of you have been lately converted after forty, or fifty, or sixty years of sin. Repent with all your hearts that you were Herods so long. Christ has forgiven you; but can you forgive yourselves? No; I think that you still smite on your breast, and say, “Lord, I grieve that ever I lived a moment without acknowledging my Lord—that I ever ate a meal or drew in a breath without bowing before him.” Lord, bury those years in forgetfulness which we spent in forgetfulness of thee!

Next, *it is now our grief that any others should set the Lord Jesus at nought*. It must be a great grief to any man here if she who lies in his bosom sets the Lord at nought. Dear woman, I know what your daily burden must be if the husband who is so dear to you does not love your Saviour, whom you love with a higher love. What an anguish it is to nourish and bring up children, and see them refuse our Lord! “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth”; and no greater sorrow than to see them running into evil ways. Could we really see the heart of an unregenerate man or woman it would cause us the utmost distress. If we felt as we ought to feel, if there were only one unconverted person in this Tabernacle, we should make a Bochim of it till that heart was yielded to Christ. If there

existed only one man or woman who did not love the Saviour, and if that person lived amongst the wilds of Siberia, and if it were necessary that all the millions of believers on the face of the earth should journey thither, and every one of them plead with him to come to Jesus, before he could be converted; it would be well worth all the zeal, and labour, and expense of all that effort. One soul would repay the travail in birth of myriads of zealous Christians. Lord, we cannot bear it that there should go on existing men and women who make nothing of the bleeding Son of God! It is an awful thing: as awful as hell itself! Out in that street to-night think of the thousands who will be hunting for the precious life. Walk along our crowded thoroughfares, and think of the myriads even of this city who live and die without God, and without hope, making nothing of Jesus, and you will feel a heartbreak which will make life a burden. I could wish that you felt that heartbreak for their sakes, and for Christ's sake.

But then, dear friends, what do we make of Christ ourselves now? Well, that I cannot tell you, except it be in one word—*Christ is all*. Herod made nothing of him; we make everything of him.

“All my capacious powers can wish,
In thee doth richly meet;
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”

Could any of you who love my Lord tell me what you think of him? I am sure that you would break down in the attempt. For my own part, I always fail in the glad endeavour.

“When my tongue would fain express
All his love and loveliness,
Then I lisp and falter forth
Broken words not half his worth.”

If we could give every drop of our blood for Jesus; if we could be burnt at a slow fire for a century for him, he deserves all our suffering and all our life. Could our zeal no respite know, a whole eternity of service would not adequately set forth what we think of him.

I close with this practical thought. Sometimes believers show their love and their appreciation of their Master by special acts of homage. Herod, you see, when he made nothing of him, said, “Here, bring out that glittering white robe of mine, and put it on him, that we may heap contempt upon him. He calls himself a King! Let us pay him homage!” They mocked him, and they put the robe upon him, and then sent him back to Pilate. Now, I want you to imitate Herod in the opposite direction. Let us do our Lord special honour to-night. Let us crown him. As soon as we have opportunity, let us make some special offering of our substance to his cause. Let us set apart a season for adoration and reverent worship. Let us resolve that for his sake we will speak well of his name to somebody to whom we have not yet spoken. It may be that some of you can sing a hymn to Jesus with choice music, or write a glorious verse for his dear sake. Go, take your pen, and dip it in your heart, and write a fresh tract in honour of his blessed name. Herod set him at nought, but let us set

him on high in our best manner. Set him at the highest figure that your thought and your imagination can reach. It may be that some brother here could preach about his Lord, and yet he has not opened his mouth from timidity. Come, try, my friend. Shake off your bashfulness. It may be that some sister here might teach women, or get together a class of youngsters, and glorify Christ by instructing them. I long to undo what Herod did, and pay the Well-beloved a recompense for his shame. Oh, how would I honour him! But what am I? What can one person do? Come, all of you, my brethren, and help to cry "Hosanna!" Alas! what are we all together? The music has no volume in it, compared with what he deserves. Come, all ye saints, and worship him! And what are all the saints on earth? Come, ye in heaven, who bear the palm, redeemed, perfected, and white-robed as ye are; come, worship him who washed your robes in his own blood! And what are all they? Even the armies of the redeemed suffice not. Come, all holy ones and praise him!

"Angels, assist our mighty joys!
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when *you* raise your highest notes,
His love can ne'er be told."

Therefore do I summon all things that are to praise the Lord, without whom was not anything made. I charge all living things to adore him who is the resurrection and the life. Let space become one great mouth for song. Let time unceasingly flow with hallelujahs. Let eternity become an orchestra to the praise of Jesus, who was mocked of Herod and his men of war. Glory be to his name! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 802, 580.

ECCE REX.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 6TH, 1877, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!”—John xix. 14.

PILATE said much more than he meant, and, therefore, we shall not restrict our consideration of his words to what *he* intended. John tells us considering Caiaphas, “and this spake he not of himself,” and we may say the same of Pilate. Everything said or done in connection with the Saviour during the day of his crucifixion was full of meaning, far fuller of meaning than the speakers or actors were aware. Transformed by the cross, even the commonplace becomes solemn and weighty. When Caiaphas said that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not, he little thought that he was enunciating the great gospel principle of substitution. When the Jewish people cried out before Pilate “His blood be on us and on our children,” they little knew the judgment which they were bringing upon themselves, which would commence to be fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem, and follow them, hanging like a heavy cloud over their race, for centuries. When the soldier with a spear pierced his side he had no idea that he was bringing forth before all eyes that blood and water which are to the whole church the emblems of the double cleansing which we find in Jesus, cleansing by atoning blood and sanctifying grace. The fulness of time had come, and all things were full. Each movement on that awful day was brimming with mystery, neither could the Master or those around him stir or speak without teaching some gospel, or enforcing some lesson. Whereas on certain days frivolity seems to rule the hour, and little is to be gathered from much that is spoken; on the day of the passion even the most careless spake as men inspired. Pilate, the undecided spirit, with no mind of his own, uttered language as weighty as if he too had been among the prophets. His acquittal of our Lord, his mention of Barabbas, his writing of the inscription to be fixed over the head of Jesus, and many other matters, were all fraught with instruction.

It was to the Jews that Pilate brought forth Jesus arrayed in garments of derision, and to them he said, "*Ecce rex*"—"Behold your King!" It was by the seed of Abraham that he was rejected as their King; but we shall not think of them in order to blame that unhappy nation, but to remind ourselves that we also may fall into the same sin. As a nation favoured with the gospel we stand in many respects in the same privileged condition as the Jews did. To us is the word of God made known, to our keeping the oracles of God are committed in these last days, and we, though by nature shoots of the wild olive, are engrafted into that favoured stock from which Israel have for a while been cut off. Shall we prove equally unworthy? Shall any of us be found guilty of the blood of Jesus? We hear of Jesus this day; are we rejecting him? The suffering Messiah will be brought forth again this morning, not by Pilate, but by one who longs to do him honour, and when he stands before you, and is proclaimed again in the words, "Behold your King!" will you also cry, "Away with him, away with him"? Let us hope that there will not be found here hearts so evil as to imitate the rebellious nation and cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Oh that each one of us may acknowledge the Lord Jesus to be his King, for beneath his sceptre there is rest and joy. He is worthy to be crowned by every heart, let us all unite in beholding him with reverence and receiving him with delight. Give me your ears and hearts while Jesus is evidently set forth as standing among you, and for the next few minutes let it be your only business to "Behold your King."

I. Come with me, then, to the place which is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha, and there "behold your King." I shall first ask you to BEHOLD YOUR KING PREPARING HIS THRONE, yea, and making himself ready to sit thereon. When you look in answer to the summons, "Behold your King," what do you see? You see the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," wearing a crown of thorns and covered with an old purple cloak, which had been thrown about him in mockery; you can see, if you look narrowly, the traces of his streaming blood, for he has just been scourged, and you may also discover that his face is blackened with bruises and stained with shameful spittle from the soldiers' mouths.

"Thus trimmed forth they bring him to the rout,
Who 'Crucify him' cry with one strong shout,
God holds his peace at man, and man cries out."

It is a terrible spectacle, but I ask you to gaze upon it steadily and see the establishment of the Redeemer's throne. See how he becomes your mediatorial King. He was setting up a new throne on Gabbatha, whereon he would reign as the King of pardoned sinners and the Prince of Peace. He was King before all worlds as Lord of all by right of his eternal power and Godhead; he had a throne when worlds were made, as King of all kings by creation; he had also always filled the throne of providence, upholding all things by the word of his power. On his head were many crowns, and to Pilate's question, "Art thou a king then?" he did fitly answer, "Thou sayest that I am a king." But here before Pilate and the Jews, in his condition of shame and misery, he was about to ascend, and first of all to prepare the throne of the heavenly grace, which

now is set up among the sons of men, that they may flee to it and find eternal salvation. Mark how he is preparing this throne of grace, it is *by pain and shame endured in our room and stead*. Sin was in the way of man's happiness, and a broken law, and justice requiring a penalty: and all this must be arranged before a throne of grace could be erected among men. If you look at our suffering Lord you see at once the ensigns of his *pain*, for he wears a crown of thorns which pierce his brow. Pain was a great part of the penalty due for sin, and the great Substitute was therefore sorely pained. When Pilate brought forth our martyr Prince he was the very mirror of agony, he was majesty in misery, misery wrought up to its full height and stature. The cruel furrows of the scourge, and the trickling rivulets of his blood adown his face were but the tokens that he was about to die in cruel pangs upon the cross, and these together were incumbent upon him because there could be no throne of grace till first there had been a substitutionary sacrifice. It behoved him to suffer that he might be a prince and a Saviour. Behold your King in his pains, he is laying the deep foundations of his kingdom of mercy. Many a crown has been secured by blood, and so is this, but it is his own blood; many a throne has been established by suffering, and so is this, but he himself bears the pain. By his great sacrificial griefs our Lord has prepared a throne whereon he shall sit till all the chosen race have been made kings and priests to reign with him. It is by his agony that he obtains the royal power to pardon: by his stripes and bruises he wins the right to absolve poor sinners. We shall have no cause to wonder at the greatness of his mediatorial power if we consider the depth of his sacrificial sufferings: as his misery is the source of his majesty, so the greatness of his pains has secured to him the fulness of power to save. Had he not gone to the end of the law, and honoured justice to the highest degree, he had not now been so gloriously able to dispense mercy from his glorious high throne of mediatorial grace. Behold your King, then, as he lays deep in his own pain and death the basis of his throne of grace.

Nor is it only pain, for he wears also the tokens of *scorn*. That crown of thorns meant mainly mockery: the soldiers made him a mimic monarch, a carnival king, and that scarlet robe, too, was cast upon his shoulders in bitter scorn: thus did this world deride its God. The evangelists give you the description in brief sentences, as if they stopped between each line to cover their faces with their hands and weep. So there he stands before the crowd, helpless, friendless, with none to declare his generation or give him a good word. He is deserted by all who formerly called him Master, and he has become the centre of a scene of rioting and ridicule. The soldiers have done their worst, and now the chief men of the nation look at him with contempt, and are only kept back from the most ribald scorn by a hate too furiously eager for death to afford them leisure for their scoffs. His enemies had done everything in their power to clothe him with scorn, and they were asking for permission to do more, for they cried, "Let him be crucified." Behold ye, how he has left all the honour of his Father's house, and his own glory among the angels, and here he stands with a mock robe, a mimic sceptre, and a thorny crown, the butt of ridicule, scoffed at by all! Yet this must be, because sin is a shameful thing, and a part of

the penalty of sin is shame, as they will know who shall wake up in the day of judgment to everlasting contempt. Shame fell on Adam when he sinned, and then and there he knew that he was naked; and now shame has come down in a tremendous hail upon the head of the Second Adam, the substitute for shameful man, and he is covered with contempt. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn." It is hard to say whether cruelty or mockery had most to do with the person of our Lord at Gabbatha; but by enduring these two things together he laid on an immovable foundation the corner stone of his dominion of love and grace. How could he have been the king of a redeemed people if he had not thus redeemed them? He might have been lord over a people doomed to die, the stern ruler of a people who continued in sin, and would so continue till they perished for ever from his presence; but no such a kingdom did he seek; he sought a kingdom over hearts that should eternally be under obligation to him, hearts that, being redeemed from the lowest hell by his atoning death, would for ever love him with the utmost fervency. His sorrow secured his power to save, his shame endowed him with the right to bless.

"Behold your King." Look at him with steady eye and see what a King he now is *by right of benefit conferred*. Behold, he hath put away sin for ever by the sacrifice of himself, and therefore all the ransomed ones agree that he should be king who smote the great dragon which devoured the nations. Behold by his stooping to shame he hath dethroned Satan, who was the prince of this world; and who should occupy the throne but he who has won it, and cast out the strong one who ruled aforesaid. Christ has done more for men than the prince of darkness could or would, for he has died for them, and so he has earned a just supremacy over all grateful hearts. As for death, Jesus, by yielding to death, has conquered it. Let him be crowned with the victor's wreath who has destroyed the world's destroyer. In his shame you also see the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling the law and making it honourable. He who could honour that law, which else would have cursed us, deserveth to have all honour and homage paid to him by the sons of men, whom he has rescued from the curse. You see, then, our Lord, when he put on the old red cloak, and submitted his brows to be environed with thorns, was really establishing for himself an empire the foundations of which shall never be shaken: he was performing that saving work which has made him king among sinners whom he saves, and Lord of the kingdom of grace, which through his death is bestowed upon men.

Note this, too, that men are kings among their fellows when they can show *deep sympathy, and give substantial succour*. He who can sympathise wins power of the best sort, not coarse force, but refined spiritual influence. For this cause our Lord was afflicted, as you see him afflicted, that he might have sympathy with you in your direst grief, and in your most grievous dishonour. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same, and as they must suffer, so the Captain of their salvation was made perfect by suffering. This gives him his glorious power over us. He is a faithful high priest, for he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and this ability to enter into our infirmities and sorrows makes him supreme

in our hearts. Look at your King in pain and mockery, and see how royal he is to your heart! How sovereignly he commands your heart to rejoice. With what regal power he commands your fears to lie still, and how obediently your despondency yields to his word. Now, as it is with you, so is it on a larger scale in the world. The suffering nations will yet see their true deliverer in their suffering Lord. That sceptre of a reed will secure him power far greater than a rod of iron. His love to man is proved by his suffering to the death on their behalf, and this, when the Holy Ghost hath made men wise, shall be to the myriads of our race the reason for proclaiming him Lord of all. The kings and princes who rule mankind by reason of their descent or by the force of arms have but the names of kings, the true kings are the great benefactors. The heroes are our kings after all. We look upon those as royal who can risk their lives for their fellow men, to win them liberty, or to teach them truth. The race forgets its masters, but it remembers its friends. Earth, but for Jesus, had been a vast prison, and men a race of condemned criminals, but he who stands before us in Gabbatha, in all his shame and grief, hath delivered us from our lost estate, and therefore he must be King. Who shall say him nay? If love must ultimately triumph; if disinterested self-sacrifice must obtain homage, then Jesus is and shall be King. If eventually when the morning breaketh and man's heart is purged from the prejudice and injustice occasioned by sin, the might shall be with the right, and truth must prevail; then Jesus must reign. The eternal fitness of things demands that the best should be highest, that he who does men most service should be most honoured among them; in a word, that he who was made nothing of for man's sake should become everything to him. See you, then, how the crown of thorns is mother to the crown which Jesus wears in his church! The scarlet robe is the purchase price of the vesture of universal sovereignty, and the mock sceptre of reed is the precursor of the rod of nations wherewith the whole earth will yet be ruled. "Behold your King," and see the sources of his mediatorial power.

II. O you who see in your bleeding and rejected Lord "the King in his beauty," come ye hither yet again and BEHOLD HIM CLAIMING YOUR HOMAGE. See in what way he comes to win your hearts. What is his right to be King over you? There are many rights, for on his head are many crowns, but the most commanding right which Jesus has over any of us is signified by that crown of thorns: it is *the right of supreme love*: he loved us as none other could have loved. If we put all the loves of parents and of wives and children all together, we can never rival even for a moment the love of Christ to us, and whenever that love touches us, so that we feel its power, we crown him King directly. Who can resist his charms? One look of his eyes overpowers us. See with your heart those eyes when they are full of tears for perishing sinners, and you are a willing subject. One look at his blessed person subjected to scourging and spitting for our sakes will give us more idea of his crown rights than anything besides. Look into his pierced heart as it pours out its life-flood for us, and all disputes about his sovereignty are ended in our hearts. We own him Lord because we see how he loved. How could we do otherwise? Love in

action, or rather love suffering, carries an omnipotence about it. Behold what his love endured, and so "Behold your King."

Jesus in the garb of mockery, marred with traces of his pain, also reminds us of *his complete purchase* of us by his deeds and death. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Behold your King, and see the price. It is the price of suffering immense, of shame most cruel. It is an incalculable price, for the Lord of all is set at nought. It is an awful price, for he who only hath immortality yields himself to die. It is the price of blood. It is the scourging and bleeding and woe of Jesus; nay, it is himself. If you would see the price of your redemption, "Behold your King." 'Tis he that hath redeemed us unto God by his blood, he that "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." You own that claim, the love of Christ constraineth you; you feel that henceforth you live for him alone, and count it joy that in all respects he should reign over you with unlimited sway.

Jesus, because he suffered, hath acquired a power over us which is far superior to any which could be urged in courts of law, or enforced by mere power, for our hearts have voluntarily surrendered to him and given him *the right of our free submission*, charmed to own allegiance to such imperial love. Is it possible for a believer to look at the Lord Jesus Christ without feeling that he longs to be more and more his servant and disciple? Do you not thirst to serve him? Can you behold him in the depth of shame without pining to lift him up to the heights of glory? Can you see him stooping thus for you without pleading with God that a glorious high throne may be his, and that he may sit upon it and rule all the hearts of men? There is no need to argue out the right of King Jesus, for you feel it; his love has carried you by storm, and it holds fast its capture. You cannot have a Saviour without his being your King, and seeing such a Saviour in such a condition, you cannot even think of him without delighting to ascribe to him all power and dominion. Could we escape his sway it would be bondage to us, and when we at any time fail to own it, it is our worst affliction.

"Behold your King," then, for he himself is his own claim to your obedience. See what he suffered for you, my brethren, and henceforth never draw back from any labour, shame, or suffering for his dear sake. "Behold your King," and reckon to be treated like him. Do you expect to be crowned with gold where he was crowned with thorns? Shall lilies grow for you and briars for him? Never again be ashamed to own his glorious name, unless indeed you can be so vile as to prove a traitor to such a Lord. See to what shame he was put, and learn from him to despise all shame for his truth's sake. Shall the disciple be above his master, or the servant above his lord? If they have thus maltreated the master of the house, what shall they do to the household? Let us reckon upon our share of this treatment, and by accepting it prove to all men that the despised and rejected of men is really the King over us, and that the subjects blush not to be like their monarch. Even though the cost be all the shame the world can possibly pour

upon us, or all the suffering that flesh and blood can in any condition endure, let us be faithful in our loyalty, and cry, "Who shall separate us? Shall persecution, or distress, or tribulation divide us from our King? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors. King of griefs, thou art King of my soul! O King of shame, thou art absolute monarch of my heart. Thou art King by right divine, and King by mine own voluntary choice. Other lords have had dominion over us, but now, since thou hast revealed thyself after this fashion, thy name only shall govern our spirit." Do you not see, then, that Jesus before Pilate reveals his claim in the appearance which he wears. "Behold your King."

III. "Behold your King," for a third time, that you may see him **SUBDUING HIS DOMINIONS**. Dressed in robes of scorn, and with a visage marred with pain, he comes forth conquering and to conquer. This is not very apparent at a superficial glance, for he is not arrayed like a man of war. You see no sword upon his thigh, nor bow in his hand. No fiery threatenings fall from his lips, nor does he speak with eloquent persuasion. He is unarmed, yet victorious; is silent, but yet conquering. In this garb he goeth forth to war. His shame is his armour, and his sufferings are his battle axe. How say you? How can it be so? I speak no fiction, but sober fact, and it shall be proved.

Missionaries have gone forth to win *the heathen* for Christ, and they have commenced with the uncivilized sons of sin by telling them that there is a God, and that he is great and just: the people have listened unmoved, or have only answered, "Dost thou think we know not this?" Then they have spoken of sin and its punishment, and have foretold the coming of the Lord to judgment, but still the people stirred not, but coolly said, "'Tis true," and then went on their way to live in sin as before. At last these earnest men have let fall the blessed secret, and spoken of the love of God in giving his only begotten Son, and they have begun to tell the story of the matchless griefs of Immanuel. Then have the dry bones stirred, then have the deaf begun to hear. They tell us that they had not long told the story before they noticed that eyes were fastened on them, and that countenances were beaming with interest which had been listless before, and they have said to themselves, "Why did we not begin with this?" Ay, why indeed? for this it is that touches men's hearts. Christ crucified is the conqueror. Not in his robes of glory does he subdue the heart, but in his vestments of shame. Not as sitting upon the throne does he at first gain the faith and the affections of sinners, but as bleeding, suffering, and dying in their stead. "God forbid that I should glory," said the apostle, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and though every theme that is connected with the Saviour ought to play its part in our ministry, yet this is the master theme. The atoning work of Jesus is the great gun of our battery. The cross is the mighty battering-ram wherewith to break in pieces the brazen gates of human prejudices and the iron bars of obstinacy. Christ coming to be our judge alarms, but Christ the man of sorrows subdues. The crown of thorns has a royal power in it to compel a willing allegiance, the sceptre of reed breaks hearts better than a rod of iron, and the robe of mockery commands more love than Cæsar's imperial purple. There is nothing like it under heaven. Victories ten thousand times ten thousand

have been achieved by him whom Pilate led forth to the multitude,—victories distinctly to be ascribed to the thorny crown and vesture of mockery, are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? There will be more such as he is more frequently set forth in his own fashion, and men are bidden in the Man of sorrows to behold their King.

Has it not been so *at home* as well as among the far-off heathen? What winneth men's hearts to Christ to-day? What but Christ in shame and Christ in suffering? I appeal to you who have been newly converted; what has bound you as captives to Jesus' chariot? What has made you henceforth vow to be his followers, rejoicing in his name? What but this, that he bowed his head to the death for your sake and hath redeemed you unto God by his blood? You know it is so.

And oh, dear *children of God*, if ever you feel the power of Christ upon you to the full, till it utterly overcomes you, is it not the memory of redeeming grief which doeth it? When you become like harps, and Jesus is the minstrel and layeth his finger amongst your heart-strings and bringeth out nothing but praise for his dear name, what is it that charms you into the music of grateful love but the fact of his condescension on your behalf? Is not this your song, that he was slain and hath redeemed you unto God by his blood? I confess I could sit me down at his cross' foot and do nothing else but weep until I wept myself away, for his sufferings make my soul to melt within me. Then if the call of duty is heard I feel intensely eager to plead with others, ready to make any sacrifice to bring others under my Lord's dominion, and full of a holy passion that even death could not quench—all this, I say, if I have but just come from gazing on the Redeemer's passion, and drinking of his cup and being baptized with his baptism. The sceptre of reed rules as nothing else ever did, for it rouses enthusiasm. The thorn-crown commands homage as no other diadem ever did, for it braces men into heroes and martyrs. No royalty is so all-commanding as that which has for its insignia the chaplet of thorn, the reed, the red cloak, and the five wounds. Other sovereignties are forced, and feigned, and hollow compared with the sovereignty of "the despised of men": fear, or custom, or self-interest make men courtiers elsewhere, but fervent love crowds the courts of King Jesus. We do not merely say that the marred countenance is the most majestic ever seen, but we have felt it to be so on many an occasion, yea, and feel it to be so now. Do you want to make our hard hearts soft? Tell us of Jesus' grief. Would you make us, strong men, into children? Set the Man of sorrows in our midst; there is no resisting *him*.

Look ye also at *backsliders* if ye would see the power of the despised Nazarene. If they have gone away from Christ, if they have become lukewarm, if their hearts have become obdurate to him who once could charm them, what can bring them back? I know but one magnet which in the hands of the Holy Spirit will attract these sadly fallen ones: it is Jesus in his shame and pains. We tell them that they crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, and they look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him. O ye that after having sipped of the communion cup have gone to drink at the table of Bacchus, ye who after having talked of love to Christ have followed

after the lusts of the flesh, ye who after singing his praises have blasphemed the sacred name with which ye are named—may his omnipotence of love be proved in you also. What can ever bring you back but this sad reflection, that ye also have twisted for him a crown of thorns and caused him to be blasphemed among his enemies? Still the merit of his death is available for you: the power and efficacy of his precious blood have not ceased even for you, and if you come back to him—and oh, may a sight of him draw you—he will receive you graciously as : t the first. I say to you, “Behold your King,” and may the sovereignty of his humiliation and suffering be proved this morning in some of you as you shall come bending at his feet, conquered by his great love and restored to repentance and faith by his marvellous compassion. A sight of his wounds and bruises heals us, so that we grieve at our rebellions and long to be brought home to God, never to wander more.

Ah, dear brethren, we shall always find, as long as the world standeth, that among saints, sinners, backsliders, and all classes of men Jesus Christ's power is most surely felt when his humiliation is most faithfully declared and most believingly known. It is by this that he will subdue all things to himself. If we will but preach Jesus Christ to the Hindoo it will not be necessary to answer all his metaphysical subtleties—the sorrows of Jesus are as a sharp sword to cut the Gordian knot. If we will go down amongst the degraded inhabitants of Africa we shall not need first to civilize them; the cross is the great lever which lifts up fallen men: it conquers evil and establishes truth and righteousness. The most depraved and hardened learn his great love, and hearts of stone begin to beat; they see Jesus suffering to the death out of nothing else but love to them, and they are touched by it, and eagerly enquire what they must do to be saved by such a Saviour. The Holy Spirit worketh in the minds of many by setting forth the great love and grief of Jesus. May we who are his ministers have great faith in his cross, and henceforth say, as we preach the suffering Jesus, “Behold your King.”

IV. In the fourth place I beg you to “Behold your King” SETTING FORTH THE PATTERN OF HIS KINGDOM. When you look at him you are struck at once with the thought that if he be a king he is like no other monarch, for other kings are covered with rich apparel and surrounded with pomp, but he has none of these. Their glories usually consist in wars by which they have made others suffer, but his glory is his own suffering; no blood but his own has flowed to make him illustrious. He is a king, but he cannot be put in the list of sovereigns such as the nations of the earth are compelled to serve. When Antoninus Pius set up the statue of Jesus in the Pantheon as one of a circle of gods and heroes, it must have seemed strangely out of place to those who gazed upon its visage if the sculptor was at all true to life. It must have stood apart as one that could not be numbered with the rest. Neither can you set him among the masters of the human race who have crushed mankind beneath their iron heel. He was no Cæsar; you cannot make him appear like one: call him not autocrat, emperor, or czar,—he has an authority greater than all these, yet not after their kind. His purple is different from theirs, and his crown also, but his face differs more, and his heart most of all. “My

kingdom," saith he, "is not of this world." For troops he has a host of sorrows, for pomp a surrounding of scorn, for lofty bearing humility, for adulation mockery, for homage spitting, for glory shame, for a throne a cross. Yet was there never truer king, indeed all kings are but a name, save this King, who is a real ruler in himself and of himself, and not by extraneous force. Right royal indeed is the Nazarene, but he cannot be likened unto the princes of earth, nor can his kingdom be reckoned with theirs. I pray that the day may soon come when none may dream of looking upon the church as a worldly organization capable of alliance with temporal sovereignties so as to be patronized, directed, or reformed by them. Christ's kingdom shines as a lone star with a brightness all its own. It standeth apart like a hill of light, sacred and sublime: the high hills may leap with envy because of it, but it is not of them nor like unto them. Is not this manifest even in the appearance of our Lord as Pilate brings him forth and cries, "Behold your King!"?

Now as he sets before us in his own person the pattern of his kingdom, we may expect that we shall see some likeness to him in his subjects; and if you will gaze upon the church, which is his kingdom from the first day of her history until now, you will see that it too is wearing its purple robe. The martyrs' blood is the purple vesture of the church of Christ; the trials and persecutions of believers are her crown of thorns. Think of the rage of persecution under Pagan Rome, and the equally inhuman proceedings of Papal Rome, and you will see how the ensign of Christ's kingdom is a crown of thorns; a crown and yet thorns, thorns but still a crown. The bush is burning, but it is not consumed. If you, beloved, are truly followers of Jesus, you must expect to take your measure of shame and dishonour, and you may reckon upon your allotment of griefs and sorrows. The "Man of sorrows" attracts a sorrowful following. The lamb of God's passover is still eaten with bitter herbs. The child of God cannot escape the rod, for the elder brother did not, and to him we are to be conformed. We must "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians i. 24).

Recollect, however, that Christ's sufferings as a pattern were not for his own sins, nor brought upon him as a chastisement for his own faults, so that the sufferings which belong to his kingdom are those which are endured for his name and for his glory's sake, and for the good of others. If men lie in prison for their own crimes, that has nothing to do with his kingdom; if we suffer for our sins, that is no part of his kingdom; but when a man loseth of his substance for Christ's cause, layeth out himself to toil even unto death, beareth contempt and suffers hardness as a Christian—this is after the type of Christ's kingdom. When the missionary goeth forth with his life in his hand among the heathen, or when a believer in any way divesteth himself of comfort for the good of others, it is then that he truly copies the pattern set him in Pilate's hall by our great King. I say to you Christians who court ease, to you who are hoarding up your gold, to you who will do nothing that would bring you under the criticism of your fellow men, to you who live unto yourselves,—would it not be irony of the severest kind if I were to point to Jesus before

Pilate and say, "Behold your King." Living in undue luxury, amassing wealth, rolling in ease, living to enjoy yourselves! Is that your King? Poor subjects you, and very unlike your Lord; but if there be among us those who for his sake can make sacrifices, we may look upon our King without fear. You who are undaunted by contempt, and who would give all that you have, yea, and give yourselves to know Jesus, and are doing so, to such I say, "Behold your King," for you are of his kingdom and you shall reign **with him**. In your your conquest of yourselves you have already become kings. In reigning over your own desires and carnal inclinations, for the sake of his dear love, you are already kings and priests unto God, and you shall reign for ever and ever. He who is ruled by his passions in any degree is still a slave, but he who lives for God and his fellow men hath a royal soul. The insignia of a prince unto God are still shame and suffering: which adornments are readily worn when the Lord calls him so to do. In Christ's kingdom those are peers of the highest rank who are most like their Lord and are the lowest and humblest in mind, and most truly the servants of all. The secondary princes of his kingdom approximate less closely to him, and the lower you descend in the scale the less you are like him in those respects. The Christian surrounded with every comfort, who never endured hardness for Christ, who never knew what it was to be sneered at for Jesus' sake, who never made a sacrifice which went so far as to pinch him in the least, he, if indeed he be a Christian, is least in the kingdom of heaven. Proud, rich men who give but trifles to Christ's cause are pariahs in his kingdom, but they are the chief who are willing to be least of all, they are princes who make themselves the offscouring of all things for his name's sake, such as were the apostles and first martyrs, and others whom his love has greatly constrained.

V. Our concluding remark shall be, "Behold your King"—PROVING THE CERTAINTY OF HIS EMPIRE.—for if, beloved, Christ was King when he was in Pilate's hands, after being scourged and spit upon, and while he was wearing the robe and crown of mockery, when will he not be King? If he was King at his worst, when is it that his throne can ever be shaken? They have brought him very low, they have brought him lower than the sons of men, for they have made him a worm and no man, despised of the people, *and yet he is King!* Marks of royalty were present on the day of his death. He dispensed crowns when he was on the cross,—he gave the dying thief a promise of an entrance into Paradise. In his death he shook the earth, he opened the graves, he rent the rocks, he darkened the sun, and he made men smite on their breasts in dismay. One voice after another, even from the ranks of his foes, proclaimed him to be King, even when dying like a malefactor. Was he a King then? When will he not be King? and who is there that can by any means shake his throne? In the days of his flesh "the Kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, saying, Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast his cords from us"; but he that sat in the heavens did laugh, the Lord did have them in derision, and Christ on the cross was acknowledged, in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, to be still the King of the Jews. When will he not be King? If he was King before he died and was laid in the grave, what is he now that he has risen from the dead, now that he has

vanquished the destroyer of our race, and lives no more to die? What is he now? Ye angels, tell what glories surround him now! If he was King when he stood at Pilate's bar, what will he be when Pilate shall stand at his bar, when he shall come on the great white throne and summon all mankind before him to judgment? What will be his acknowledged sovereignty and his dreaded majesty in the day of the Lord? Come, let us adore him; let us pay our humble homage in the courts of the Lord's house this day; and then let us go forth to our daily service in his name, and make this our strong resolve, his Spirit helping us, that we will live to crown him in our hearts and in our lives, in every place where our lot may be cast, till the day break and the shadows flee away, and we behold the King in his beauty and the land that is very far off. None can overturn a kingdom which is founded on the death of its King; none can abolish a dominion whose deep foundations are laid in the tears and blood of the Prince himself. Napoleon said that he founded his empire by force, and therefore it had passed away; but, said he, "Jesus founded his kingdom upon love, and it will last for ever." So it must be, for whatever may or may not be, it is written—"He must reign."

As for us, if we wish to extend the Redeemer's kingdom we must be prepared to deny ourselves for Christ, we must be prepared for weariness, slander, and self-denial. In this sign we conquer. The cross will have to be borne by us as well as by him if we are to reign with Jesus. We must both teach the cross and bear the cross. We must participate in the shame if we would participate in the glory. No thorn no throne. When again shall be heard the voice, "Behold your King," and Jew and Gentile shall see him enthroned, and surrounded with all his Father's angels, with the whole earth subdued to his power, happy shall he be who shall then in the exalted Saviour behold his King. The Lord grant us this day to be loyal subjects of the Crucified that we may be favoured to share his glory.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xix. 1—30.

THE DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 26TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”—Matthew xxvii. 19.

I EARNESTLY wished to pursue the story of our Saviour's trials previous to his crucifixion, but when I sat down to study the subject I found myself altogether incapable of the exercise. “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” My emotions grew so strong, and my sense of our Lord's grief became so extremely vivid, that I felt I must waive the subject for a time. I could not watch with him another hour, and yet I could not leave the hallowed scene. It was, therefore, a relief to meet with the episode of Pilate's wife and her dream: it enables me to continue the thread of my narrative, and yet to relax the extreme tension of the feelings caused by a near view of the Master's grief and shame. My spirit failed before the terrible sight. I thought I saw him brought back from Herod where the men of war had set him at naught. I followed him through the streets again as the cruel priests pushed through the crowd and hastened him back to Pilate's hall. I thought I heard them in the streets electing Barabbas, the robber, to be set free, instead of Jesus, the Saviour, and I detected the first rising of that awful cry, “Crucify, crucify,” which they shrieked out from their bloodthirsty throats: and there he stood, who loved me and gave himself for me, like a lamb in the midst of wolves, with none to pity and none to help him. The vision overwhelmed me, especially when I knew that the next stage would be that Pilate, who had exculpated him by declaring, “I find no fault in him,” would give him over to the tormentors that he might be scourged, that the mercenary soldiery would crown him with thorns and mercilessly insult him, and that he would be brought forth to the people and announced to them with that heart-rending word, “Behold the man!” Was there ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? Rather than speak about it this day I feel inclined to act like Job's friends, of whom it is written, that at the sight of him “they lifted up their voice, and wept; and sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”

No. 1,647-8.

We leave the Master awhile to look at this dream of Pilate's wife, which is only spoken of once in the Scriptures, and then by Matthew. I know not why that evangelist only should have been commissioned to record it; perhaps he alone heard of it; but the one record is sufficient for our faith, and long enough to furnish food for meditation. We receive the story as certified by the Holy Spirit.

Pilate throughout his term of office had grossly misbehaved himself. He had been an unjust and unscrupulous ruler of the Jews. The Galileans and the Samaritans both felt the terror of his arms; for he did not hesitate to massacre them at the slightest sign of revolt; and among the Jews themselves he had sent men with daggers into the midst of the crowds at the great gatherings, and so had cut off those who were obnoxious to him. Gain was his object, and pride ruled his spirit. At the time when Jesus of Nazareth was brought before him a complaint against him was on the way to Tiberius the Emperor, and he feared lest he should be called to account for his oppressions, extortions, and murders. His sins at this moment were beginning to punish him: as Job would word it, "The iniquities of his heels compassed him about." One terrible portion of the penalty of sin is its power to force a man to commit yet further iniquity. Pilate's transgressions were now howling around him like a pack of wolves; he could not face them, and he had not grace to flee to the one great refuge; but his fears drove him to flee before them, and there was no way apparently open for him but that which led him into yet deeper abominations. He knew that Jesus was without a single fault, and yet since the Jews clamoured for his death he felt that he must yield to their demands, or else they would raise another accusation against himself, namely, that he was not loyal to the sovereignty of Cæsar, for he had allowed one to escape who had called himself a king. If he had behaved justly he would not have been afraid of the chief priests and scribes. Innocence is brave; but guilt is cowardly. Pilate's old sins found him out and made him weak in the presence of the ignoble crew, whom otherwise he would have driven from the judgment seat. He had power enough to have silenced them, but he had not sufficient decision of character to end the contention: the power was gone from his mind because he knew that his conduct would not bear investigation, and he dreaded the loss of his office, which he held only for his own ends. See there with pity that scornful but vacillating creature wavering in the presence of men who were more wicked than himself and more determined in their purpose. The fell determination of the wicked priests caused hesitating policy to quail in their presence, and Pilate was driven to do what he would gladly have avoided.

The manner and the words of Jesus had impressed Pilate. I say the manner of Jesus, for his matchless meekness must have struck the governor as being a very unusual thing in a prisoner. He had seen in captured Jews the fierce courage of fanaticism; but there was no fanaticism in Christ. He had also seen in many prisoners the meanness which will do or say anything to escape from death; but he saw nothing of that about our Lord. He saw in him unusual gentleness and humility combined with majestic dignity. He beheld submission blended with innocence. This made Pilate feel how awful goodness is.

He was impressed—he could not help being impressed—with this unique sufferer. Besides, our Lord had before him witnessed a good confession—you remember how we considered it the other day—and though Pilate had huffed it off with the pert question, “What is truth?” and had gone back into the judgment-hall, yet there was an arrow fixed within him which he could not shake off. It may have been mainly superstition; but he felt an awe of one whom he half suspected to be an extraordinary personage. He felt that he himself was placed in a very extraordinary position, being asked to condemn one whom he knew to be perfectly innocent. His duty was clear enough, he could never have had a question about that; but duty was nothing to Pilate in comparison with his own interests. He would spare the Just One if he could do so without endangering himself; but his cowardly fears lashed him on to the shedding of innocent blood.

At the very moment when he was vacillating, when he had proffered to the Jews the choice of Barabbas, or Jesus of Nazareth;—at that very moment, I say, when he had taken his seat upon the bench, and was waiting for their choice, there came from the hand of God a warning to him, a warning which would for ever make it clear that, if he condemned Jesus, it would be done voluntarily by his own guilty hands. Jesus must die by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and yet it must be by wicked hands that he is crucified and slain; and hence, Pilate must not sin in ignorance. A warning to Pilate came from his own wife concerning her morning's dream, a vision of mystery and terror, warning him not to touch that just person; “for,” said she, “I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” There are times in most men's lives when, though they have been wrong, yet they have not quite been set on mischief, but have come to a pause and have deliberated as to their way; and then God in great mercy has sent them a caution, and has set up a danger-signal bidding them stop in their mad career ere they plunged themselves finally into irretrievable ruin. Somewhere in that direction lies the subject of our present discourse. O that the Spirit of God may make it useful to many.

I. And, first, I call your attention to THE CO-OPERATION OF PROVIDENCE WITH THE WORK OF GOD. I call it the work of God to warn men against sin, and I call your attention to Providence working with it to bring the preventives and cautions of divine mercy home to men's minds.

For, first, observe the providence of God *in sending this dream*. If anything beneath the moon may be thought to be exempt from law, and to be the creature of pure chance, surely it is a dream. True, there were in old time dreams in which God spake to men prophetically; but ordinarily they are the carnival of thought, a maze of mental states, a dance of disorder. The dreams which would naturally come to the wife of a Roman governor would not be likely to have much of tenderness or conscience in them, and would not, in all probability, of themselves run in the line of mercy. Dreams ordinarily are the most disorderly of phenomena, and yet it seems that they are ordered of the Lord. I can well understand that every drop of spray which flashes from the wave when it dashes against the cliff has its appointed orbit as truly as the stars of heaven;

but the thoughts of men appear to be utterly lawless, especially the thoughts of men when deep sleep falleth upon them. As well might one foretell the flight of a bird as the course of a dream. Such wild fantasies seem to be ungoverned and ungovernable. Many things operate naturally to fashion a dream. Dreams frequently depend upon the condition of the stomach, upon the meat and drink taken by the sleeper before going to rest. They often owe their shape to the state of the body or the agitation of the mind. Dreams may, no doubt, be caused by that which transpires in the chamber of the house; a little movement of the bed caused by passing wheels, or the tramp of a band of men, or the passing of a domestic across the floor, or even the running of a mouse behind the wainscot, may suggest and shape a dream. Any slight matter affecting the senses at such time may raise within the slumbering mind a mob of strange ideas. Yet whatever may have operated in this lady's case, the hand of providence was in it all, and her mind, though fancy free, wandered nowhere but just according to the will of God, to effect the divine purpose. She must dream just so, and no how else, and that dream must be of such and such an order, and none other. Even dreamland knows no god but God, and even phantoms and shadows come and go at his bidding, neither can the images of a night-vision escape from the supreme authority of the Most High. See the providence of God in the fact that the dream of Pilate's wife, however caused, should be of such a form and come at such a time as this. Certain old writers trace her dream to the devil, who thus hoped to prevent the death of our Lord, and so prevent our redemption. I do not agree with the notion; but even if it were so, I admire all the more the providence which overrules even the devices of Satan for the purposes of wisdom. Pilate must be warned, so that his sentence may be his own act and deed, and that warning is given him through his wife's dream. So doth Providence work.

Note, next, the providence of God in arranging that *with this dream there should be great mental suffering*. "I have suffered many things in a dream concerning him!" I cannot tell what vision passed before her mind's eye, but it was one which caused her terrible agony. A modern artist has painted a picture of what he imagined the dream to be, but I shall not attempt to follow that great man in the exercise of fancy. Pilate's wife may have realized in her sleep the dreadful spectacle of the thorn-crown and the scourge, or even of the crucifixion and the death-agony; and truly I know of nothing more calculated to make the heart suffer many things concerning the Lord Jesus than a glance at his death. Around the cross there gathers grief enough to cause many a sleepless night, if the soul has any tenderness left in it. Or her dream may have been of quite another kind. She may have seen in vision the Just One coming in the clouds of heaven. Her mind may have pictured him upon the great white throne, even the man whom her husband was about to condemn to die. She may have seen her husband brought forth to judgment, himself a prisoner to be tried by the Just One, who had aforetime been accused before him. She may have awoke, startled at the shriek of her husband as he fell back into the pit that knows no bottom. Whatever it was,

she had suffered repeated painful emotions in the dream, and she awoke startled and amazed. The terror of the night was upon her, and it threatened to become a terror to her for all her days, and she therefore hastens to stay her husband's hand. Now, herein is the hand of God, and the simple story goes to prove that the wandering Zingari of dreamland are still under his control, and he can cause them to produce distress and anguish, if some grand end is to be served thereby.

Equally remarkable is it that *she should have sent to her husband the message*, "Have nothing to do with this just person." Most dreams we quite forget; a few we mention as remarkable, and only now and then one is impressed upon us so that we remember it for years. Scarcely have any of you had a dream which made you send a message to a magistrate upon the bench. Such an intention would only be resorted to in an urgent case. Though the judge were your own husband you would be very hard pressed before you would worry him with your dreams while he was occupied with important public business. Mostly a dream may wait till business is over. But so deep was the impression upon this Roman lady's mind that she does not wait until her lord comes home, but sends to him at once. Her advice is urgent—"Have thou nothing to do with this Just One." She must warn him now, before he has laid a stroke on him, much less imbrued his hands in his blood. Not "have a little to do and scourge him, and let him go," but "have thou nothing to do with him. Say not an unkind word, nor do him any injury! Deliver him from his adversaries! If he must die, let it be by some other hand than thine! My husband, my husband, my husband, I beseech thee, have thou nothing to do with this just person. Let him alone, I pray thee!" She words her message very emphatically. "Have thou nothing to do with this just person: for I have suffered many things in a dream concerning him. Think of thy wife! think of thyself! Let my sufferings about this Holy One be a warning to thee. For my sake let him alone!" And yet, do you know, her message to my ear sounds rather authoritative for a woman to her husband, and he a judge! There is a tone about it that is not ordinarily in the address of wives to husbands. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." It shows a wonderful providence of God that this lady was moved to send so strong a message to her self-willed husband, to beseech, to entreat, to implore, almost to demand of him, that he let this just man go. O Providence, how mightily canst thou work! O Lord, the seraphim obey thee, but thou findest an equally willing servitor in a wife who, at thy bidding, stands between her husband and a crime.

Once more, about this providence I want you to notice *the peculiar time in which her warning came*. It was evidently a dream of the morning: "I have suffered many things in a dream this day." The day had not long broken—it was yet early in the morning. The Romans had a superstition that morning dreams are true. I suppose it was after her husband had left her that she thus dreamed. If I may be allowed, not to state a fact, but to make a conjecture, which seems to me most probable, she was a dearly beloved wife, but sickly, and therefore needed to rest further into the day than her husband; and when he had left

his couch she had yet another sleep, and being a sensitive person, and all the more likely to dream, she awoke from her morning sleep oppressed with a terror which she could not shake off. Pilate was gone, and she was told that he was in the judgment-hall. She asked her attendants why he was there so early, and they replied that there had been an unusual clamour in the courtyard, for the high priests and a mob of Jews had been there, and the governor had gone out to them. They might, perhaps, also tell her that Jesus of Nazareth was brought there a prisoner, and the priests were entreating Pilate to put him to death, though they had heard the governor say that he found no fault in him. "Go," she said to her maid, "call to one of the guards, and bid him go at once to my husband, and say what I tell you. Let him speak aloud, that some of the cruel Jews may hear it, and be moved from their cruel purpose: let him say that I implore my husband to have nothing to do with this just person, for I have suffered many things this very morning in a dream concerning him." Just at the moment, you see, when he had sat down on the judgment-seat, the warning came to him. When there was a little lull, and he was anxious to acquit his prisoner, at that instant of time which was the most hopeful this weight was thrown into the right side of the scale, thrown in most wisely and mercifully to keep back Pilate from his grievous sin. The warning came at the nick of time, as we say, though, alas, it came in vain! Admire the punctuality of Providence. God never is before his time; he never is too late. It shall be seen concerning all that he doeth that on the selfsame day determined by the prophecy the fulfilment came. My soul stands trembling while she sings the glory of her God, whose providence is high, even like Ezekiel's wheels; but the wheels are full of eyes, and, as they turn, all the surroundings are observed and provided for, so that there are no slips, or oversights, or accidents, or delays. Prompt and effectual is the operation of the Lord.

Thus much concerning Providence, and I think you will all agree that my point is proven—that providence is always co-working with the grace of God. A great writer who knows but little about divine things, yet, nevertheless, tells us that he perceives a power in the world which works for righteousness. Exactly so! It is well spoken, for this is the chief of all powers. When you and I go out to warn men of sin, we are not alone, all Providence is at our back. When we preach Christ crucified, we are workers together with God; God is working with us as well as by us. Everything that happens is driving towards the end for which we work, when we seek to convince men of sin and of righteousness. Where the Spirit of God is, all the forces of nature and providence are mustered. The fall of empires, the death of despots, the uprise of nations, the making or the breaking of treaties, terrific wars and blighting famines, are all working out the grand end. Yea, and domestic matters, such as the death of children, the sickness of wives, the loss of work, the poverty of the family, and a thousand other things are working, working, ever working, for the improvement of men; and you and I, lending our poor feebleness to co-operate with God, are marching with all the forces of the universe. Have comfort, then, in this. O workers for Jesus, suffering many things for him, be of good courage, for the stars in their courses fight for the

servants of the living God, and the stones of the field are in league with you.

II. Secondly, I gather from this story THE ACCESSIBILITY OF CONSCIENCE TO GOD. How are we to reach Pilate? How are we to give him warning? He has rejected the voice of Jesus and the sight of Jesus—could not Peter be fetched to expostulate with him? Alas, he has denied his Master. Could not John be brought in? Even he has forsaken the Lord. Where shall a messenger be found? It shall be found in a dream. God can get at men's hearts, however hardened they may be. Never give them up, never despair of arousing them. If my ministry, your ministry, and the ministry of the blessed Book should all seem to be nothing, God can reach the conscience by a dream. If the sword cometh not at them at close quarters, yet what seems but a stray arrow from a bow drawn at a venture shall find out the joints in their harness. We ought to believe in God about wicked men, and never say of them, "It is impossible that they should be converted." The Lord can wound leviathan, for his weapons are many, and they are suited to the foe. I do not think a dream would operate upon *my* mind to convince me; but certain minds lie open in that direction, and to them a dream may be a power. God may use even superstition to accomplish his beneficent purposes. Many besides Pilate have been warned by dreams.

Better still, Pilate was accessible through the dream of *his wife*. Henry Melvill has a very wonderful discourse upon this topic, in which he tries to show that probably if Pilate had dreamed this dream himself it would not have been so operative upon him as when his wife dreamed it. He takes it as a supposition, which nobody can deny, that Pilate had an affectionate and tender wife, who was very dear to him. The one brief narrative which we have of her certainly looks that way; it is evident that she loved her husband dearly, and would therefore prevent his acting unjustly to Jesus. To send a warning by her was to reach Pilate's conscience through his affections. If his beloved wife was distressed it would be sure to weigh heavily with him: for he would not have her troubled. He would fain shield his tender one from every breath of wind and give her perfect comfort, and when she pleads it is his delight to yield: it is, therefore, no small trouble to him that she is suffering, suffering so much as to send a message to him, suffering because of one who deserves her good opinion—one whom he himself knows to be without fault. If this lady was indeed the wife of Pilate's youth, tender and dearly beloved, and if she was gradually sickening before his eyes, her pale face would rise before his loving memory, and her words would have boundless power over him when she said, "I have suffered many things in a dream." O *Claudia Procula*, if that were thy name, well did the Lord of mercy entrust his message to thy persuasive lips, for from thee it would come with tenfold influence. Tradition declares this lady to have been a Christian, and the Greek church have placed her in their calendar as a saint. For this we have no evidence; all that we know is that she was Pilate's wife, and used her wifely influence to stay him from this crime. How often has a tender, suffering, loving woman exercised great power over a coarse, rough man! The All-wise One knows this, and hence he often speaks to sinful men by this influential agency. He converts one in a family that she may be his missionary

to the rest. Thus he speaks with something better than the tongues of men and of angels, for he uses love itself to be his orator. Affection has more might than eloquence. That is why, my friend, God sent you for a little while that dear child who prattled to you about the Saviour. She is gone to heaven now, but the music of her little hymns rings in your ear even now, and her talk about Jesus and the angels is yet with you. She has been called home; but God sent her to you for a season to charm you to himself and win you to the right way. Thus he bade you cease from sin and turn to Christ. And that dear mother of yours, who is now before the throne, do you remember what she said to you when she was dying? You have heard me a great many times, but you never heard a sermon from me like that address from her dying couch. You can never quite forget it, or shake yourself free from its power. Beware how you trifle with it. To Pilate his wife's message was God's ultimatum; he warned him never again, and even Jesus stood silent before him. O my friend, to you it may be that your child, your mother, or your affectionate wife may be God's last messenger, the final effort of the warning angel to bring you to a better mind. A loving relative pleading with tears is often the forlorn hope of mercy. An attack so skilfully planned and wisely conducted may be regarded as the last assault of love upon a stubborn spirit, and after this it will be left to its own devices. The selection of the wife was no doubt made by infinite wisdom and tenderness, that if possible Pilate might be arrested in his career of crime and strengthened to the performance of an act of justice by which he would have avoided the most terrible of crimes.

So, then, we may safely conclude that the Lord has his missionaries where the city missionary cannot enter; he sends the little children to sing and pray where the preacher is never heard; he moves the godly woman to proclaim the gospel by her lip and life where the Bible is not read. He sends a sweet girl to grow up and win a brother or a father where no other voice would be allowed to tell of Jesus and his love. We thank God it is so; it gives hope for the households of this godless city,—it gives us hope even for those for whom the Sabbath-bell rings out in vain. They will hear, they must hear these home preachers, these messengers who tug at their hearts.

Ay, and let me add that where God does not employ a dream, nor use a wife, yet he can get at men's conscience by no visible means but *by thoughts which come unbidden and abide upon the soul*. Truths long buried suddenly rise up, and when the man is in the very act of sin he is stopped in the way, as Balaam was when the angel met him. How often it has happened that conscience has met a guilty man even in the moment when he meant to enjoy the pleasure bought with wrong, even as Elijah met Ahab at the gate of Naboth's vineyard! How the king starts back as he beholds the prophet: he would sooner have seen the very fiend than Elijah. Angrily he cries, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Though, indeed, Elijah was his best friend, had he known it. Often does conscience pounce upon a man when the sweet morsel of sin has just been rolled under his tongue, and he is sitting down to enjoy it: the visitation of conscience turns the stolen honey into bitterness, and the forbidden joy into anguish. Conscience often lies like a lion in a thicket, and when the sinner comes along the broad

road it leaps upon him, and for a while he is sorely put to it. The bad man is comparable to leviathan, of whom we read that his scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal; so that the sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold, the spear, the dart, nor the javelin; and yet the Lord hath a way of coming at him and of sore wounding him. Let us, therefore, both hope and pray for the very worst of men.

Brothers and sisters, use for the good of men anything which comes in your way. Use not only sober argument and sound doctrine, but even if a dream has touched your heart, do not hesitate to repeat it where it may have effect. Any weapon may be used in this war. But see to it that you do seek the souls of men, all of you. You who are wives should be especially stirred up to this sacred work. Remember Pilate's wife, and think of her as affectionately giving the warning to her husband, and go and do likewise. Never keep back from an ungodly husband the word which may convert him from the error of his ways. And you, dear children, you sisters, you of the gentler sort, do not hesitate, in your own quiet way, to be heralds for Jesus wherever your lot is cast. As for us all, let us take care that we use every occasion for repressing sin and creating holiness. Let us warn the ungodly at once; for perhaps the man to whom we are sent has not yet performed the fatal deed. Let us stand in the gap while yet there is space for repentance. Pilate is even now sitting on the judgment-seat. Time is precious. Make haste! Make haste, ere yet he commits the deed of blood! Send the messenger to him! Stop him ere the deed is done; even though he should complain of your interference. Say to him, "Have thou nothing to do with this just person: for I have suffered many things because of him, and I pray thee do nothing against him."

That is our second point. God bless it; although I cannot preach upon it as I would, the Spirit of God can put power into it.

III. Thirdly, we have now the lamentable task of observing THE FREQUENT FAILURE EVEN OF THE BEST MEANS. I have ventured to say that, humanly speaking, it was the best means of reaching Pilate's conscience for his wife to be led to expostulate with him. He would hear but few, but her he would hear; and yet even her warning was in vain. What was the reason?

First, *self-interest* was involved in the matter, and that is a powerful factor. Pilate was afraid of losing his governorship. The Jews would be angry if he did not obey their cruel bidding; they might complain to Tiberius, and he would lose his lucrative position. Alas, such things as these are holding some of you captives to sin at this moment. You cannot afford to be true and right, for it would cost too much. You know the will of the Lord; you know what is right; but you renounce Christ by putting him off, and by abiding in the ways of sin that you may gain the wages thereof. You are afraid that to be a true Christian would involve the loss of a friend's goodwill, or the patronage of an ungodly person, or the smile of an influential worldlying, and this you cannot afford. You count the cost, and reckon that it is too high. You resolve to gain the world, even though you lose your soul! What then? You will go to hell rich! A sorry result this! Do you see anything

desirable in such an attainment? Oh that you would consider your ways and listen to the voice of wisdom!

The next reason why his wife's appeal was ineffectual was the fact that Pilate was a *coward*. A man with legions at his back, and yet afraid of a Jewish mob,—afraid to let one poor prisoner go whom he knew to be innocent; afraid because he knew his conduct would not bear inspection! He was, morally, a coward! Multitudes of people go to hell because they have not the courage to fight their way to heaven. "The fearful and unbelieving shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." So saith the word of God. They are afraid of encountering a fool's laugh, and so rush upon everlasting contempt. They could not bear to tear themselves away from old companions, and excite remarks and sarcasm among ungodly wits, and so they keep their companions and perish with them. They have not the pluck to say "No," and swim against the stream; they are such cowardly creatures that they will sooner be for ever lost than face a little scorn.

Yet while there was cowardice in Pilate, there was *presumption* too. He who was afraid of man and afraid to do right, yet dared to incur the guilt of innocent blood. Oh, the cowardice of Pilate to take water and wash his hands, as if he could wash off blood with water; and then to say, "I am innocent of his blood,"—which was a lie,—“see ye to it.” By those last words he brought the blood upon himself, for he consigned his prisoner to their tender mercies, and they could not have laid a hand upon him unless he had given them leave. Oh, the daring of Pilate thus in the sight of God to commit murder and disclaim it. There is a strange mingling of cowardliness and courage about many men; they are afraid of a man, but not afraid of the eternal God who can destroy both body and soul in hell. This is why men are not saved, even when the best of means are used, because they are presumptuous, and dare defy the Lord.

Besides this, Pilate was *double-minded*: he had a heart and a heart. He had a heart after that which was right, for he sought to release Jesus; but he had another heart after that which was gainful, for he would not run the risk of losing his post by incurring the displeasure of the Jews. We have plenty around us who are double-minded. Such are here this morning; but where were they last night? You will be touched by to-day's sermon! How will you be affected to-morrow by a lewd speech or a lascivious song? Many men run two ways; they seem earnest about their souls, but they are far more eager after gain or pleasure. Strange perversity of man that he should tear himself in two. We have heard of tyrants tying men to wild horses and dragging them asunder, but these people do this with themselves. They have too much conscience to neglect the Sabbath, and to forego attendance at the house of prayer; too much conscience to be utterly irreligious, to be honestly infidel; and yet at the same time they have not enough conscience to keep them from being hypocrites. They let "I dare not" wait upon "I would." They want to do justly, but it would be too costly. They dare not run risks, and yet, meanwhile, they run the awful risk of being driven for ever from the presence of God to the place where hope can never come. Oh that my words were shot

as from a culverin! Oh that they would hurl a cannon-shot at indecision! Oh that I could speak like God's own thunder, which maketh the hinds to calve, and breaketh the rocks in pieces: even so would I warn men against these desperate evils which thwart the efforts of mercy, so that, even when the man's own wife, with tenderest love, bids him escape from the wrath to come, he still chooses his own destruction.

IV. Lastly, we have a point which is yet more terrible, THE OVERWHELMING CONDEMNATION OF THOSE WHO THUS TRANSGRESS. This Pilate was guilty beyond all excuse. He deliberately and of his own free will condemned the just Son of God to die, being informed that he was the Son of God, and knowing both from his own examination and from his wife that he was a "just person."

Observe that the message which he received was most distinct. It was suggested by a dream; but there is nothing dreamy about it. It is as plain as words can be put:—"Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." He condemned the Lord with his eyes open, and that is an awful way of sinning. Oh, my dear friends, am I addressing any here who are purposing to do some very sinful thing, but have lately received a warning from God? I would add one more caution. I pray you by the blessed God, and by the bleeding Saviour, and as you love yourself, and as you love her from whom the warning may have come to you, do stop, and hold your hand! Do not this abominable thing! You know better. The warning is not put to you in some mysterious and obscure way; but it comes point blank to you in unmistakable terms. God has sent conscience to you, and he has enlightened that conscience, so that it speaks very plain English to you. This morning's discourse stops you on the highway of sin, puts its pistol to your ear, and demands that you "Stand and deliver." Stir an inch, and it will be at your own soul's peril. Do you hear me? Will you regard the heaven-sent expostulation? Oh, that you would stand still awhile and hear what God shall speak while he bids you yield yourself to Christ to-day. It may be *now or never* with you, as it was with Pilate that day. He had the evil thing which he was about to do fully described to him, and therefore if he ventured on it, his presumption would be great. His wife had not said, "Have nothing to do with this man," but "with this just man," and that word rang in his ears, and again and again repeated itself till he repeated it too. Read the twenty-fourth verse. When he was washing his wicked hands he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person,"—the very name his wife had given to our Lord. The arrows stuck in him! He could not shake them off! Like a wild beast, he had the javelin sticking in his side, and though he rushed into the forest of his sin, it was evidently rankling in him still:—"that just person" haunted him. Sometimes God makes a man see sin as sin, and makes him see the blackness of it; and if he then perseveres in it, he becomes doubly guilty, and pulls down upon himself a doom intolerable beyond that of Sodom of old.

Beside that, Pilate was sinning not only after distinct warning, and a warning which set out the blackness of the sin, but he was sinning after his conscience had been touched and moved through his affections. It

is a dreadful thing to sin against a mother's prayer. She stands in your way; she stretches out her arms, with tears she declares that she will block your road to perdition. Will you force your way to ruin over her prostrate form? She kneels! She grasps your knees, she begs you not to be lost. Are you so brutal as to trample on her love? Your little child entreats you; will you disregard her tears? Alas, she was yours, but death has removed her, and ere she departed she entreated you to follow her to heaven and she sang her little hymn—

“Yes, we'll gather at the river.”

Will you fling your babe aside as though you were another Herod that would slay the innocents, and all in order that you may curse yourself for ever and be your own destroyer? It is hard for me to talk to you thus. If it is coming home to any of you it will be very hard for you to hear it; indeed, I hope it will be so hard that you will end it by saying, “I will yield to love which assails me by such tender entreaties.”

It will not be a piece of mere imagination if I conceive that at the last great day, when Jesus sits upon the judgment-seat, and Pilate stands there to be judged for the deeds done in the body, that his wife will be a swift witness against him to condemn him. I can imagine that at the last great day there will be many such scenes as that, wherein those who loved us best will bring the most weighty evidences against us, if we are still in our sins. I know how it affected me as a lad when my mother, after setting before her children the way of salvation, said to us, “If you refuse Christ and perish, I cannot plead in your favour and say that you were ignorant. No, but I must say Amen to your condemnation.” I could not bear *that!* Would my mother say “Amen” to my condemnation? And yet, Pilate's wife, what canst thou do otherwise? When all must speak the truth, what canst thou say but that thy husband was tenderly and earnestly warned by thee and yet consigned the Saviour to his enemies?

Oh, my ungodly hearers, my soul goes out after you. “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” Why will ye sin against the Saviour? God grant you may not reject your own salvation, but may turn to Christ and find eternal redemption in him. “Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans iii.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—21, 5, 473.

PILATE AND OURSELVES GUILTY OF THE
SAVIOUR'S DEATH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 5TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.”—Matthew xxvii. 24, 25.

THE crucifixion of Christ was the crowning sin of our race. In his death we shall find all the sins of mankind uniting in foul conspiracy. Envy and pride and hate are there, with covetousness, falsehood, and blasphemy, eager to rush on to cruelty, revenge, and murder. The devil roused around the seed of the woman the iniquities of us all: they compassed the Lord about, yea, they compassed him about like bees. All the evils of human hearts of all ages were concentrated around the cross: even as all the rivers run into the sea, and as all the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, so did all the crimes of man gather to the slaying of the Son of God. It seemed as if hell held a levée, and all the various forms of sin came flocking to the rendezvous; army upon army, they hastened to the battle. As the vultures hasten to the body, so came the flocks of sins to make the Lord their prey. By all the assembled troops of sins there was consummated the foulest crime which the sun has ever beheld. By wicked hands they did crucify and slay the Saviour of the world.

We have been singing two hymns in which we took to ourselves a share of the guilt of our Lord's death. We sang—

“Oh, the sharp pangs of smarting pain
My dear Redeemer bore,
When knotty whips and rugged thorns
His sacred body tore.

“But knotty whips and rugged thorns
In vain do I accuse;
In vain I blame the Roman bands,
And the more spiteful Jews.

“’Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.”

And then after the same manner we sorrowfully asked a question, and sang a penitential reply :

“ My Jesus ! who with spittle vile
 Profaned thy sacred brow ?
 Or whose un pitying scourge has made
 Thy precious blood to flow ?
 'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
 Yet, Jesus, pity take !
 Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
 For thy sweet mercy's sake ! ”

Perhaps some of you hardly understand what you have been singing ; but others of us have sincerely and intelligently pleaded guilty of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that he not only suffered for our transgressions, but by our iniquities. This is not clear to a great many ; and I would not have them pretend that it is. They cannot see that they have anything to do with the matter of Jesus' death, and therefore they are not moved to repentance by hearing thereof ; indeed, they imitate the example of Pilate in our text, when he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, and said, “ I am innocent of the blood of this just person.” The object of our present discourse will be to arouse slumbering consciences. Without going into any metaphysical questions as to whether such a man did or did not actually have a share in the particular action by which Jesus died, I shall show you that in many ways men practically commit a like crime, and so prove that they have similar dispositions to those ancient Kill-Christs. Though they repudiate the crucifixion, they repeat it, if not in form, yet in spirit. Though Jesus is not here in flesh and blood, yet the cause of holiness and truth and his divine Spirit are still among us, and men act towards the kingdom of Christ, which is set up among them, in the same way as the Jews and Romans acted towards the incarnate God. True, all men are not alike inveterate against him ; for the Lord spoke of some who have “ the greater sin ; ” and few are as guilty as the traitor Judas, that son of perdition ; but in every form of it the rejection of Christ is a great sin, and it will be a great gospel blessing if it be repented of after the fashion of the prophet when he said, “ They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

I shall now take up the story of our Lord's appearance before Pilate, from the moment of his being sent back to Herod to the time when he was delivered to the Jews to be led away for crucifixion, and I shall try to exhibit by this narrative several ways in which men virtually put the Christ to death, and therefore become partakers of the ancient transgression which was committed at Jerusalem.

I. First, there are some—and these are they who have the greater sin—who are **DETERMINEDLY AND AVOWEDLY THE OPPONENTS OF THE LORD JESUS.** These are the men who are represented by the chief priests and elders of the Jews, who of old sought the Saviour's blood, because they could not endure his teaching. Nothing else would satisfy them but that he should be removed from the earth, for he was a standing protest:

against their evil deeds. They hated him because by his light their wicked lives were reprov'd. These were the true murderers of Christ, who gloried in their shame and defied the punishment of it, crying, "His blood be on us, and on our children." We have still among us those who cannot endure the teaching of our Lord Jesus. His very name seems to excite their worst passions; they rave at the mention of it. Oh, the atrocious things that some have said of late of the Christ of God. They have gone out of their way to insult him. If anyone else had been slandered as he has been, society would not have tolerated the loathsome tongues. Accusations against Jehovah and his Son would seem to be delectable morsels to modern blasphemers, dainties upon which they feed greedily. My flesh trembles when I think of the hard speeches which the ungodly still utter against him who in the day of his humiliation endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. Absurd many of these calumnies would have been, and to be dismissed with uttermost contempt, if it were not for the guilt of the men themselves; for in these speeches we see that the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. They treat not so the heroes of war, the philosophers of antiquity, nor even the notorious scourges of the race; to all of these they show some candour, and often award honours which are doubtfully due; but when they touch upon the person and life of our blessed Lord, candour and honesty are dismissed: anything like an attempt to understand him is refused, and he and his are treated with ridicule, misrepresentation, and falsehood. They heap up their coarsest epithets, they put the worst interpretation upon his words, they give the vilest misrepresentations of his deeds, and attribute to him motives to which he was an utter stranger. Such men are among us, clamouring to be heard. There have been unbelievers and deriders of Jesus in all time; but just now the race is of fouler speech than usual. Once infidelity was philosophical and thoughtful, and great names were to be found upon her roll; but now her noisiest advocates are bullies after the manner of Tom Paine, men who seem to delight in wounding the feelings of the godly and crushing every sacred thing under their feet. These are the true followers of the men whose mouths were full of "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They cannot endure that Jesus should be remembered, much less revered. They claim to be "liberal," and to be large-hearted towards all religions; but their unmitigated scorn of the faith of Jesus is displayed on every possible occasion, proving that the spirit of persecution burns within them. It would be idle for these to say that they would not crucify Christ, for they do crucify him to the utmost of their power by their profane speeches against him.

By a certain number their main attack is aimed against the royal authority and reigning power of the Lord Jesus. They exclaim against him because he claims universal sovereignty. They might not object so much to Christianity as one of various creeds; but as it claims to be supreme they will have nothing to do with it. The Roman Senate was willing to set up Jesus in the Pantheon, among other gods, but when they learned that the Christ claimed to be worshipped alone, then he was denied a place in the circle of adoration. If the gospel claims to be truth, and judges other systems to be false,

straightway it arouses the opposition of the broad school. We have men among us to-day who say, "Yes, there is something good in Christianity as there is in Buddhism." Of this precious Buddhism they seem of late to be wonderfully fond; any idol will suit men so long as they can be rid of the living God. A Christ who will be everything or nothing is not to their taste. When he saith that the idols he will utterly demolish, and break his enemies in pieces as with a rod of iron, they give him the cold shoulder, for they are distinctly the enemies of Jesus Christ if he be set forth as Lord of all.

And we have some of milder cast who, nevertheless, join with this oand; for their opposition is to the deity of Christ. These in effect cry, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." They grow indignant over the claims which Christians advance for their God and Saviour. Christ the best of men, Christ the noblest of prophets, Christ near akin to Deity, possibly a delegated God, they will go as far as that, but further they will not stir. "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father" is not to their mind. If Jesus be preached as "very God of very God," straightway we hear from them the cry, "Away with him! away with him!" When we proclaim Jesus as King upon God's holy hill of Zion, and say of him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," they refuse to bow before his divine majesty. They do, so far as they are able, destroy the divinity of Christ and reduce him to a mere man. How can such people blame the Jews and the Romans? They could but slay his manhood, but these would destroy his deity. Is not their guilt as great? I charge all deniers of the godhead of our Lord with being, as far as they can be, his murderers; for they strike at his noblest nature by assailing his divine power and godhead. May the Spirit of God be here to convince them of their error and lead them to worship Jesus, who is exalted at the right hand of the Father.

I must charge home the accusation in the name of God and truth. Avowed opposers of Christ, had they been alive in the days of his flesh, would have wished him to be put to death, for, so far as they are concerned, he is either dead to them in his true character, or else they are doing their best in their own conscience and upon the conscience of others to sweep him out of existence. If they say they would not have put Jesus to a literal death on the cross, I say they are putting him to a death which he would deprecate even more, namely, the destruction of all his influence over the minds of men. By decrying his atonement by which he reconciles men to God, by setting men's hearts against him and causing them to refuse his salvation, these men do as far as they can rob him of the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. Is this nothing? Put me to death if you will, for I shall live when I am dead by the words which I have spoken: I should count it a far worse murder if you could sweep out of men's minds all that I have taught, and overthrow all the good which I have attempted to do. And if it be so of a mere man, much more must it be so of Jesus—that merely to murder him upon a cross is comparatively little compared with declaring, "We will not be influenced by him, nor believe in him as Saviour and God, and to the best of our power we will prevent others from believing in him."

What a wretched object for a man to live for, what a horrible fame for a man to seek after—to stamp out the gospel of Jesus. Terrible will be the punishment of this sin. Oh opponent of Jesus, instead of being less guilty than the Jews of our Lord's day, you are even more culpable. You are not slaying him in one way, but you are doing it in another, and the crime is the same in spirit. I see a mystic cross to which your cruel words do nail my Lord; I see before my mental eye a Calvary whereon the Lord Jesus is crucified afresh and put to an open shame by infidel sarcasms and sceptical insinuations; I see him derided and made nothing of by those who deny his deity and refuse to believe in his sacrifice. Enough of this. May conscience be present here, and the Spirit of God be present too, that men may not dare to wash their hands in innocency if they have been the open antagonists of Jesus and are so still. Oh that you would turn to him, and become his disciples. His beauties are such that they might well charm every honest heart: his teaching is so tenderly reasonable, so full of sweetness and of light, that it is marvellous that men do not receive it with joy. His cross is unique,—a bleeding sufferer, bearing offences that were not his own, that his own enemies might live! The conception is so strange that it could never have originated in the selfish mind of fallen man. It bears its own witness on its brow. Woe unto those that fight against it, for it shall cost them dear. He that stumbleth upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomsoever this stone shall fall it shall grind him to powder. See what came to these Jewish people: they were themselves crucified by Titus in such numbers that they could no longer find wood enough for their execution. Jerusalem destroyed is the result of Jesus crucified. Beware, ye that fight against him, for the omnipotent Father will take up his quarrel, and all the forces of creation and of providence will be at his command to wage war for truth and righteousness. The Nazarene has triumphed, and he will triumph even to the end, when he shall have all his enemies under his feet. O ye that hate him, be wise betimes, and close the hopeless contest in which you chiefly fight against your own souls.

II. I hope there are not many here to whom this first part of my sermon applies; we will advance to a second point. Pilate having a conscience which troubled him was exceedingly anxious not to put Jesus to death, and yet could not see how he could avoid doing so, seeing that the Jews threatened to accuse him of want of loyalty to Cæsar, and that Cæsar the gloomy tyrant Tiberius, who was unrelenting in his fury. After first sending his prisoner to Herod, he finds that he cannot escape in that way, and therefore he catches at a second hope. He tells the mob that the custom of the feast required that one prisoner should be released, and that the choice remained with them. He hopes that they will choose Jesus of Nazareth. A vain hope indeed! It so happened that there was another Jesus in prison at the time, namely, Jesus Barabbas, who had been a murderer, and was guilty both of sedition and robbery. Pilate brings out the two, and he gives the Jews their choice. It would make a wonderful picture if it were really so, as a writer on the Life of Christ suggests, that Pilate actually set the two individuals before the crowd. See there the dark-browed, scowling assassin, with fierce looks, and every mark of fury and hate upon his face, the man taken

red-handed, familiar with blood, the brigand whose very profession was strife! There he stands like a wolf, and by his side is set the gentle Lamb of God. See there in his face and bearing all that is good, tender, benevolent, heroic. The incarnations of hate and love are before them; and Pilate gives the crowd their choice. Without hesitation they cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." The murderer walks away free, and the innocent Jesus is left to die. In this I shall have to impeach a second class of men IN THE MATTER OF THEIR CHOICE. Many among us have by divine grace chosen Jesus to be our Saviour, King, and Lord. He is the groundwork of our eternal hope, and the spring of our present joy: we have selected Christ to be the guide and leader of our lives, and we are not ashamed of the choice. It has been made deliberately and solemnly, and we renew it from day to day.

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour we bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

I fear that some among you have not chosen Christ; but what have you chosen? Let me mention two or three objects of human choice, worthy to be ranked with Barabbas of old. Too many have chosen *lust* to be their delight: I will not paint the hideous monster; I have no colours. It is a foul and bestial thing: the cheek of modesty crimsons at the very mention of it. Yet, for the pleasures of wantonness, Christ is set aside. For the strange woman many a man has thrown away his soul, and chosen infamy instead of glory. I half excuse the Jews for choosing Barabbas when I see a man obeying the lusts of the flesh instead of Christ; and yet I am probably addressing individuals who secretly indulge their baser passions, and are thereby held back from becoming decided Christians. They know they cannot be followers of Christ and yet indulge in wantonness and chambering, and therefore for this vile self-indulgence they let Jesus go.

Very frequently I meet with persons who have chosen another Barabbas instead of Jesus. What if, to borrow from heathenism, I call it Bacchus? *Drink* is the demon which enthralls millions. It is a vice which degrades men, and defaces the image of God in them. We insult the brutes when we say that a drunken man sinks to the level of the beasts; for the cattle never go so low as that. Alas, I have known men—ay, and women, too—who have been hearers of the gospel, and have in a measure felt its power, and yet for this sin they have sold their souls and given up their Saviour. No drunkard hath eternal life abiding in him; and, to speak plain English, there are professing Christians who deserve to be called by that name. I say that they prefer the drink-demon to the holy Lord Jesus. You condemn the Jews for choosing Barabbas: where will you find a counsellor to plead for you when you choose drunkenness? If it was sinful for them to choose a murderer, what must it be for you to choose this cursed vice, which murders its hundreds of thousands? Oh, this national vice of ours, the vice which makes this nation a byword and a proverb among the nations of the earth! What shall I say of it? And

is this to be set in rivalry with my Lord? Oh, shame, cruel shame that this should be selected in preference to him who loved us and gave himself for us!

"Well, well," says one, "I do not fall into that sin." No, my friend, but what is it that you do choose instead of Christ, for if you do not set him on the throne of your heart, you are choosing something else. Is it that you do not want to be a Christian because you wish to save yourself trouble and would be happy and comfortable and enjoy yourself? You do not choose any openly vicious way in particular, but you prefer to be moderately sinful and to take care of yourself, and save all care, thought, and anxiety about death and heaven and hell. You think that by leading a careless life you are happier than if you yielded yourself to Jesus. You are labouring under a mistake; but one thing is clear,—self is your god, and that is a deity as grovelling as any other. The idolater who worships a god of gold or silver, or even of stone or mud, is not quite so degraded as the man who worships himself. Self-worship is coming very low indeed. When I am my own god, or my belly is my god, can there be a lower depth? If I live merely to be easy and comfortable, and have no care for God, or Christ, or heavenly things; what a choice I am making. Think of it, and be ashamed. Oh, I say again, in many a man's choice of what should be the object of his life, he sins precisely as they sinned who put away Jesus and chose Barabbas. I say no more. May the Holy Spirit send home this sadly convicting truth.

III. Thirdly. Pilate, seeing that he cannot thus set his prisoner free, gives him over into the hands of the soldiers, who straightway make merry over him and treat him as an object of contempt. The words are cruel, and are enough to draw tears from all eyes as we read them: "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe." "I am innocent here," cries one of my hearers. What! are you quite sure that you are free from THE SIN OF CONTEMPT AND OF CAUSING PAIN TO JESUS? Listen a while. When you have been so busy about the world that you could not think of him; when you have been so eager to be rich that you laughed at the true riches, do you not know that you were plaiting a crown of thorns to put upon his head? Your folly in despising your own soul sorely wounds him. He pities you, and cannot bear to see that the thorns of this world should be the harvest which you sow and reap. If he were not so loving of heart and tender of spirit it would not matter, but this unkindness to yourself is unkindness to him, and virtually when you have been full of cares and anxieties concerning the world, and have had no care and no anxiety about him or about your own soul, you have put a crown of thorns upon his head. Is this nothing?

Let me ask you when you have gone up to the place of worship on the Sunday, as you always do, and have pretended to adore him, though you do not love him, do you know what you have done? You have mocked him by a feigned worship, and thus you have put the purple robe upon him. For that purple robe meant that they made him a nominal king, a king who was not in truth a king, but a mere show. Your Sunday religion, which has been forgotten in the week, has been a sceptre of

reed, a powerless ensign, a mere sham. You have mocked and insulted him even in your hymns and prayers, for your religion is a pretence, with no heart in it; you brought him an adoration that was no adoration, a confession that was no confession, and a prayer that was no prayer. Is it not so? I pray you be honest with yourselves. Is it not so? And then all the week long have you not preferred anyone to Jesus? any book to the Bible? any exercise to prayer? any enjoyment to communion with himself? Political objects have aroused you, but not the Lord's glory nor the spread of his kingdom. Is not this despising Jesus? Is not this mocking him?

Are there not among you some who are weary of the Lord? weary of the Sabbath? weary of sermons about Jesus? weary of atoning blood? weary of praising the Redeemer? What is this but contempt of him?

Too many have even jested about the holiest of things: if they have not mocked Jesus personally they have ridiculed his people for his sake, and made mirth of his gospel. By some religion is set up as a scare-crow, and piety is treated as a byword, conscientious scruples are laughed at as old-fashioned absurdities, and devotion to Christ is set down as next of kin to insanity. We know it is so, even among some who are hearers of the gospel, and outwardly its upholders. There is contempt for the life and power of it: they know and honour its name, but the reality of vital godliness they do not value. At times their conscience thunders heavily at them, and then they are compelled to wish they had what at other times they disdain. They do despite to the blood of Jesus, and yet would fain be partakers in its pardoning power.

I fear me none of us dare wash our hands of this as a sin of our fallen estate. Time was when those of us who love Jesus now, and could kiss every wound of his, yet thought so little of him that anything was better than he. The story of his sufferings was as wearisome as a worn-out tale; and as for giving our whole selves to him, we deemed it a fanatical expression or an enthusiastic dream. Blessed Saviour, thou hast forgiven us: forgive others who are doing the same.

IV. I have but a minute to spare for each point; so now I must turn to another sin of which many are guilty, namely, **THE SIN OF HEARTLESSNESS WITH REGARD TO THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD.** Pilate thought he had another way of letting his prisoner go, and this he tried. He scourged him. I will not tell you how dreadful Roman scourging was. It could not now be equalled except it be by the Russian knout. It was the most terrible of tortures. Many died under it, and almost all the victims fainted after a few blows: by it the human frame was reduced to a mass of bruised, bleeding, quivering flesh. When the Saviour was all a mass of wounds and bruises, Pilate brought him forth and said, "Behold the man," appealing to what little humanity he hoped there still might be in the chief priests and elders. "Behold the man!" said he. "Is not that enough? He is crushed and battered and bleeding all over, is not that enough?" But they had no feeling for him whatever, and only cried, "Away with him." If the spectacle of woe which our Lord presented on this occasion does not touch you, it is a lamentable proof of hardness of heart. Do not many read the story of his sufferings without emotion?

Despised, reviled, thorn-crowned, and scourged, our Lord stands alone as the Man of sorrows, the Monarch of miseries. Grievs without parallel! Woes unique and by themselves! Have you no tears to shed for him whom soldiers mocked and Jews derided? No? Is it possible that you answer "No"? Have you heard the story till it has less effect than an idle romance? For shame! For shame! And the worst of it is that it should not affect men when they recollect that these griefs were voluntarily borne out of love, and neither of necessity nor from any selfish motive. His woes were borne for his enemies. He bade his disciples begin to preach at Jerusalem that the men who spat in his face might know that they had a share in his compassion, and that he who drove the lance into his heart was one for whom he tasted death. He dies praying for his murderers. Ah me! that it should be so. A man dying for his friend is a noble sight; but a man dying for those who put him to death is the most extraordinary sight that angels ever beheld.

There is this about it too, which touches believers most tenderly: our Lord suffered thus on our account. In his death is our hope, or else we are lost for ever. If we have not part and lot in the merits of the agony, then for us there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. Do we not mourn when we see Jesus dying for us. O feeling, thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason. Surely our hearts will be like the rock in Horeb. Stricken by the rod of the cross, our souls will gush with rivers of penitential grief. But herein is a marvellous proof of our guiltiness, that we have compassion for everybody but the Saviour; that we can cry over a lapdog, and yet can hear of Christ with utter indifference. There are multitudes of persons of this kind, and I pray God's Spirit to touch their conscience upon this matter of heartlessness toward Jesus.

But I must hasten on, though I might wish to linger, leaving with your meditations the enlargement of these charges.

V. There is another crime of which many are guilty which was seen in Pilate himself, and that was the crime of COWARDICE. No less than three times did Pilate say of our Lord, "I find no fault in him," and yet he did not let him go. He himself owned, "I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee," and yet he dared not exercise the power to deliver. Through cowardice he dared not let his perfectly innocent prisoner go free. He knew, but he did not act up to his knowledge. Have I none before me whose knowledge of good things far outruns their practice? This, surely, will be one of the never-dying worms of hell—the gnawing of an instructed and disregarded conscience. Over the door of their prison-house the lost shall read this inscription,—Ye knew your duty but ye did it not. The knowledge which makes men responsible for their deeds increases that responsibility as it is itself increased, and with it their guilt and their punishment. Moreover, Pilate did not only know the right, but after his own fashion he wished to do it. One almost pities the vacillating coward. See how he struggles to release Jesus in some indirect fashion which may cost him nothing. He wishes, he resolves, and then hangs back. Like a vessel tossed with contrary winds, he is at one time almost in harbour, and anon he is far out at sea. Oh, the

quantities of dead wishes that one might gather in this Tabernacle, as men gather untimely fruit which the wind has shaken from the tree. Men wish to repent, wish to believe, wish to decide, wish to be holy, wish to be right with God; but their wishing leads to no practical decision, and so they perish at the threshold of mercy. Their goodness ends in empty desires, which do but evidence their responsibility, and so secure their condemnation. Yet, to be just, we must admit that Pilate did more than wish; he spoke for Christ. But having spoken in his favour he did not proceed to action, as he was bound to have done. It is possible for a man to say with his tongue, "I find no fault in him," and then by his actions to condemn Jesus by giving him up to die. Words are a poor homage to the Saviour. Not by words does he save mankind, and not by lip-service is he to be repaid. Pilate spake boldly enough, and then retreated before the clamours of the crowd; and yet Pilate could be firm sometimes. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, the priests begged Pilate to change the accusation which was written over his head, and he would not, but replied, "What I have written I have written." Why could he not have shown a little backbone when Jesus yet lived? He was not altogether such a weak, effeminate being as to be incapable of putting his foot down firmly; if he did so once he might have done it before, and so have saved himself from this great transgression. Are there no Pilates here—persons who would long ago have been Christians if they had possessed enough moral courage? Some foolish companion would laugh at them if they became religious, and this they could not bear. Poor dastards! I heard the other day of a lad who dared not pray in the room where two or three others slept; and so, like a craven, he crept into bed and succumbed to the fear of others. I fear that some men would sooner be damned than be laughed at. Another person has a wicked companion, and he knows that he must cut his acquaintance if he becomes a follower of Jesus: this he would do, but he lacks courage. O ye, who shrink back from that which Christ's service involves, because of the fear of men, know ye not the portion of the fearful? O ye trembling ones, is Jesus covered with wounds and shame for you, and are you ashamed of him? Death is coming upon him speedily, and do you hide your faces from him? This is cruelty, indeed, both to Christ and to yourself. Can you not leave his enemies? "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate: touch not the unclean thing." Will you not espouse his cause? "If any man will serve me let him follow me." By this cowardice you do as much as in you lies to put the Christ to death. "How?" say you. Well, suppose everybody acted as you do, would there be any Christianity in the world? If everybody was cowardly, would there be a church at all? Are you not killing Christ and burying Christ as far as ever you can? Are you not destroying his influence and weakening his church by refusing to own him? Is it not so? Look at it. Whatever influence you have in the world you refuse to use for Jesus. Though multitudes are active in despising and opposing him, you do not lift a hand in his favour. Why do you not come out and say, "I am on his side"? By your supposed neutrality you act as his foe. You must be on one side or the other now that you have heard the gospel; for

Jesus has said, "He that is not with me is against me: he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." You are against him, and you are scattering abroad. Suppose others follow your example? "Well," say you, "there is nothing bad in my example, except that I am not a Christian." Just so, and under some aspects the very goodness of your example makes it operate all the more powerfully for evil. I do not think that the example of a thoroughly drunken man, for instance, leads many young people into intemperance; on the contrary, many take warning from the spectacle, and fly to total abstinence for security. I have often had young men and women coming to join the church who have been total abstainers of the most intense kind because a drunken father made their childhood so wretched, and kept the home so poor that they abhorred the accursed thing. See, then, how an ill example may lose its evil power by very excess. Yours is another case; your example is in some respects admirable, and then you throw it on the side of the devil. The better man you are the more mischief you are doing by siding with evil. Inasmuch as you are that which is moral, excellent, amiable, you are the very man whose influence Christ ought to have on his side, and if you cause it to go against him the fact is all the more deplorable. If the weight of your character goes to make men ignore the claims of the Son of God, what is this but spiritually to compass his death?

Lastly, and oh that the Spirit of God may bless this sharp medicine to some heart that it may feel the pangs of penitence this morning—there is the sin of SELF-RIGHTEOUS HYPOCRISY. This Pilate committed in set form. He took water and washed his hands, and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." What a contradiction! He is innocent, but he gives them permission to be guilty. They could not murder the Lord without his permission; he gives the necessary permit, and yet he says, "I am innocent." Do I not see another of the same class over yonder? He says, "I do not despise Christ, or speak a word against him. I am perfectly innocent of any ill-will towards him. Of course, if others oppose him they may, for it is a free country: let them do as they like, but I am perfectly clear of it." It is not thus that a man acts if he sees another being murdered. He does not look on and say that he would rather not interfere. You say you cannot help other people's opinions. Have you no opinion of Jesus of your own? Do you say, "No; I never think of him?" Is not that contempt? Do you decline to hold any opinion about one who claims to be your God? about one who must be your Saviour, or you must perish for ever? You cannot sheer off in that way. Now that rebellion is afoot you must either be loyal or be a traitor. The standard is unfurled, and each man must take his side. Your negligence of Jesus contradicts your claim to be neutral. You pretend to let him alone, but that letting alone is fatal. A man is yonder in the upper room of a burning house, and you can save him. You refuse to touch the matter, for it is no concern of yours either way, and so you leave it to the firemen and their helpers. Meanwhile, the man perishes because you will not help him. I say that you are inexcusable: that man's blood lies at your door. It was your duty to have rescued him. So the Lord Jesus Christ comes here among men and

he is persecuted. You quietly say, "No doubt it is a pity, but I cannot help it." Just so; but by your inaction you side with his foes.

Do you say that you are so righteous that you do not want a Saviour? That, indeed, is smiting him on the face. He comes to be a Saviour, and you tell him that he is superfluous; that you are so good that you can do without being washed in his blood. That is spitting in his face, and telling him that he was a fool to die for you. Why should he shed his blood if you are innocent enough without it? In effect you charge God with folly for providing a great propitiation when such good people as you are need nothing of the kind. I do not believe anybody can more grossly insult the Son of the Highest! This is crucifying him indeed! The self-righteous man who says, "I am clean," deprives Christ's sacrifice of its glory, his life of its end, his person of its dignity, his whole work of its wisdom. The very heart of God is set upon the object for which Christ died, and yet the self-righteous man counts this a folly.

Come, my hearers, there is no room for any one of us to accuse his fellow: let us all come with humble confessions to the feet of Jesus, now risen from the dead, and let us each say to him right sorrowfully,—

"'Tis I to whom these pains belong,
'Tis I should suffer for my wrong,
Bound hand and foot in heavy chains;
Thy scourge, thy fetters, whatsoe'er
Thou bearest, 'tis my soul should bear,
For she hath well deserved such pains.

"Yet thou dost even for my sake
On thee, in love, the burdens take
That weighed my spirit to the ground:
Yes; thou art made a curse for me,
That I might yet be blest through thee:
My healing in thy wounds is found."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xix. 1—16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 581, 580.



THE WHOLE BAND AGAINST CHRIST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

On Lord's-day Evening, September 15th, 1889.

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers."—Matthew xxvii. 27.

I HAVE not observed that anyone has turned to account the fact that "the whole band of soldiers" gathered in the Prætorium, or common hall, for the purpose of mocking our Lord. That they did mock him, has often been noticed, and preached upon; but that they should have gathered unto him the whole cohort, that all should have been there, is mentioned both by Matthew and by Mark, and this being twice recorded cannot have been without some meaning and some lesson for us.

To begin then, our blessed Lord, being condemned to die, was given over to the brutal soldiery who garrisoned Jerusalem. They lived in quarters round about the palace of the governor; and when the Saviour was delivered to them to be put to death, they must needs make him the centre of their mockery and derision before they executed the terrible sentence upon him. Does it not strike you that any man condemned to die ought to be protected against such usage as that? If he must die, some respect should be paid to one who is about to endure the death-penalty. I think that there should be great indulgence shown in such a case; at any rate, nothing should be done or said to hurt the feelings, or to wound the sensibilities. Pity seems to say, "If the man must die, then so be it; but let us not for a single moment jest at him. Far hence be mirth; that is a brutality not to be thought of at such a time as this; and to make a man, about to die, the subject of scorn, is a superfluity of cruelty and wickedness." Methinks that even a devil might be ashamed of such savagery as this. But there was no law to protect the Saviour from these soldiers. Every man's heart seems to have been steeled against him; the common dictates of the most ignorant humanity appear to have been violated. They said by their actions, if not in words, "He shall not only die, but he shall be stripped of all his honour; he shall be robbed

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of every comfort; he shall become the butt and target of all the cruel arrows of contempt that we can shoot at him."

Still, why is it said that, in order to make him the object of derision, they gathered together "the whole band"? I do not know how many soldiers constituted the garrison, or how many were barracked round about the governor's palace; but they gathered together "the whole band"; not merely a few of them who were on duty that day, but all were summoned to make a mock of Christ. It was not because he needed to be guarded lest he should escape, for he had no desire to be set free. It was not because the soldiers would be wanted to keep him securely lest the people should attempt to rescue him, for the Jews did not want him to be rescued. On the contrary, it was by their clamour that he was doomed to die. They had cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" He had no friends to stand up for him, no band of disciples to come and force the soldiery away, and set him free. Therefore these legionaries did not guard him with the whole strength of the band on that account.

Nor were they all wanted to execute the death-sentence. With a people eager for his death, four soldiers, a single quaternion, sufficed. He carried his own cross, and they had but to drive the nails into his hands and feet, and fasten him to the tree. That could be soon done to a Victim so defenceless, so inoffensive; it did not need that they should gather together "the whole band", and so we are told it, as a remarkable circumstance which did not rise necessarily out of the narrative. It must have a meaning of its own, "They gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers."

I shall speak thus upon it. First, it would appear that *the soldiers were unanimous in mocking their Prisoner*; secondly, *so are men united in opposing Christ*; and, thirdly, *what shall we say of both the facts whereof we are to speak to-night?*

I. First, then, it is clear that **THE SOLDIERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN MOCKING THEIR PRISONER.**

Upon this, I remark, first, that *men are very apt to go together when they go wrong*. You notice, in a workshop, how the religion of Christ will be despised, and how certain men will lead the way in uttering calumnies against it, and then the rest will follow. When men go astray, they are like a flock of sheep; one gets through the hedge, and all the rest go after it. We have heard of one sheep leaping the parapet of a bridge into a river, and the whole flock went after it, and all were destroyed. Men are such curious beings, not only the creatures of their own habits, but the imitators of other men's example. I know not how it is, but persons who, alone and apart, would seem to have some good inclinations, will shake them all off when they get into evil company. At home they will talk reasonably; but, in the crowd, they speak madly. At home and alone, they are amenable to rebuke and conviction; but when they get with other men, they will not hear a word of it; they shut their ears to anything like good teaching, and they run greedily to do mischief. I do not, therefore, so much wonder that, when our Lord was given over to the soldiers, they gathered together the whole band, for it is so usual for men to go together when they go wrong.

Frequently, too, it will happen that *there is not one man to bear his protest*. Would you not have expected that, in a large band of soldiers, there would have been at least one man of noble spirit, who would have said, "Nay, do not torture him; he is about to die"? Would it have been at all wonderful if one man had stood forward, and said, "This Man has done nothing amiss; our governor has said that he finds no fault in him. Why, therefore, do you set him in that chair, and robe him, and bow the knee in mockery, and spit upon him?" It would not have been very surprising if there had been amongst the Roman soldiery some one or two who had espoused Christ's cause; for, truth to tell, those valiant men, although they grew brutalized by living amidst scenes of blood, were capable of deeds of high virtue. One has but to read the old Roman story, to stand amazed sometimes that such fair flowers of virtue and benevolence could grow on such a dunghill as the Roman State then was. Yet you see that not one out of the whole band of soldiery would say a word for Christ, or absent himself from the ring, when their comrades mocked him.

Peradventure, I address some men here who work together, and who are in the habit of scoffing at the cross of Christ. I hope that there is not a workshop in London without one man, at least, who will stand forward, and defend his Master's cause; but if I speak to one to whom that thought has occurred, and yet he has said, "I dare not; I should be myself the subject of so much persecution, that I could not stand forth alone;" now, listen, sir, if a Caius, or a Fabius, or a Julius, had stood forth alone to defend the Lord's cause, we should have had his name here, and if he had even suffered death for it, he would have been amongst the brightest of the martyr host. And you know not what honour you lose if you conceal your testimony. If you allow the whole drift of the talk to be infidel and atheistic, and never put in your good word for him whom you call Master and Lord, you dishonour yourself; but if you could have the courage, and I hope that you may, to say, "He, of whom you speak thus ill, has saved my soul, snatched me from habits of vice, and renewed my character," if you could stand forward, and bear such testimony for him, I wot that it were a short road to glory, and honour, and immortality. It is not likely that you would have to suffer as the martyrs did; but suppose that you did, the more of suffering, the brighter that ruby crown which would be set upon your head in the day of your Lord's appearing. I hope that Christian men are still made of that grand old stuff which defied the Roman emperors, and made them weary of slaughter, for they could not mow down the crops of the Church so fast as they grew. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church; and the more copiously it was shed, the more the Church multiplied.

But, once more, *the number of those who thus mocked Christ made their conduct all the baser*. When you, young fellow, get in with fifty more, and in the workshop you mock at some solitary Christian youth, when you each one have your jibe, when you give him what you call "chaff", which is sport to you, but cruel enough to be death to him, did it never occur to you that it was a most cowardly thing, and altogether unworthy of you, that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, should all set upon one? What if a man does believe in religion? Has he

not a right to do so if he likes? Some of you who talk so much about freedom are the biggest bullies in the world; you boast loudly of religious liberty, but to you it means liberty to be irreligious. Surely I have as much right to worship Christ as you have to despise him; and if my views of religion should seem to you to be peculiar, yet, if peculiar, have I not as good reason to hold them as you have to reject them? I speak thus plainly because I know of many, many cases where, if men were men at all, they would cease to persecute Christians, seeing that they persecute one or two wherever they can if they themselves happen to be in the majority. Think of this lot of howling dogs around this one gentle Lamb of God, the Christ who had never even a hard word for them, whose mightiest weapon was silence and patience; think of him surrounded by all these men of war from their youth up, these Roman legionaries with their imperial eagles. It was a cruel shame. The more there were of them, the meaner it was of them thus, as a whole band, to gather together to mock the Saviour.

But I suppose that *their number accounted for the excess to which they went*. If there had only been two or three of them, they would not have thought of all the cruel things that they did to our Lord. To put an old cloak upon him, and to call him the purpled Cæsar, is commonplace enough; but one cries, "Let us make a crown for him," and they plait the thorns with cruel hands, piercing his temples with the sharp spines. Another says, "Fetch a sceptre, and put it in his hand. Set him in that chair, and let us bow before him, let us cry, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" They would have stopped at that point had there not been so many of them; but, being so large a band, one coarse fellow must go further still, and he spits into that blessed face!

"See how the patient Jesus stands,

Insulted in his lowest case!

Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,

And spit in their Creator's face."

I hardly think that one, two, three, or even half-a-dozen by themselves could have been guilty of such detestable, loathsome conduct to Christ; but the whole band being together, they thought of fresh insults.

Take heed of sinning in a crowd. Young man, abandon the idea that you may sin in a crowd. Beware of the notion that, because many do it, it is less a guilt to any one of them. Remember that the broad way always was the wrong road, and that it leads to destruction none the less because many walk in it. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Though you finish up the day's work of sin with three cheers for your noble selves, you shall find yourselves arraigned each one before the judgment-seat of God, each one to give account for the deeds done in his body according to what he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Oh, the pitiful story, a whole company of soldiers united against Christ, with not one to quit the ranks, and say, "No, comrades; do not so;" but all wallowing in their cruelty, like swine in the mire!

II. That leads me to talk to you, secondly, about another point. As these soldiers were unanimous in mocking their illustrious Prisoner,

SO ARE MEN UNITED IN OPPOSING CHRIST.

Like these soldiers, many do not pass Christ by with neglect. I should

have thought that many a brave man of that Roman legion would have said, "Pshaw! I shall not go to taunt the poor Jew who has been hunted down by the priests. Nobody gives him a good word; even his own followers have fled from him. I heard one of them declare that he did not know him, though I knew that man was a liar, for I saw him in the garden with his Master. My comrades are going to the Prætorium to mock him, but I shall not go; such mirth is unworthy of a man, especially of a Roman." Instead thereof, they were all there. Curiosity fetched them up, they must all come to see this Man of whom they had heard so much; and an evil conscience made them bitter against him, for, because they were evil, his being good was a protest against their wicked deeds.

So they were all united against him, and *they came up, every one of them, to show their scorn*. It is a strange thing; but if Christ is fully preached, somehow men cannot be indifferent to him. If they can be right away, and never hear of him, they may be indifferent; but the true gospel either offends men, or else it charms them. I believe that you may preach a certain sort of gospel, from the first of January to the end of December, and everybody will say, "Yes, that is very good, very, very good, perfectly harmless." Yes, a chip in the porridge, with no flavour in it; but if it is the real out-and-out gospel of a crucified Saviour, there will be someone who will say, "Ah, that is what I want! I like that;" but there will be others who will grind their teeth, and say, "I will never hear that man again; I cannot bear his talk; I hate it." Do not be surprised when I say that, if I hear that So-and-so was very angry at one of my sermons, I state as my belief, "That man will go to heaven. I have the hook in that fish, and I shall catch him yet." But when I hear people simply say, "Oh, yes; we heard the sermon!" and they make some trifling remark about it, and go their way, nothing good comes of it. It is better that a man should be in a downright rage against Christ than be utterly indifferent to him; and where he really comes so that men are obliged to see him, they cannot long be indifferent. "That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," is one of the objects of his death. The cross of Christ is the great detector of men. Fix it up, and men straightway go to the right or to the left of it. It is the parturient and divider of the ways. Jesus himself said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Men cannot pass by utterly with neglect after once hearing the story of the cross. They must gather up for Christ or against him, and alas! many of them do gather up to pour their scorn upon him.

Many ungodly men *feel an inward contempt for Christ's claims*. "No," says one, "I have no such contempt for Christ." I would not wish to charge you wrongfully; but if you are not a believer in him, if you have never accepted him to be your Saviour and your Lord, I venture to repeat the charge, you have an inward contempt for his claims, my hearers. Whether you are Christians or not, you are the subjects of King Jesus. God has put you into his hand, and you will have to stand before his judgment-seat at the last. The Man Christ Jesus, who died on Calvary, and rose again, and went to heaven, will judge every one of you at the last great day; and he claims that you now should

become his servants, and yield obedience to him. Now, I know that you will say in your hearts, "We shall not do anything of the kind." Just so, and have I not proved what I said? "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and that carnal mind may be in a man who always goes to church, or to chapel. If he has not been renewed, he does not believe in Christ as King; and as far as his heart is concerned, he mocks at the idea of his being a servant of Christ, and Christ being Lord over him. In his very soul he thinks this to be a preposterous claim, that he should be obedient to Christ in everything. Besides, the mass of men do not seek to know what Christ's claims are. They are ignorant of his royalty and sovereignty, and it is in this way that their minds are filled with an indistinctly-expressed, but still very powerful, contempt for him.

And so it happens, in the next place, that *men invent different ways of showing their derision*. It is very curious that you find very learned men opposed to Christ, and they go to work usually by destructive criticism, trying to get rid of this part of the Bible and that; but an ignorant man cannot do that, so he says that he does not believe in the Bible at all. Here you find a rich man despising Christ, sneering at "the common people", as he calls Christ's followers, and there you see another man, who is very poor, despising Christ by wishing to overthrow all the rules of his sacred kingdom. Herod and Pilate hate one another till Christ comes, and then they join together in reviling him.

These Roman soldiers, having all come together, found employment in mocking Christ. First, some of them stripped him. Oh, have I not seen men at it in these days, stripping Christ of his Deity, stripping him of his priesthood, stripping him of his sovereignty, stripping him of his righteousness, stripping Christ of everything that makes him Christ? Is not that the way with many of the rich, and the great, and the "advanced" theologians of the present day? They show their hatred of Christ by stripping him.

There are others who go to work the other way; they put on him a scarlet robe. I have seen them do it; put other men's garments upon him, make him out to be what he never was, travesty the doctrines of grace, caricature the gospel, and hold it all up to contempt, imputing to Christ the faults of all his followers, and even laying at his door the sin of men who, like Judas, have betrayed him. That is another method of showing enmity to Christ.

Then we see all around us men who mock at Christ's royalty. They crown him with a crown of thorns by their harsh speeches against his people. By their persecutions of those who love him, Christ is often crowned again with thorns. The husband has done it in his unkindness to his believing wife; parents have done it in their objection to their children following Christ; the man or woman who has given the cold shoulder to a pious friend has thus put another crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head. And have we not seen them put the reed into his hand by representing Christ as being a mere myth, and his doctrine as a dream, a holy fancy, a proper thing to keep the people quiet, but with no matter of fact or truth in it? So they put into his hand the reed-sceptre to mock him, and he regards it as mockery.

And thus, around the Christ to-day, I seem to see, with eyes closed, but by the vision of faith, a multitude kneeling before him, and pretending to worship him, hypocritical worshippers, those who even by their bedsides are hypocrites, repeating a form of prayer, and yet never really praying, drawing near to him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him. Oh, how do sinners thus prove their unanimity of enmity to Christ! Even in their pretended worship, they do but show the opposition of their hearts to him.

Here and there, also, I see one coarser than other men, who spits upon Jesus, and smites him. You cannot live long in London without hearing from men who are opposed to the cross of Christ expressions that disgust you. I have given up all idea now that we are living in a Christian country. Believers, in England, are a band of Christ's soldiers who are holding the fort against deadly odds. Ours is a heathen country, with an admixture of Christian people, and a smear, a varnish, of pretended religion, but a heathen country still. And every now and then, some outspoken heathen, by his awful profanity, makes us wish that we could not hear at all. This is how they spit on Christ. One does it very politely with a bow; another comes forward, and abuses both the Christ and his cross. He has spat in his face, and honestly let us know where he stands. One will undermine the truth; another brings the battering ram, in open day, to beat down the citadel; but they are so united together that, with one accord, the whole band of soldiers is gathered against Christ.

Dear friends, if men attacked any one doctrine, you would find only one band of men opposing it; but when Christ himself is the object of mockery, the whole band gathers round him. If I preach some of the doctrines of Calvinism, I shall find men, who are fatalists, and necessitarians, and the like, who will agree with me; but if I preach the whole gospel of Christ, these very men, who might have been my friends under one form of doctrine, will be my enemies against the whole of it. Only let Jesus appear, and Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, until they are renewed by grace, count his cross to be a stumbling-block and his doctrine to be foolishness.

Now notice that *men who could mock Christ like this were capable of doing anything evil*. If they could revile Christ, it was no wonder that they cast lots for his vesture just at his feet when he hung on the cross. I am often astounded at things that I read about gamblers, and what they have been known to do. It is fifty years ago since there was a story told by a policeman, and I do not doubt its truth, of two men at Hampstead who, having bet with one another all that they had, at last had a wager as to which should hang the other, and one of them did hang the other. The policeman came along just in time to save him; and when the man was cut down, what do you think he said? Why, he said that he would have hung the other man, if he could, to win the bet! That was thought to be very extraordinary; but it is not so very long ago since, at the laying of the first stone of a chapel, a friend of mine stood behind two gentlemen from Newmarket; and when one whom I know stood up to pray over the first stone, these two made a bet about how long he would be praying! Men will do anything for a wager. That mischievous vice, which is becoming

so common nowadays, leads to an extraordinary hardness of heart beyond anything else; and I cannot so much wonder that men, who were brought up as these Roman soldiers were, were capable of mockery of Christ, and of anything else that was evil.

III. I have finished when I have asked and answered this question, WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF BOTH THE FACTS WHEREOF WE HAVE SPOKEN TO-NIGHT?

These cruel soldiers unanimously came together to see Christ as a prisoner, and to put him to extraordinary scorn; yet *out of this band Christ found witnesses*. Their chief officer, "the centurion, and they that were with him," as they stood and saw Christ die, said, "Truly this was the Son of God"; and some of these soldiers, being appointed to watch the tomb of Christ, came and declared that he had risen from the dead. They were fine witnesses, were they not? men who were too rough to lie to help a sect. They came forward to bear testimony to the Christ. O God, if there be any here who have blasphemed thee, who have cursed Christ to his face, who have persecuted Christ's people, save them to-night, and make them witnesses of thy power to bless! When such a man gets saved, he is a good witness for Christ. He says, "I know what Christ can do, for he has changed my heart, he has appeared to me by the way, and manifested himself to me; and I know and am sure of that which I testify, that verily this is the Son of God."

Next, learn another lesson. *All this mockery should rebuke the backwardness among Christ's friends*. When he was to be mocked, all the soldiers came up. Some of them were down in the canteen, but they left their wine, and came up to mock him. Some of the soldiery, perhaps, had furlough for that day; but they gave up their holiday to go to mock Christ. Now, then, brethren and sisters, if his enemies could gather together the whole band against him, let us gather together the whole band for him. Why, just look at some of you on the Lord's-day! There are a few drops of rain, that might spoil your best bonnets, or wet your new clothes, so you cannot go to chapel. You would have gone to market, you know, rain or shine. How many there are who will not be able to come to the prayer-meeting to-morrow night! One pleaded, some time ago, at the prayer-meeting, "Lord, bless those that are at home on beds of sickness!" "Yes," said the preacher, "and, Lord, bless those that are at home on sofas of wellness!" There are plenty of that kind, who stay at home because they have not enough of the hearty spirit that ought to be in them to let the whole band gather together to confess Christ. Do you love Jesus Christ, my dear sister? Then, come and confess it. Do you love Jesus Christ, my brother? Then out with your avowal of it. Do not try to go to heaven behind the hedges. Get into the King's high road, and travel in broad daylight as a soldier of Christ should. Say,—

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his cause."

Next, I think that *these mockers hide the uninventiveness of many Christians*. See how they brought out the old red cloak, and plaited the crown of thorns, and cried, "Put them on him." Then they

brought the sceptre of reed, saying, "Stick it in his hand, and shout, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" Then came the spitting and the smiting; they could not have made the mockery more complete. They soon rigged up all that mimicry of royalty. Come, then, brethren and sisters, let us be inventive in honouring Christ.

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

See, is there not some new plan to be tried, some method that you have not yet attempted by which you could make Jesus loved and honoured in the soul of somebody, be it only a poor child, a servant girl, or the humblest man in the street? Surely, if enmity was so quick to deride him, love ought to be equally alert and inventive to find out ways by which to honour him.

But, once more, *all this mockery should excite our admiration of our patient Lord.* Remember that, as he sat there, flouted and made a jest of, he might with one glance of his eyes have flashed hell into their souls, and slain every one of them. Had he only opened those lips, he could have spoken thunderbolts that would have destroyed them at once; but he sat there, and patiently bore it all. As a sheep before her shearers, he was dumb; he opened not his mouth, because he was bearing all this to save you and to save me. Blessed Saviour! Oh, come, let us worship and adore and love him!

The last lesson is, *let us summon all our faculties to honour Christ to-night.* Gather together the whole band, your memory of all his goodness, your judgment of all his greatness, all your hopes, and all your fears, your quieted conscience, your soul at rest, come, and with the whole band of faculties that God has given you, from the highest to the lowest, bow down in grateful adoration before him who bowed so low that he might lift us up to be with him for ever.

Dear hearers, are you trusting Christ? There is no other trust that will do for a soul for time and for eternity. On a dying bed, it must be none but Jesus; let it be none but Jesus on your bed to-night before you fall asleep. Do not dare to close your eyes till you have committed your soul into the keeping of him who holds out his hands still, as he did upon the cross, that he may receive you with open arms, and save you with an everlasting salvation. Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 299, 267.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVII. 22—50.

Our Lord was brought before the Roman governor Pilate. He was anxious to let Jesus go; but he was a weak-minded man, easily swayed by the noisy cry of the people, prompted by the chief priests and elders.

Verses 22, 23. *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.*

A blind, unreasoning hate had taken possession of the people. They gave no answer to Pilate's wondering enquiry, "Why, what evil hath he done?"

for he had done nothing amiss; they only repeated the brutal demand, "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!" The world's hatred of Christ is shown in similar fashion to-day. He has done no evil, no one has suffered harm at his hands, all unite to pronounce him innocent; and yet they practically say, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

24. *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.*

Ah, Pilate, you cannot rid yourself of responsibility by that farce! He who has power to prevent a wrong is guilty of the act if he permits others to do it, even though he does not actually commit it himself. If you are placed in positions of power and responsibility, do not dream that you can escape from guilt by merely allowing other people to do what you would not do yourself.

25. *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.*

All the people willingly took upon themselves the guilt of the murder of our dear Lord: "His blood be on us, and on our children." This fearful imprecation must have been remembered by many when the soldiers of Titus spared neither age nor sex, and the Jewish capital became the veritable Aceldama, the field of blood.

26. *Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

Why scourge him before delivering him up to be crucified? Surely this was a superfluity of cruelty. The Roman scourging was something which I scarcely care to describe, one of the most terrible punishments to which anyone could be subjected; yet Pilate first scourged Jesus, and then gave him up to die by crucifixion.

27, 28. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.*

Some old soldier's coat, that they found lying about, they cast upon Christ in imitation of the royal robes of Cæsar or Herod.

29—31. *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

By that fact, though they did not intend it, our Lord was recognized in the street as the same Person who had been taken into the Prætorium by the soldiers. Had Jesus been brought forth in the scarlet robe, persons looking at him might not have known him to be the same Man who wore the garment woven from the top throughout; but in his own seamless raiment, they readily recognized the Nazarene.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

I wonder if he was a black man. There was a Simon in the early Church; and it certainly was the lot of the Ethiopian to bear the cross for many and many an age. This Simon was a stranger, anyhow, and a foreigner; truly honoured was he to be compelled to bear the cross after Christ.

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,*

From its shape. There appears to be to this day a hill still in the form

of a human skull outside the gate of Jerusalem. When they came to that common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of the city,—

34. *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

A stupefying draught was given to the condemned; that is the only mercy that there was about the whole thing. The Romans did give to the crucified a draught of myrrh to take away something of the agony of crucifixion; but our Lord came not to be stupefied, he came to suffer, therefore he would not take anything that would at all impair his faculties. He drank even to the dregs the bitter cup of grief and woe.

35. *And they crucified him,*

Horrible scene, to see those blessed hands and feet pierced with nails, and fastened to the cross!

35. *And parted his garments, casting lots:*

Rattling the dice-box at the foot of the cross! Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. I believe that crimes have been committed by persons, under the influence of gambling, which never could have been committed by them in any other condition of mind: "They parted his garments, casting lots." See here, ye gamblers! With Christ's blood bespattering them, these soldiers dared still to raffle for his robe.

35, 36. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;*

His enemies gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his sufferings; his friends with many tears watching his amazing griefs. It is for us, tonight, with humble faith and grateful love, to mark the incidents connected with his painful death.

37, 38. *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

Giving him the place of honour, which means in this case the place of dishonour. He was the apex of that terrible triangle.

39, 40. *And they that passed by reviled him, wiggling their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

This is the cry of the Socinians to-day, "Come down from the cross. Give up the atoning sacrifice, and we will be Christians." But, by rejecting his vicarious atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as those mockers at Golgotha did.

41, 42. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*

Just so. Get rid of a crucified Saviour, then they will believe in Him. Atonement, substitution, vicarious sacrifice, this staggers them. They will have Christ if they can have him without his cross.

43—46. *He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Every word in this terrible cry from the cross is emphatic; every syllable cuts and pierces to the heart.

47. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.*

They knew better, yet they jested at the Saviour's prayer

48. *And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge,*

It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In his death, the whole circle of creation was completed.

48—50. *And filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered "with a loud voice", like the shout of a conquering warrior. He need not have died on account of any infirmity in himself; but voluntarily, for your sake and mine, he "yielded up the ghost." Blessed be his holy name!

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.”—
Matthew xxvii. 29.

BEFORE we enter the common hall of the soldiers, and gaze upon “the sacred head once wounded,” it will be well to consider who and what he was who was thus cruelly put to shame. Forget not the intrinsic excellence of his person; for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; he is in himself God over all, blessed for ever, the eternal Word by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist. Though Heir of all things, the Prince of the kings of the earth, he was despised and rejected of men, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” his head was scornfully surrounded with thorns for a crown, his body was bedecked with a faded purple robe, a poor reed was put into his hand for a sceptre, and then the ribald soldiery dared to stare into his face, and worry him with their filthy jests:—

“The soldiers also spit upon that face
Which angels did desire to have the grace,
And prophets once to see, but found no place.
Was ever grief like mine?”

Forget not the glory to which he had been accustomed aforetime, for ere he came to earth he had been in the bosom of the Father, adored of cherubim and seraphim, obeyed by every angel, worshipped by every principality and power in the heavenly places; yet here he sits, treated worse than a felon, made the centre of a comedy before he became the victim of a tragedy. They sat him down in some broken chair, covered him with an old soldier's cloak, and then insulted him as a mimic monarch:—

“They bow their knees to me, and cry, Hail king;
Whatever scoffs and scornfulness can bring,
I am the floor, the sink, where they'd fling.
Was ever grief like mine?”

What a descent his love to us compelled him to make! See how low he fell to lift us from our fall! Do not also fail to remember that at the very time when they were thus mocking him, he was still the Lord of all, and could have summoned twelve legions of angels to his rescue. There was majesty in his misery; he had laid aside, it is true, the glorious pomp imperial of his Father's courts, and he was now the lowly man of Nazareth, but for all that, had he willed it, one glance of those eyes would have withered up the Roman cohorts; one word from those silent lips would have shaken Pilate's palace from roof to foundation; and had he willed it, the vacillating governor and the malicious crowd would together have gone down alive into the pit, even as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram of old. Lo, God's own Son, heaven's darling, and earth's prince, sits there and wears the cruel chaplet which wounds both mind and body at once, the mind with insult, and the body with piercing smart. His royal face was marred with "wounds which could not cease to bleed, trickling faint and slow," yet that "noblest brow and dearest" had once been fairer than the children of men, and was even then the countenance of Immanuel, God with us. Remember these things, and you will gaze upon him with enlightened eyes and tender hearts, and you will be able the more fully to enter into fellowship with him in his griefs. Remember whence he came, and it will the more astound you that he should have stooped so low. Remember what he was, and it will be the more marvellous that he should become our substitute.

And now let us press into the guard-room, and look at our Saviour wearing his crown of thorns. I will not detain you long with any guesses as to what kind of thorns he wore. According to the Rabbis and the botanists there would seem to have been from twenty to twenty-five different species of thorny plants growing in Palestine; and different writers have, according to their own judgments or fancies, selected one and another of these plants as the peculiar thorns which were used upon this occasion. But why select one thorn out of many? He bore not one grief, but all; any and every thorn will suffice; the very dubiousness as to the peculiar species yields us instruction. It may well be that more than one kind of thorn was platted in that crown: at any rate sin has so thickly strewn the earth with thorns and thistles that there was no difficulty in finding the materials, even as there was no scarcity of griefs wherewith to chasten him every morning and make him a mourner all his days.

The soldiers may have used pliant boughs of the acacia, or shittim tree, that unrotting wood of which many of the sacred tables and vessels of the sanctuary were made; and, therefore, significantly used if such was the case. It may have been true, as the old writers generally consider, that the plant was the *spina Christi*, for it has many small and sharp spines, and its green leaves would have made a wreath such as those with which generals and emperors were crowned after a battle. But we will leave the matter; it was a crown of thorns which pierced his head, and caused him suffering as well as shame, and that suffices us. Our inquiry now is, what do we see when our eyes behold Jesus Christ crowned with thorns? There are six things which strike me most, and as I lift the curtain I pray you watch with me, and may the Holy

Spirit pour forth his divine illumination and light up the scene before our wondering souls.

I. The first thing which is seen by the most casual observer, before he looks beneath the surface, is a **SORROWFUL SPECTACLE**. Here is the Christ, the generous, loving, tender Christ, treated with indignity and scorn, here is the Prince of Life and Glory made an object of derision by a ribald soldiery. Behold to-day the lily among thorns, purity lifting up itself in the midst of opposing sin. See here the sacrifice caught in the thicket, and held fast there, as a victim in our stead to fulfil the ancient type of the ram held by the bushes, which Abraham slew instead of Isaac. Three things are to be carefully noted in this spectacle of sorrow.

Here is Christ's *lowliness and weakness triumphed over* by the lusty legionaries. When they brought Jesus into the guard-room they felt that he was entirely in their power, and that his claims to be a king were so absurd as to be only a theme for contemptuous jest. He was but meanly dressed, for he wore **only** the smock frock of a peasant—was he a claimant of the purple? He held his peace—was he the man to stir a nation to sedition? He was all wounds and bruises, fresh from the scourger's lash—was he the hero to inspire an army's enthusiasm and overturn old Rome? It seemed rare mirth for them, and as wild beasts sport with their victims, so did they. Many, I warrant you, were the jibes and jeers of the Roman soldiery at his expense, and loud was the laughter amid their ranks. Look at his face, how meek he appears! How different from the haughty countenances of tyrants! To mock his royal claims seemed but natural to a rough soldiery. He was gentle as a child, tender as a woman; his dignity was that of calm quiet endurance, and this was not a dignity whose force these semi-barbarous men could feel, therefore did they pour contempt upon him. Let us remember that our Lord's weakness was undertaken for our sakes: for us he became a lamb, for us he laid aside his glory, and therefore it is the more painful for us to see that this voluntary humiliation of himself must be made the object of so much derision and scorn, though worthy of the utmost praise. He stoops to save us, and we laugh at him as he stoops; he leaves the throne that he may lift us up to it, but while he is graciously descending, the hoarse laughter of an ungodly world is his only reward. Ah me! was ever love treated after so unlovely a sort? Surely the cruelty it received was proportioned to the honour it deserved, so perverse are the sons of men.

"O head so full of bruises!
Brow that its lifeblood loses!
Oh great humility.
Upon his face are falling
Indignities most galling;
He bears them all for me."

It was not merely that they mocked his humility, but *they mocked his claims to be a king*. "Aha," they seemed to say, "is this a king? It must be after some uncouth Jewish fashion, surely, that this poor peasant claims to wear a crown. Is this the Son of David? When will he drive Cæsar and his armies into the sea, and set up a new state,

and reign at Rome. This Jew, this peasant, is he to fulfil his nation's dream, and rule over all mankind? Wonderfully did they ridicule this idea, and we do not wonder that they did, for they could not perceive his true glory. But, beloved, my point lies here, *he was a King* in the truest and most emphatic sense. If he had not been a king, then he would as an impostor have deserved the scorn, but would not have keenly felt it; but being truly and really a king, every word must have stung his royal soul, and every syllable must have cut to the quick his kingly spirit. When the impostor's claims are exposed and held up to scorn, he himself must well know that he deserves all the contempt he receives, and what can he say? But if the real heir to all the estates of heaven and earth has his claims denied and his person mocked at, then is his heart wounded, and rebuke and reproach fill him with many sorrows. Is it not sad that the Son of God, the blessed and only Potentate, should have been thus disgraced.

Nor was it merely mockery, but *cruelly added pain to insult*. If they had only intended to mock him they might have platted a crown of straw, but they meant to pain him, and therefore they fashioned a crown of thorns. Look ye, I pray you, at his person as he suffers under their hands. They had scourged him till probably there was no part of his body which was not bleeding beneath their blows except his head, and now that head must be made to suffer too. Alas, our whole head was sick, and our whole heart faint, and so he must be made in his chastisement like to us in our transgression. There was no part of our humanity without sin, and there must be no part of his humanity without suffering. If we had escaped in some measure from iniquity, so might he have escaped from pain, but as we had worn the foul garment of transgression, and it covered us from head to foot, even so must he wear the garments of shame and derision from the crown of his head even to the sole of his foot.

" O Love, too boundless to be shown
By any but the Lord alone!
O Love offended, which sustains
The bold offender's curse and pains!
O Love, which could no motive have,
But mere benignity to save."

Beloved, I always feel as if my tongue were tied when I come to talk of the sufferings of my Master. I can think of them, I can picture them to myself, I can sit down and weep over them, but I know not how to paint them to others. Did you ever know pen or pencil that could? A Michael Angelo or a Raphael might well shrink back from attempting to paint this picture; and the tongue of an archangel might be consumed in the effort to sing the griefs of him who was loaded with shame because of our shameful transgressions. I ask you rather to meditate than to listen, and to sit down and view your Lord with your own loving eyes rather than to have regard to words of mine. I can only sketch the picture, roughly outlining it as with charcoal; I must leave you to put in the colours, and then to sit and study it, but you will fail as I do. Dive we may, but we cannot reach the depths of this abyss of woe and shame. Mount we may, but these storm-swept hills of agony are still above us.

II. Removing the curtain again from this sorrowful spectacle, I see here a SOLEMN WARNING which speaks softly and meltingly to us out of the spectacle of sorrow. Do you ask me what is that warning? It is a warning against our ever committing the same crime as the soldiers did. "The same!" say you; "why, we should never put a crown of thorns for that dear head." I pray you never may; but there are many who have done, and are doing it. Those are guilty of this crime who, as these soldiers did, *deny his claims*. Busy are the wise men of this world at this very time all over the world, busy in gathering thorns and twisting them, that they may afflict the Lord's Anointed. Some of them cry, "Yes, he was a good man, but not the Son of God;" others even deny his superlative excellence in life and teaching; they cavil at his perfection, and imagine flaws where none exist. Never are they happier than when impugning his character. I may be addressing some avowed infidel here, some sceptic as to the Redeemer's person and doctrine, and I charge him with crowning the Christ of God with thorns every time that he invents bitter charges against the Lord Jesus, and utters railing words against his cause and his people. Your denial of his claims, and especially your ridicule of them, is a repetition of the unhappy scene before us. There are some who ply all their wit, and tax their utmost skill for nothing else but to discover discrepancies in the gospel narratives, or to conjure up differences between their supposed scientific discoveries and the declarations of the Word of God. Foul often have they torn their own hands in weaving crowns of thorns for him, and I fear some of them will have to lie upon a bed of thorns when they come to die, as the result of their displays of scientific research after briars with which to afflict the Lover of mankind. It will be well if they have not to lie on worse than thorns for ever, when Christ shall come to judge them and condemn them and cast them into the lake of fire for all their impieties concerning him. Oh, that they would cease this useless and malicious trade of weaving crowns of thorns for him who is the world's only hope, whose religion is the lone star that gilds the midnight of human sorrow, and guides mortal man to the port of peace! Even for the temporal benefits of Christianity the good Jesus should be treated with respect; he has emancipated the slave, and uplifted the down-trodden; his gospel is the charter of liberty, the scourge of tyrants, and the death of priests. Spread it and you spread peace, freedom, order, love, and joy. He is the greatest of philanthropists, the truest friend of man, wherefore then array yourselves against him, ye who talk of progress and enlightenment? If men did but know him they would crown him with diadems of reverent love, more precious than the pearls of Ind, for his reign will usher in the golden age, and even now it softens the rigour of the present, as it has removed the miseries of the past. It is an ill business, this carping and cavilling, and I beseech those engaged in it to cease their ungenerous labours, unworthy of rational beings and destructive to their immortal souls.

This crowning with thorns is wrought in another fashion by *hypocritical professions of allegiance to him*. These soldiers put a crown on Christ's head, but they did not mean that he should be king; they

put a sceptre in his hand, but it was not the substantial ivory rod which signifies real power, it was only a weak and slender reed. Therein they remind us that Christ is mocked by insincere professors. O ye who love him not in your inmost souls, ye are those who mock him : but you say, "Wherein have I failed to crown him? Did I not join the church? Have I not said that I am a believer?" Oh, but if your hearts are not right within you, you have only crowned him with thorns; if you have not given him your very soul, you have in awful mockery thrust a sceptre of reed into his hand. Your very religion mocks him. Your lying professions mock him. Who hath required this at your hands, to tread his courts? You insult him at his table! You insult him on your knees! How can you say you love him, when your hearts are not with him? If you have never believed in him and repented of sin, and yielded obedience to his command, if you do not own him in your daily life to be both Lord and King, I charge you lay down the profession which is so dishonouring to him. If he be God, serve him; if he be King, obey him; if he be neither, then do not profess to be Christians. Be honest and bring no crown if you do not accept him as King. What need again to insult him with nominal dominion, mimic homage, and pretended service? O ye hypocrites, consider your ways, lest soon the Lord whom ye provoke should ease him of his adversaries.

In a measure the same thing may be done by those who are sincere, but through want of watchfulness *walk so as to dishonour their profession*. Here, if I speak rightly, I shall compel every one of you to confess it in your spirits that you stand condemned; for every time that we act according to our sinful flesh we crown the Saviour's head with thorns. Which of us has not done this? Dear head, every hair of which is more precious than fine gold, when we gave our hearts to thee we thought we should always adore thee, that our whole lives would be one long psalm, praising and blessing and crowning thee. Alas, how far have we fallen short of our own ideal! We have hedged thee about with the briers of our sin. We have been betrayed into angry tempers, so that we have spoken unadvisedly with our lips; or we have been worldly, and loved that which thou abhorrest, or we have yielded to our passions, and indulged our evil desires. Our vanities, follies, forgetfulnesses, omissions, and offences have set upon thy head a coronet of dishonour, and we tremble to think of it. Oh, cruel hearts and hands to have so maltreated the Well-beloved, whom it should have been our daily care to glorify! Do I speak to any backslider whose open sin has dishonoured the cross of Christ? I fear I must be addressing some who, once had a name to live, but now are numbered with the dead in sin. Surely if there be a spark of grace in you, what I am now saying must cut you to the quick, and act like salt upon a raw wound to make your very soul to smart. Do not your ears tingle as I accuse you deliberately of acts of inconsistency which have twisted a thorny crown for our dear Master's head? It is assuredly so, for you have opened the mouths of blasphemers, taught gainsayers to revile him, grieved the generation of his people, and made many to stumble. Ungodly men have laid your faults at the door of the innocent Saviour; they have said "This is your religion." You have grown the

thorns, but he has had to wear them. We call your offences inconsistencies, but worldly men regard them as the fruit of Christianity, and condemn the vine because of your sour clusters. They charge the holy Jesus with the faults of his erring followers. Dear friends, is there not room to look at home in the case of each one of us? As we do so, let us come with the sorrowful and loving penitent, and wash his dear feet with tears of repentance, because we have crowned his head with thorns.

Thus our thorn-crowned Lord and Master stands before us as a sorrowful spectacle, conveying to us a solemn warning.

III. Lifting the veil again, in the person of our tortured and insulted Lord we see TRIUMPHANT ENDURANCE. He could not be conquered, he was victorious even in the hour of deepest shame.

“ He with unflinching heart
Bore all disgrace and shame,
And 'mid the keenest smart
Lov'd on, yea lov'd the same ”

He was bearing at that moment, first, *the substitutionary griefs* which were due to him because he stood in our place, and from bearing them he did not turn aside. We were sinners, and the reward of sin is pain and death, therefore he bore the chastisement of our peace. He was enduring at that time what we ought to have endured, and draining the cup which justice had mingled for us. Did he start back from it? Oh, no. When first he came to drink of that worm-wood and gall in the garden he put it to his lips, and the draught seemed for an instant to stagger even his strong spirit. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He was like one demented, tossed to and fro with inward agony. “My Father,” said he, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Thrice did he utter that prayer, while every portion of his manhood was the battle-field of legions of griefs. His soul rushed out at every pore to find a vent for its swelling woes, his whole body being covered with gory sweat. After that tremendous struggle the strength of love mastered the weakness of manhood; he put that cup to his lips and never shrank, but he drank right on till not a dreg was left; and now the cup of wrath is empty, no trace of the terrible wine of the wrath of God can be found within it. At one tremendous draught of love the Lord for ever drank destruction dry for all his people. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that hath risen again,” and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Now surely endurance had reached a very high point when he was made to endure the painful mockery which our text describes, yet he quailed not, nor removed from his settled purpose. He had undertaken, and he would go through. Look at him, and see there a miracle of patient endurance of griefs which would have sent a world to hell had he not borne them on our behalf.

Besides the shame and suffering due for sin, with which it pleased the Father to bruise him, he was enduring a *superfluity of malice from the hate of men*. Why needed men have concentrated all their scorn

and cruelty into his execution? Was it not enough that he must die? Did it give pleasure to their iron hearts to rack his tenderest sensibilities? Wherefore these inventions for deepening his woe? Had any of us been thus derided we should have resented it. There is not a man or woman here who could have been silent under such indignities, but Jesus sat in omnipotence of patience, possessing his soul right royally. Glorious pattern of patience, we adore thee as we see how malice could not conquer thine almighty love! The pain which he had endured from the scourges caused him to throb with exquisite anguish, but we read neither of tears nor groans, much less of angry complaints or revengeful threats. He does not seek for pity, or make one appeal for lenity. He does not ask wherefore they torture or why they mock. Brave witness! Courageous martyr! Suffering exquisitely thou dost also suffer calmly. Such a perfect frame as his, his body being conceived without sin, must have been capable of tortures which our bodies, unstrung by sin, cannot feel. His delicate purity felt a horror of ribald jests which our more hardened spirits cannot estimate, yet Jesus bore all, as only the Son of God could bear it. They might heap on the load as they would, he would only put forth more endurance, and bear it all, but shrink or quail he would not.

I venture to suggest that such was the picture of patience which our blessed Lord exhibited that it may have moved some even of the soldiery themselves. Has it ever occurred to you to ask how Matthew came to know all about that mockery? Matthew was not there. Mark also gives an account of it, but he would not have been tolerated in the guard-room. The Prætorians were far too proud and rough to tolerate Jews, much less disciples of Jesus, in their common hall. Since there could have been nobody there except the legionaries themselves, it is well to inquire—Who told this tale? It must have been an eye-witness. May it not have been that centurion who in the same chapter is reported to have said, “Certainly this was the Son of God”? May not that scene as well as the Lord’s death have led him to that conclusion? We do not know, but this much is very evident, the story must have been told by an eye-witness, and also by one who sympathised with the sufferer, for to my ear it does not read like the description of an unconcerned spectator. I should not wonder—I would almost venture to assert—that our Lord’s marred but patient visage preached such a sermon that one at least who gazed upon it felt its mysterious power, felt that such patience was more than human, and accepted the thorn-crowned Saviour as henceforth his Lord and his King. This I do know, that if you and I want to conquer human hearts for Jesus we must be patient too; and if, when they ridicule and persecute us, we can but endure without repining or retaliation, we shall exercise an influence which even the most brutal will feel, and to which chosen minds will submit themselves.

IV. Drawing up the veil again, I think we have before us, in the fourth place, in the person of the triumphant sufferer, a SACRED MEDICINE. I can only hint at the diseases which it will cure. These blood-besprinkled thorns are plants of renown, precious in heavenly surgery if they be rightly used. Take but a thorn out of this crown and use it as a lancet, and it will let out the hot blood of

passion and abate the fever of pride; it is a wonderful remedy for swelling flesh and grievous boils of sin. He who sees Jesus crowned with thorns will loathe to look on self, except it be through tears of contrition. This thorn at the breast will make men sing, but not with notes of self-congratulation, the notes will be those of a dove moaning for her mate. Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns, but the lessons were not so salutary as those which we learn from the thorns of Jesus. The sacred medicine which the good Physician brings to us in his thorny chaplet acts as a tonic, and strengthens us to endure without depression whatever shame or loss his service may bring upon us:—

“ Who defeats my fiercest foes?
 Who consoles my saddest woes?
 Who revives my fainting heart,
 Healing all its hidden smart?
 Jesus crowned with thorns.”

When you begin to serve God, and for his sake endeavour to benefit your fellow-mortals, do not expect any reward from men, except to be misunderstood, suspected, and abused. The best men in the world are usually the worst spoken of. An evil world cannot speak well of holy lives. The sweetest fruit is most pecked at by the birds, the most heaven-nearing mountain is most beaten by the storms, and the loveliest character is the most assailed. Those whom you would save will not thank you for your anxiety, but blame you for your interference. If you rebuke their sins they will frequently resent your warnings, if you invite them to Jesus, they will make light of your entreaties. Are you prepared for this? If not, consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds. If you succeed in bringing many to Christ, you must not reckon upon universal honour, you will be charged with self-seeking, popularity-hunting, or some such crime; you will be misrepresented, belied, caricatured, and counted as a fool or a knave by the ungodly world. The probabilities are that the crown you will win in this world, if you serve God, will contain more spikes than sapphires, more briars than beryls. When it is put upon your head pray for grace to wear it right gladly, counting it all joy to be like your Lord. Say in your heart, “I feel no dishonour in this dishonour. Men may impute shameful things to me, but I am not ashamed. They may degrade me, but I am not degraded. They may cast contempt upon me, but I am not contemptible.” The Master of the house was called Beelzebub and spit upon, they cannot do worse to his household, therefore we scorn their scorn. Thus are we nerved to patience by the patience of the despised Nazarene.

The thorn crown is also a remedy for discontent and affliction. When enduring bodily pain we are apt to wince and fret, but if we remember Jesus crowned with thorns, we say—

“ His way was much rougher and darker and mine;
 Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?”

And so our complaints grow dumb; for very shame we dare not com-

pare our maladies with his woes. Resignation is learned at Jesus' feet, when we see our great Exemplar made perfect through suffering.

The thorn crown is a cure for care. We would cheerfully wear any array which our Lord may prepare for us, but it is a great folly to plait needless thorn crowns for ourselves. Yet I have seen some who are, I hope, true believers take much trouble to trouble themselves, and labour to increase their own labours. They haste to be rich, they fret, they toil, they worry, and torment themselves to load themselves with the burden of wealth; they wound themselves to wear the thorny crown of worldly greatness. Many are the ways of making rods for our own backs. I have known mothers make thorn crowns out of their children whom they could not trust with God, they have been worn with family anxieties when they might have rejoiced in God. I have known others make thorn crowns out of silly fears, for which there were no grounds whatever; but they seemed ambitious to be fretful, eager to prick themselves with briars. O believer, say to thyself, "My Lord wore my crown of thorns for me; why should I wear it too?" He took our griefs and carried our sorrows that we might be a happy people, and be able to obey the command, "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Ours is the crown of loving kindness and tender mercies, and we wear it when we cast all our care on him who careth for us.

That thorn crown cures us of desire for the vainglorious of the world, it dims all human pomp and glory till it turns to smoke. Could we fetch hither the Pope's triple crown, or the imperial diadem of Germany, or the regalia of the Czar of All the Russias, what of them all compared with Jesus' crown of thorns? Let us set some great one on his throne, and see how little he looks when Jesus sits beside him. What is there kingly in being able to tax men, and live upon their labours, giving little in return? The royalest thing is to lay them all under obligations to our disinterested love, and be the fountain of blessing to them. Oh, it takes the glitter from your gold, and the lustre from your gems, and the beauty from all your dainty gewgaws, to see that no imperial purple can equal the glory of his blood, no gems can rival his thorns. Show and parade cease to attract the soul when once the superlative excellencies of the dying Saviour have been discerned by the enlightened eye.

Who seeks for ease when he has seen the Lord Christ? If Christ wears a crown of thorns, shall we covet a crown of laurel? Even the fierce Crusader when he entered into Jerusalem, and was elected king, had sense enough to say, "I will not wear a crown of gold in the same city where my Saviour wore a crown of thorns." Why should we desire, like feather-bed soldiers, to have everything arranged for our ease and pleasure? Why this reclining upon couches when Jesus hangs on a cross? Why this soft raiment when he is naked? Why these luxuries when he is barbarously entreated? Thus the thorn crown cures us at once of the vainglory of the world, and of our own selfish love of ease. The world's minstrel may cry, "Ho, boy, come hither, and crown me with rose brds!" but the voluptuary's request is not for us. For us neither delights of the flesh nor the pride of life can have charms while the Man of Sorrows is in view. For us it

remains to suffer, and to labour, till the King shall bid us share his rest.

V. I must notice in the fifth place that there is before us a MYSTIC CORONATION. Bear with my many divisions. The coronation of Christ with thorns was symbolical, and had great meaning in it, for, first, it was to him *a triumphal crown*. Christ had fought with sin from the day when he first stood foot to foot with it in the wilderness up to the time when he entered Pilate's hall, and he had conquered it. As a witness that he had gained the victory behold sin's crown seized as a trophy! What was the crown of sin? Thorns. These sprang from the curse. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," was the coronation of sin, and now Christ has taken away its crown, and put it on his own head. He has spoiled sin of its richest regalia, and he wears it himself. Glorious champion, all hail! What if I say that the thorns constituted a mural crown? Paradise was set round with a hedge of thorns so sharp that none could enter it, but our champion leaped first upon the bristling rampart, and bore the blood-red banner of his cross into the heart of that better new Eden, which thus he won for us never to be lost again. Jesus wears the mural chaplet which denotes that he has opened Paradise. It was a wrestler's crown he wore, for he wrestled not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and he overthrew his foe. It was a racer's crown he wore, for he had run with the mighty and outstripped them in the race. He had well-nigh finished his course, and had but a step or two more to take to reach the goal. Here is a marvellous field for enlargement, and we must stay at once lest we go too far. It was a crown rich with glory, despite the shame which was intended by it. We see in Jesus the monarch of the realms of misery, the chief among ten thousand sufferers. Never say, "I am a great sufferer." What are our griefs compared with his? As the poet stood upon the Palatine Mount and thought of Rome's dire ruin, he exclaimed, "What are our woes and sufferings?" even so I ask, What are our shallow griefs compared with the infinite sorrows of Immanuel? Well may we "control in our close breasts our petty misery." Jesus is, moreover, the prince of martyrs. He leads the van among the noble army of suffering witnesses and confessors of the truth. Though they died at the stake, or pined in dungeons, or were cast to wild beasts, they none of them claim the first rank; but he, the faithful and the true witness, with the thorn crown and the cross, stands at the head of them all. It may never be our lot to join the august band, but if there be an honour for which we might legitimately envy saints of former times, it is this, that they were born in those brave days when the ruby crown was within human grasp, and when the supreme sacrifice might have been made. We are cravens, indeed, if in these softer days we are ashamed to confess our Master, and are afraid of a little scorn, or tremble at the criticisms of the would-be wise. Rather let us follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, content to wear his crown of thorns that we may in his kingdom behold his glory.

VI. The last word is this. In the thorn crown I see a MIGHTY STIMULUS. A mighty stimulus to what? Why, first, to fervent love of him. Can you see him crowned with thorns and not be

drawn to him? Methinks, if he could come among us this morning, and we could see him, there would be a loving press around him to touch the hem of his garment or to kiss his feet. Saviour, thou art very precious to us. Dearest of all the names above, my Saviour and my God, thou art always glorious, but in these eyes thou art never more lovely than when arrayed in shameful mockery. The Lily of the Valley, and the Rose of Sharon, both in one is he, fair in the perfection of his character, and blood-red in the greatness of his sufferings. Worship him! Adore him! Bless him! And let your voices sing "Worthy the Lamb."

This sight is a stimulus, next, to repentance. Did our sins put thorns around his head? Oh, my poor fallen nature, I will scourge thee for scourging him, and make thee feel the thorns for causing him to endure them. What, can you see your best Beloved put to such shame, and yet hold truce or parley with the sins which pierced him? It cannot be. Let us declare before God our soul's keen grief that we should make the Saviour suffer so; then let us pray for grace to hedge our lives around with thorns that from this very day sin may not approach us.

I thought this day of how oftentimes I have seen the blackthorn growing in the hedge all bristling with a thousand prickles, but right in the centre of the bush have I seen the pretty nest of a little bird. Why did the creature place its habitation there? Because the thorns become a protection to it, and shelter it from harm. As I meditated last night upon this blessed subject, I thought I would bid you build your nests within the thorns of Christ. It is a safe place for sinners. Neither Satan, sin, nor death can reach you there. Gaze on your Saviour's sufferings, and you will see sin atoned for. Fly into his wounds! fly, ye timid trembling doves! there is no resting-place so safe for you. Build your nests, I say again, among these thorns, and when you have done so, and trusted Jesus, and counted him to be all in all to you, then come and crown his sacred head with other crowns. What glory does he deserve? What is good enough for him? If we could take all the precious things from all the treasuries of monarchs, they would not be worthy to be pebbles beneath his feet. If we could bring him all the sceptres, mitres, tiaras, diadems, and all other pomp of earth, they would be altogether unworthy to be thrown in the dust before him. Wherewith shall we crown him? Come let us weave our praises together and set our tears for pearls, our love for gold. They will sparkle like so many diamonds in his esteem, for he loves repentance, and he loves faith. Let us make a chaplet this morning with our praises, and crown him as the laureate of grace. This day on which he rose from the dead, let us extol him. Oh, for grace to do it in the heart, and then in the life, and then with the tongue, that we may praise him for ever who bowed his head to shame for us.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvii. 11—54.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—336, 282, 275, 417 (v. 1 & 4).

MOCKED OF THE SOLDIERS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 29TH, 1903,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 3rd, 1883.

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"—Matthew xxvii. 29.

It is a shameful spectacle where cruelty uses its keenest instrument to cut, not into the flesh, but into the very spirit, for scorn, contempt, insult, and ridicule, are as painful to the mind and heart as a scourge is to the body, and they cut like the sharpest lance. These Roman soldiers were a rough body of men,—fierce, courageous, terrible in fight, uncouth, untaught, uncivilized, little better than barbarians; and when they had this unique King in their power, they made the most of their opportunity to torment him. Oh, how they laughed to think that he should call himself a King,—this poor, emaciated creature, who looked as if he would faint and die in their hands, whose blessed visage was marred more than that of any of the sons of men! It must have seemed to them a sorry jest that he should be a rival to imperial Cæsar, so they said, "If he is a King, let us clothe him with royal purple," so they flung over his shoulders a soldier's tunic. "As he is a King, let us plait him a crown;" and they made it of thorns. Then they bowed the knee in mock homage to the man whom his own people despised, whom even the mob rejected, and whom the chief men of the nation abhorred. It seemed to them that he was such a poor, miserable, dejected creature that all they could do was to make scorn of him, and treat him as the butt for their utmost ridicule.

These Roman soldiers had in them, as men, a spirit which I sometimes grieve to see in boys at this present day. That same cruel spirit that will torture a bird or a cockchafer, or hunt a dog or cat simply because it looks miserable, and because it is in their power, that was the sort of spirit that was in these soldiers. They had never been taught to avoid cruelty; nay, cruelty was the element in which they lived. It was worked into their very

being; it was their recreation. Their grandest holiday was to go and sit in those tiers of seats at the Coliseum, or at some provincial amphitheatre, and see lions contending with men, or wild beasts tearing one another in pieces. They were trained and inured to cruelty; they seemed to have been suckled upon blood, and to have been fed on such food as made them capable of the utmost cruelty; and, therefore, when Christ was in their hands, he was in a sorry case indeed. They called together the whole band, and put upon him a purple robe, and a crown of thorns upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat upon him, and took the reed from his hand, and smote him on the head.

Now we will leave those Roman soldiers, and the Jews that had a hand in persecuting him, for he that delivered him unto them had committed even greater sin. Neither Pilate nor his legionaries were the chief criminals at that time, as we well know. From this incident in our Lord's life, I think we may learn, first, *lessons for the heart*; and, secondly, *lessons for the conscience*.

I. First, we have here A SET OF LESSONS FOR OUR HEART.

Beloved, we begin with this one. Where I see the great Substitute for sinners put to such shame, scorn, and ridicule, my heart says to itself, "*See what sin deserves.*" There is nothing in the world that more richly deserves to be despised, abhorred, condemned, than sin. If we look at it aright, we shall see that it is the most abominable thing, the most shameful thing in the whole universe. Of all the things that ever were, this is the thing which most of all deserves to be loathed and spurned. It is not a thing of God's creating, remember. It is an abortion; a spectre of the night, which plucked a host of angels from their thrones in heaven, drove our first parents out of paradise, and brought upon us unnumbered miseries.

Think, for a minute, what sin is, and you will see that it deserves ridicule for its folly. What is sin? It is rebellion against the Omnipotent, a revolt against the Almighty. What utter folly that is! Who shall hurl himself against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler, and not be dashed in pieces? Who shall rush upon the point of his spear, and hope to vanquish him? Laugh to scorn such folly as that. Under that aspect, sin is the apex of folly, the climax of absurdity; for what power can ever stand up against God, and win the day?

But, further, sin deserves to be scorned because it is a wanton attack upon One who is full of goodness, and justice, and truth. Note that evil thing that assails the Most High, and brand it so that the mark of the iron shall abide on it for ever. Set it up in the public pillory, and let all true hearts and hands hurl scorn upon it for having disobeyed the perfect law of God, angered the generous Creator and Preserver of men, done despite to eternal love, and infinite damage to the best interests of the human race. It is a ridiculous thing, because it is fruitless, and must end in being defeated. It is a shameful thing, because of its wanton, malicious,

unprovoked attack upon God. If you will look back a little, and consider what sin attempted to do, you will see the reason why it should be shamed for its audacity. "Ye shall be as gods," said he who was the mouthpiece of sin; but are we, by nature, like gods? Are we not more like devils? And he who uttered that lie,—even Satan,—did he succeed as he expected when he dared to rebel against his Creator? See how his former glory has vanished! How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, and how is thy brightness quenched in everlasting night! Yet sin, speaking through the lips of Satan, talked about being a king, and of making all of us kings; but it has degraded us to the dung-hill, and to utter beggary; ay, to worse than that, to death and hell. What spitting sin deserves! If it is to be crowned, let it be crowned with thorns. Bow not your knee to it, but pour upon it all the scorn you can. Every true and honest heart, in heaven, among the angels and the glorified spirits, and on earth, among sanctified men and women, must look upon sin as a thing worthy of unspeakable contempt. May God make sin as contemptible in our sight as Christ appeared to be to the Roman soldiers! May we scoff at its temptations; may we scorn its proffered rewards; and may we never bow our hearts to it in any degree whatsoever, since God has set us free from its accursed thralldom!

That is the first lesson for our hearts to learn from the mockery of our Saviour by the soldiers,—see what a contemptible thing sin is.

Learn, next, my dear brethren and sisters, *how low our glorious Substitute stooped for our sake*. In him was no sin either of nature or of act. He was pure, entirely without spot before God himself; yet, as our Representative, he took our sin upon himself. "He was made sin for us," says the Scripture most emphatically; and inasmuch as he was regarded as being the sinner, though in him was no sin, it naturally followed that he should become the object of contempt. But what a wonder that it should be so! He, who created all things by the word of his power, and by whom all things consist,—he, who counted it not robbery (not a thing to be grasped) to be equal with God,—sits in an old chair to be made a mimic king, and to be mocked and spat upon! All other miracles put together are not equal to this miracle; this one rises above them all, and out-miracles all miracles,—that God himself, having espoused our cause, and assumed our nature, should deign to stoop to such a depth of scorn as this. Though myriads of holy angels adored him, though they would have gladly left their high estate in heaven, to smite his foes, and set him free, he voluntarily subjected himself to all the ignominy that I have described, and much more which is utterly indescribable;—for who knows what things were said and done, in that rough guard-room, which holy pens could not record, or what foul jests were made, and what obscene remarks were uttered, which were even more shocking to Christ than the filthy spittle which ran down his blessed cheeks in that time of shameful mockery? Ah, my brothers and sisters, you cannot imagine how low your Lord stooped on your account!

When I hear any say that they have been so slandered for his sake that they cannot endure it, I have wished that they knew what he endured on their account. If we stood in the pillory, and all mankind hooted at us for a million million years, it would be as nothing compared with the wondrous condescension of him who is God over all, blessed for ever, stooping as he did for our sake.

That is the second lesson for our hearts to learn.

Then let me say to you very tenderly, wishing that some other voice could speak of it more effectively, *see how your Redeemer loved you*. You know that, when Christ stood by the grave of Lazarus, and wept, the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!" Ah! but look at him there among those Roman soldiers,—despised, rejected, insulted, ridiculed; and then let me say to you, "Behold how he loved us,—you, and me, and all his people!" In such a case, I might quote the words of John, "Behold, what manner of love!" But this love of Jesus is beyond all manner and measure of which we can have any conception. If I were to take all your love to him, and heap it up like a vast mountain; if I were to gather all the members of the one Church of Christ on earth, and bid them empty their hearts, and then fetched out of heaven the myriads of redeemed and perfected spirits before the throne, and they added all their hearts' love; and if I could collect all the love that ever has been and that ever shall be throughout eternity in all the saints;—all that would be but as a drop of a bucket compared with the boundless, fathomless love of Christ to us, that brought him down so low as to be the object of the scorn and derision of these wicked men for our sake. So, beloved, from this sad scene let us learn how greatly Jesus loved us, and let each one of us, in return, love him with all our heart.

I cannot leave this set of lessons for your heart without giving you one more; that is, *see the grand facts behind the scorn*. I do believe—I cannot help believing—that our blessed Master, when he was in the hands of those cruel soldiers, and they crowned him with thorns, and bowed before him in mock reverence, and insulted him in every possible way, all the while looked behind the curtain of the visible circumstances, and saw that the heartless pantomime,—nay, tragedy,—only partially hid the divine reality, for he was a King even then, and he had a throne, and that thorn-crown was the emblem of the diadem of universal sovereignty that shall, in due season, adorn his blessed brow; that reed was to him a type of the sceptre which he shall yet wield as King of kings and Lord of lords; and when they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" he heard, behind that mocking cry, the triumphant note of his future glory, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; and he shall reign for ever and ever!" for when they mockingly bowed the knee to him, he saw all nations really bowing before him, and his enemies licking the dust at his feet. Our Saviour knew that these ribald soldiers, unconsciously to themselves, were setting before him pictures of the great reward of his soul-travail. Let us not be discouraged if we have to endure anything of the same sort as our Lord suffered. He was not discouraged,

but remained steadfast through it all. Mockery is the unintentional homage which falsehood pays to truth. Scorn is the unconscious praise which sin gives to holiness. What higher tribute could these soldiers give to Christ than to spit upon him? If Christ had received honour from such men, there would have been no honour in it to him. You know how even a heathen moralist, when they said to him, "So-and-so spoke well of you yesterday in the market," asked, "What have I done amiss that such a wretch as that should speak well of me?" He rightly counted it a disgrace to be praised by a bad man; and because our Lord had done nothing amiss, all that these men could do was to speak ill of him, and treat him with contumely, for their nature and character were the very opposite of his. Representing, as these soldiers did, the unregenerate, God-hating world, I say that their scorn was the truest reverence that they could offer to Christ while they continued as they were; and so, at the back of persecution, at the back of heresy, at the back of the hatred of ungodly men to the cross of Christ, I see his everlasting kingdom advancing, and I believe that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above the hills," and that "all nations shall flow unto it," even as Isaiah foretold; that Jesus shall sit upon the throne of David, and that of the increase of his kingdom there shall be no end, for the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour unto him, "and he shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah!" Glory be to his holy name!

Have all our hearts truly learned these four grand lessons,—the shamefulness of sin,—the condescension of our Lord,—the immeasurable love which made him so condescending,—and the ineffable glory which hides behind the skirts of all this shame and sorrow? If not, let us beseech the Holy Spirit to teach them to us.

II. Now I want to give you, from this same incident, A SET OF LESSONS FOR YOUR CONSCIENCE.

And, first, it is a very painful reflection—let your conscience feel the pain of it—that *Jesus Christ can still be mocked*. He has gone into the heavens, and he sits there in glory; but yet, spiritually, so as to bring great guilt upon him who does it, the glorious Christ of God can still be mocked, and he is mocked by those who deride his people. Now, men of the world, if you see faults and failings in us, we do not wish you to screen us. Because we are the servants of God, we do not ask for exemption from honest criticism, we do not desire that our sins should be treated with more leniency than those of other men; but, at the same time, we bid you beware that you do not slander, and scandalize, and persecute those who are the true followers of Christ; for, if you do, you are mocking and persecuting him. I believe that, if it be the poorest of his people, the least gifted and the most faulty, yet, if they are evil spoken of for Christ's sake, our Lord takes it all as done to himself. You remember how Saul of Tarsus, when he lay smitten to the ground, heard a voice which said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Well, but," he might have said, "I have never persecuted thee, Lord." No; but he dragged

Christian men and women to prison, and scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme; and because he had done this to Christ's people, Christ could truly say to him, "Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me." If you persecutors want to amuse yourselves, you can find much cheaper sport than that of slandering the servants of Christ. Remember that the Lord has said concerning them, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." If you were to touch the apple of a man's eye, you would be provoking him to defend himself; so do not arouse Christ's righteous anger by scoffing at any of his people. I say no more upon that point; if the message is meant for any man here, let him give heed to the warning.

Next, Christ may be mocked by contemning his doctrine. It seems to me a fearful thing that men should ever hold up Christianity to scorn; yet, nowadays, there is scarcely any portion of the truth of God which is not ridiculed and caricatured. It is stripped of its own clothes, and dressed up in somebody else's old purple cloak, and then it is set in a chair, while men pretend great homage for it, and salute it, saying that they have great reverence for Christ's teaching; but, before long, they spit in its face, and treat it with the utmost disdain. There are some who deny the Deity of Christ, others who hate the central doctrine of his atoning sacrifice, while many rail at justification by faith, which is the very heart of the gospel. Is there any doctrine—I scarcely know one—which has escaped the mockery and scorn of ungodly men. In the present day, if a man wants to make himself a name, he does not write upon something which he understands, and which is for the public weal, but he straightway begins to assail some doctrine of Scripture of which he does not know the meaning; he misrepresents it, and sets up some notion of his own in opposition to it, for he is a "modern thought" man, a person of much importance. It is easy work to scoff at the Bible, and to deny the truth. I think that I could myself pose as a learned man, in that way, if ever the devil should sufficiently control me to make me feel any ambition of that sort. In fact, there is scarcely a fool in Christendom who cannot make himself a name among modern thinkers if he will but blaspheme loudly enough, for that seems to be the road to fame, nowadays, among the great mass of mankind. They are dubbed "thoughtful" who thus insult the truth of God as the soldiers, with their spittle, insulted the Christ of God.

I shall come closely home to some of you, who attend here regularly, when I say that Christ can still be mocked by resolves which never lead to obedience. Let me speak very softly upon this solemn truth. Give me your hand, my friend; let me look into your eyes; I would fain look into your soul if I could, while I put this matter very personally to you. Several times, ere leaving this house, you have said, "I will repent of my sin; I will seek the Lord; I will believe in Jesus." You meant these words when you uttered them; why, then, have you not fulfilled your promises? I do not care what excuse you give, because any reason which you

give will be most unreasonable, for it will only amount to this,—that there was something better than to do what Christ bids you, something better for you than to be saved by him, something better than the forgiveness of your sins, something better than regeneration, something better than Christ's eternal love. You would have chosen Christ, but Barabbas came across your path, so you said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." You would have thought seriously about the salvation of your soul, but you had promised to go to a certain place of amusement, so you put off seeking the Saviour till a more convenient season. Possibly, you said, "My trade is of such a character that I shall have to give it up if I become a Christian, and I cannot afford to do that." I heard of one, who listened to a sermon which impressed him,—and he did not often hear sermons,—and he wished that he could be a Christian; but he had made various bets for large amounts, and he felt that he could not think of other things till they were ended.

There are many such things that keep men from Christ. I do not care what it is that you prefer to the Saviour; you have insulted him if you prefer anything to him. If it were the whole world, and all that it contains, that you had chosen, these things are but trifles when compared with the sovereignty of Christ, his crown rights to every man's heart, and the immeasurable riches that he is prepared to give to every soul that comes and trusts in him. Do you prefer a harlot to the Lord Jesus Christ? Then, tell me not that you do not spit in his face; you do what is worse even than that. Do you prefer profits wrongly gained to accepting Jesus as your Saviour? Do not tell me, sir, that you have never bowed the knee before him in scorn; for you have done far worse than that. Or was it a little paltry pleasure,—mere trifling laughter and folly of an hour,—that you preferred to your Lord? Oh, what must he feel when he sees these contemptible things preferred to him, knowing that eternal damnation is at the back of your foolish choice? Yet men choose a moment's folly and hell, instead of Christ and heaven! Was ever such an insult as that paid to Christ by Roman soldiers? Go, legionaries; you are not the worst of men! There are some who, being pricked in their conscience, make a promise of repentance, and then, for the world's sake, and for their flesh's sake, and for the devil's sake, break that promise; the soldiers did not sin against Christ so grossly as that!

Listen once more. I must again come very closely home to some of you. Was it not a shameful thing that they should call Christ King, and yet not mean it; and, apparently, give him a crown, a sceptre, a royal robe, the bowing of the knee, and the salutation of the lips, but not to mean any of it? It cuts me to the heart to think of what I am going to say, yet I must say it. There are some professors,—members of Christian churches,—members of this church,—who call Christ Master and Lord, yet they do not the things which he says. They profess to believe the truth, yet it is not like the truth to them, for they never yield to its power, and they act as if what they call truth were fiction and human invention. There are still some, like those of whom the apostle wrote,

and I can say as he did,—“of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ,”—though in the nominal church. Their God is their belly, they glory in their shame, and they mind earthly things; yet they bow the knee before Christ, they sing, “crown him, crown him;” and they eat the bread and drink the wine which set forth his broken body and shed blood, yet they have no part nor lot in him. It has always been so in the nominal church, and it will be so, I suppose, till Christ comes to separate the chaff from the wheat. But, oh, how dreadful it is! To insult Christ in the Roman guardroom, was bad enough; but to insult him at the communion table, is far worse. For a Roman soldier to spit in his face, was bad enough; but to come and mingle with his people, and call yourself his servant, and then to go deliberately to drink with the drunkard, or to be unchaste in your life, or dishonest in your trade, or false in your talk, or foul in your heart, is even more abominable. I know no milder word that can express the truth. To call Christ Master, and yet never to do his bidding,—this is mockery and scorn of the worst possible kind, for it wounds him at the very heart.

I was reading, to-day, part of a Welsh sermon which struck me much. The preacher said, “Let all who are in this congregation avow their real master. I will first call upon the servants of the devil to own him. He is a fine master, and a glorious one to serve, and his service is joy and delight; now, all of you who are serving him say, ‘Amen. Glory be to the devil!’ Say it.” But nobody spoke. “Now,” said he, “don’t be ashamed to own him whom you serve every day of your life; speak out, and say, ‘Glory be to my master, the devil!’ or else hold your tongues for ever.” And still nobody spoke, so the minister said, “Then, I hope that, when I ask you to glorify Christ, you will speak.” And they did speak, till the chapel seemed to ring again as they cried, “Glory be to Christ!” That was good; but if I were to test you in a similar fashion, I feel tolerably certain that nobody here would own his master if his master is the devil, and I am afraid that some of the devil’s servants would join us in our hallelujahs to Christ. That is the mischief of it; the devil himself can use self-denial, and he can teach his servants to deny their master, and in that very way to do him the most honour. O dear friends, be true to Christ; and, whatever you do, never mock him! There are many other things, which you can do, that will be much more profitable to you than mocking Christ. If God be God, serve him; if Christ be your Master and Lord, honour him; but if you do not mean to honour him, do not call him Master; for, if you do, all your faults and sins will be laid at his door, and he will be dishonoured through you.

Now I think that I hear somebody say, “I am afraid, sir, that I have mocked Christ; what am I to do?” Well, my answer is,—Do not despair, because that would be mocking him in another way, by doubting his power to save you. “I am inclined to throw it all up.” Do not act so, for that would be to insult your Maker by another sin; namely, open revolt against him. “What shall I

do, then?" Well, go and tell him your grief and sorrow. He told his disciples to preach the gospel first at Jerusalem, because that was where those soldiers lived, the very men who had mocked him; and he prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In a like manner, he presents his mercy to you first. Come to him, then; and, if you are conscious that you have mocked him in any one of these ways that I have mentioned, say to yourself, "Then, if he will but forgive me, I will henceforth live all the more to his praise. I cannot wipe out my s'n, but he can; and if he will do so, I will love him much because I shall have had much forgiven; and I will spend and be spent to glorify his holy name."

My time has almost gone, so this must be my last remark. Whether we have mocked Christ or not, come, dear brothers and sisters, *let us now glorify him*. This very hour, let us crown him with our heart's love and trust. Bring forth that royal crown,—the crown of your love, of your trust, of your complete consecration to him,—and put it upon his head now, saying, "My Lord, my God, my King." Now put the sceptre into his hand by yielding absolute obedience to his will. Is there anything he bids you do? Do it. Is there anything he bids you give? Give it. Is there anything he bids you abstain from? Abstain from it. Put not a reed sceptre into his hand, but give him the entire control of your whole being. Let him be your real Lord, reigning over your spirit, soul, and body. What next? Bow before him, and worship in the quiet of your inmost heart. You need not bow your bodies, but let your spirits fall down before him that sitteth upon the throne, and cry, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

And when you have worshipped him, then proclaim him King. As those soldiers said in mockery, "Hail, King of the Jews!" so now do you in real earnestness proclaim him King of Jews and Gentiles, too. Go home, and tell your friends that Jesus is King. Tell it out among the nations that "the Lord reigneth," as the old version has it, "reigneth from the tree." He has made his cross to be his throne, and there he reigns in majesty and in mercy. Tell it to your children, tell it to your servants, tell it to your neighbours, tell it in every place wherever you can be heard,—that the Lord, even Jesus, reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. Say to them, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

And then, when you have proclaimed him, kiss him yourself. As the rough soldiers spat upon him, so do you give to him the kiss of homage and affection, saying, "Lord Jesus, thou art mine for ever and ever." Say, with the spouse, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." I suggest to you that each individual here, who loves his Lord much, should think of something fresh that he can do for Christ during this week,—some special gift that you can bestow upon him,—some special action that you can do, which shall be quite new and shall be only for Jesus, and altogether for

Jesus, as an act of homage to his name. I often wish that God's people were more inventive, like that woman who wanted greatly to honour him, so she brought out her alabaster box, and broke it, and poured the precious ointment upon his head. Think of something special that you can do for Christ, or give to him. A dear friend, now in heaven, but who used to worship in this place, had a son who had been a great scapegrace, and was, in fact, living a vicious life. He had been long away from his father, and his father did not know what to do about getting him home, for he had treated him very badly, marred his comfort, and spoiled his home. But, as I was preaching, one night, this thought came to him, "I will find out, to-morrow morning, where my son is, and I will go to him." The father knew that the son was very angry with him, and very bitter against him, so he thought of a certain fruit, of which his son was very fond, and he sent him a basketful of it next morning; and when the son received it, he said, "Then, my father has still some affection for me." And the next day the father called, and the day after he had him at home again, and that was the means of bringing the son to the Saviour. He had worn himself out with vice, and he soon died, but his father told me that it was a great joy to his heart to think that he could have a good hope concerning his son. Had the son died away from home, had the father not sought him out, he would never have forgiven himself. Now, he did that for Christ's sake; cannot some of you do a similar deed for the same reason? Is there any skeleton in your house? Is there any mischief you could set right; or have you anything you can give to your Lord and Master? Think, each one of you for himself or herself, what you can do; and, inasmuch as Christ was so shamefully despised and rejected, seek to honour and glorify him in the best way that you can, and he will accept your homage and your offering for his love's sake. May he help you so to do! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVII. 15-54; AND JOHN XVIII. 28-38.

We are now to read about our Lord before Pontius Pilate.

Matthew xxvii. Verses 15-30. Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed

his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them : and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand : and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Surely, mockery could have gone no further ; we marvel at the boldness and ingenuity of their scorn. Oh, that we were half as earnest in seeking to honour him,—as careful to think of everything that might make our homage perfect. But we, alas ! too often fail to give him due honour and glory, even when others are all aflame with zeal to insult him.

31. *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

Perhaps they were afraid that he would die from sheer exhaustion ; and, so, with a cruel mercy, they would keep him alive for the infliction of further tortures.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name : him they compelled to bear his cross.*

Any one of us might well have wished to have been Simon, yet we need not envy him. There is a cross for every one who is a follower of the Crucified ; may we have grace to carry it after him !

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall : and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

He wholly abstained from that which might have lessened his pain. He came to suffer, and he intended to go through with all that he had undertaken. He would do nothing that would blunt the edge of the sacrificial knife. He forbids not the soothing draught to other sufferers who are in pain ; but, as for himself, he will not partake of it.

35—37. *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there ; and set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

And so he is, and so he shall be,—King of the Jews even on that cross, and never so royal as when he had surrendered everything for love of those whom he came to redeem.

38—43. *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of God.*

What pain this taunt must have caused to the Saviour ! Because he is so pure, and never yields to temptation, we are very apt to forget that temptation was really temptation even to him, and that it grieved his pure and holy soul thus to be tempted to turn aside from the path of perfect trust in his Father, and complete obedience to him. No doubt the pain of temptation is in inverse ratio to our willingness to yield to it. When we yield

to temptation, we feel a pleasure in it ; but when we are horrified at it, and start back from it, then we feel the pain of it. Oh, for a mind and heart, so perfectly subject to the will of God, that we should feel such a temptation as this to be the very agony of grief to us, as it was to our Lord !

44. *The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

Nobody seemed to look upon him with any desire to help him, but even the lowest of the low would contribute their portion of mockery to increase his misery.

45—54. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ; and the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

John gives us some details of our Lord before Pilate which Matthew does not mention.

John xviii. Verses 28—38. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment : and it was early ; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled ; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man ? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death : that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews ? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me ? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew ? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me : what hast thou done ? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then ? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth ? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

Thus did all who came into contact with Jesus bear witness that the Lamb of God was indeed "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

THE PROCESSION OF SORROW.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 1ST, 1863, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they took Jesus, and led him away.”—John xix. 16.

NEXT Saturday all eyes will be fixed on a great Prince who shall ride through our streets with his Royal Bride. To-day I invite your attention to another Prince, marching in another fashion through his metropolis. London shall see the glory of the one: Jerusalem beheld the shame of the other. Come hither, ye lovers of Immanuel, and I will show you this great sight—the King of sorrow marching to his throne of grief, the cross. I claim for the procession of my Lord an interest superior to the pageant you are now so anxiously expecting. Will your Prince be sumptuously arrayed? Mine is adorned with garments crimsoned with his own blood. Will your Prince be decorated with honours? Behold, my King is not without his crown—alas, a crown of thorns set with ruby drops of blood! Will your thoroughfares be thronged? So were the streets of Jerusalem; for great multitudes followed him. Will ye raise a clamour of tumultuous shouting? Such a greeting had the Lord of glory, but alas, it was not the shout of welcome, but the yell of “Away with him! away with him.” High in the air ye bid your banners wave about the heir of England’s throne, but how shall ye rival the banner of the sacred cross, that day for the first time borne among the sons of men. For the thousands of eyes which shall gaze upon the youthful Prince, I offer the gaze of men and angels. All nations gathered about my Lord, both great and mean men clustered around his person. From the sky the angels viewed him with wonder and amazement; the spirits of the just looked from the windows of heaven upon the scene, yea, the great God and Father watched each movement of his suffering Son. But ye ask me where is the spouse, the king’s daughter fair and beautiful? My Lord is not altogether without his espoused one. The Church, the bride of Christ, was there, conformed to the image of her Lord; she was there, I say, in Simon, bearing the cross, and in the women weeping and lamenting. Say not that

the comparison is strained, for in a moment I will withdraw it and present the contrast. Grant me only thus much of likeness: we have here a Prince with his bride, bearing his banner, and wearing his royal robes, traversing the streets of his own city, surrounded by a throng who shout aloud, and a multitude who gaze with interest profound. But how vast was the disparity! The most careless eye discerns it. Yonder young Prince is ruddy with the bloom of early youth and health; my Master's visage is more marred than that of any man. See, it has been blackened with bruises, and stained with the shameful spittle of them that derided him. Your heir of royalty is magnificently drawn along the streets in his stately chariot, sitting at his ease: my princely sufferer walks with weary feet, marking the road with crimson drops; not borne, but bearing; not carried, but carrying his cross. Your Prince is surrounded by a multitude of friends; hark how they joyously welcome him! And well they may; the son of such noble parents deserves a nation's love. But my Prince is hated without a cause. Hark how their loud voices demand that he should be hastened to execution! How harshly grate the cruel syllables, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Your noble Prince is preparing for his marriage: mine is hastening to his doom. Oh, shame that men should find so much applause for Princes and none for the King of kings. Yet, dear friends, to some eyes there will be more attraction in the procession of sorrow, of shame, and of blood, than in yon display of grandeur and joy. Oh! I pray you, lend your ears to such faint words as I can utter on a subject all too high for me, the march of the world's Maker along the way of his great sorrow; your Redeemer traversing the rugged path of suffering, along which he went with heaving heart and heavy footsteps, that he might pave a royal road of mercy for his enemies.

I. After our Lord Jesus Christ had been formally condemned by Pilate, our text tells us he was led away. I invite your attention to **CHRIST AS LED FORTH.**

Pilate, as we reminded you, scourged our Saviour according to the common custom of Roman courts. The lictors executed their cruel office upon his shoulders with their rods and scourges, until the stripes had reached the full number. Jesus is formally condemned to crucifixion, but before he is led away he is given over to the Prætorian guards that those rough legionaries may insult him. It is said that a German regiment was at that time stationed in Judea, and I should not wonder if they were the lineal ancestors of those German theologians of modern times who have mocked the Saviour, tampered with revelation, and cast the vile spittle of their philosophy into the face of truth. The soldiery mocked and insulted him in every way that cruelty and scorn could devise. The platted crown of thorns, the purple robe, the reed with which they smote him, and the spittle with which they disfigured him, all these marked the contempt in which they held the King of the Jews. The reed was no mere rush from the brook, it was of a stouter kind, of which easterns often make walking-staves; the blows were cruel as well as insulting; and the crown was not of straw but thorn, hence it produced pain as well as pictured scorn. When they had mocked him they pulled off the purple gar-

ment he had worn, this rough operation would cause much pain. His wounds unstaunched and raw, fresh bleeding from beneath the lash, would make this scarlet robe adhere to him, and when it was dragged off, his gashes would bleed anew. We do not read that they removed the crown of thorns, and therefore it is most probable, though not absolutely certain, that our Saviour wore it along the *Via Dolorosa*, and also bore it upon his head when he was fastened to the cross. Those pictures which represent our Lord as wearing the crown of thorns upon the tree have therefore at least *some* scriptural warrant. They put his own clothes upon him, because they were the perquisites of the executioner; as modern hangmen take the garments of those whom they execute, so did the four soldiers claim a right to his raiment. They put on him his own clothes that the multitudes might discern him to be the same man, the very man who had professed to be the **Messias**. We all know that a different dress will often raise a doubt about the identity of an individual; but lo! the people saw him in the street, not arrayed in the purple robe, but wearing his garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, the common smock-frock, in fact, of the countrymen of Palestine, and they said at once, "Yes, 'tis he, the man who healed the sick, and raised the dead; the mighty teacher who was wont to sit upon the mountain-top, or stand in the temple courts and preach with authority, and not as the Scribes." There can be no shadow of doubt but that our Lord was really crucified, and no one substituted for him. How they led him forth we do not know. Romish expositors, who draw upon their prolific fancy for their facts, tell us that he had a rope about his neck with which they roughly dragged him to the tree; this is one of the most probable of their surmises, since it was not unusual for the Romans thus to conduct criminals to the gallows. We care, however, far more for the fact that he went forth carrying his cross upon his shoulders. This was intended at once to proclaim his guilt and intimate his doom. Usually the crier went before with an announcement such as this, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, who for making himself a King, and stirring up the people, has been condemned to die." This cross was a ponderous machine; not so heavy, perhaps, as some pictures would represent it, but still no light burden to a man whose shoulders were raw with the lashes of the Roman scourge. He had been all night in agony, he had spent the early morning at the hall of Caiaphas, he had been hurried, as I described to you last Sunday, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate; he had, therefore, but little strength left, and you will not wonder that by-and-bye we find him staggering beneath his load, and that another is called to bear it with him. He goes forth, then, bearing his cross.

What learn we here as we see Christ led forth? Do we not see here the truth of that which was set forth in shadow by *the scape-goat*? Did not the high-priest bring the scape-goat, and put both his hands upon its head, confessing the sins of the people, that thus those sins might be laid upon the goat? Then the goat was led away by a fit man into the wilderness, and it carried away the sins of the people, so that

if they were sought for, they could not be found. Now we see Jesus brought before the priests and rulers, who pronounce him guilty; God himself imputes our sins to *him*; he was made sin for us; and, as the substitute for our guilt, bearing our sin upon his shoulders—for that cross was a sort of representation in wood of our guilt and doom—we see the great Scape-goat led away by the appointed officers of justice. Bearing upon his back the sin of all his people, the offering goes without the camp. Beloved, can you say he carried *your* sin? As you look at the cross upon his shoulders does it represent *your* sin? Oh! raise the question, and be not satisfied unless you can answer it most positively in the affirmative. There is one way by which you can tell whether he carried your sin or not. Hast thou laid thy hand upon his head, confessed thy sin, and trusted in him? Then thy sin lies not on thee; not one single ounce or drachma of it lies on thee; it has all been transferred by blessed imputation to Christ, and he bears it on his shoulder in the form of yonder heavy cross. What joy, what satisfaction this will give if we can sing—

“My soul looks back to see
The burden thou didst bear,
When hastening to the accursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there!”

Do not let the picture vanish till you have satisfied yourselves once for all that Christ was here the substitute for you.

Let us muse upon the fact that Jesus was conducted without the gates of the city. It was *the common place of death*. That little rising ground, which perhaps was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, from its somewhat resembling the crown of a man's skull, was the common place of execution. It was one of Death's castles; here he stored his gloomiest trophies; he was the grim lord of that stronghold. Our great hero, the destroyer of Death, bearded the lion in his den, slew the monster in his own castle, and dragged the dragon captive from his own den. Methinks Death thought it a splendid triumph when he saw the Master impaled and bleeding in the dominions of destruction; little did he know that the grave was to be rifled, and himself destroyed, by that crucified Son of man.

Was not the Redeemer led thither *to aggravate his shame*? Calvary was like our Old Bailey; it was the usual place of execution for the district. Christ must die a felon's death, and it must be upon the felon's gallows, in the place where horrid crimes had met their due reward. This added to his shame; but, methinks, in this, too, he draws the nearer to us, “He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

But further, my brethren; this, I think, is the great lesson from Christ's being slaughtered without the gate of the city—*let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach*. You see there the multitude *are leading him forth from the temple*. He is not allowed to worship with them. The ceremonial of the Jewish religion denies him any participation in its pomps; the priests condemn him never again to

tread the hallowed floors, never again to look upon the consecrated altars in the place of his people's worship. He is exiled from *their* friendship, too. No man dare call him friend now, or whisper a word of comfort to him. Nay more; he is banished from their *society*, as if he were a leper whose breath would be infectious, whose presence would scatter plague. They force him without the walls, and are not satisfied till they have rid themselves of his obnoxious presence. For him they have no tolerance; Barrabas may go free; the thief and the murderer may be spared; but for Christ there is no word, but "Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he should live." Jesus is therefore hunted out of the city, beyond the gate, with the will and force of his own nation, but he journeys not against his own will; even as the lamb goeth as willingly to the shambles as to the meadow, so doth Christ cheerfully take up his cross and go without the camp. See, brethren, here is a picture of what we may expect from men if we are faithful to our Master. It is not likely that we shall be able to worship with their worship. They prefer a ceremonial pompous and gaudy; the swell of music, the glitter of costly garments, the parade of learning all these must minister grandeur to the world's religion, and thus shut out the simple followers of the Lamb. The high places of earth's worship and honour are not for us. If we be true to our Master we shall soon lose the friendship of the world. The sinful find our conversation distasteful; in our pursuits the carnal have no interest; things dear to us are dross to worldlings, while things precious to them are contemptible to us. There have been times, and the days may come again, when faithfulness to Christ has entailed exclusion from what is called "society." Even now to a large extent the true Christian is like a Pariah, lower than the lowest caste, in the judgment of some. The world has in former days counted it God's service to kill the saints. We are to reckon upon all this, and should the worst befall us, it is to be no strange thing to us. These are silken days, and religion fights not so stern a battle. I will not say it is because we are unfaithful to our Master that the world is more kind to us, but I half suspect it is, and it is very possible that if we were more thoroughly Christians the world would more heartily detest us, and if we would cleave more closely to Christ we might expect to receive more slander, more abuse, less tolerance, and less favour from men. You young believers, who have lately followed Christ, should father and mother forsake you, remember you were bidden to reckon upon it; should brothers and sisters deride, you must put this down as part of the cost of being a Christian. Godly working-men, should your employers or your fellow-workers frown upon you; wives, should your husbands threaten to cast you out, remember, without the camp was Jesus' place, and without the camp is yours. Oh! ye Christian men, who dream of trimming your sails to the wind, who seek to win the world's favour, I do beseech you cease from a course so perilous. We are in the world, but we must never be of it; we are not to be secluded like monks in the cloister, but we are to be separated like Jews among Gentiles; men, but not of men; helping, aiding, befriending, teaching, comforting, instructing, but not sinning either to escape a frown or to win a smile. The more manifestly there shall be a great

gulf between the Church and the world, the better shall it be for both ; the better for the world, for it shall be thereby warned ; the better for the Church, for it shall be thereby preserved. Go ye, then, like the Master, expecting to be abused, to wear an ill-name, and to earn reproach ; go ye, like him, without the camp.

II. Let us now gaze for awhile upon CHRIST CARRYING HIS CROSS.

I have shown you, believer, your position ; let me now show you your *service*. Christ comes forth from Pilate's hall with the cumbrous wood upon his shoulder, but through weariness he travels slowly, and his enemies urgent for his death, and half afraid, from his emaciated appearance, that he may die before he reaches the place of execution, allow another to carry his burden. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, they cannot spare him the agonies of dying on the cross, they will therefore remit the labour of carrying it. They place the cross upon Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country. We do not know what may have been the colour of Simon's face, but it was most likely black. Simon was an African ; he came from Cyrene. Alas poor African, thou hast been compelled to carry the cross even until now. Hail, ye despised children of the sun, ye follow first after the King in the march of woe. We are not sure that Simon was a disciple of Christ ; he may have been a friendly spectator ; yet one would think the Jews would naturally select a disciple if they could. Coming fresh from the country, not knowing what was going on, he joined with the mob, and they made him carry the cross. Whether a disciple then or not, we have every reason to believe that he became so afterwards ; he was the father, we read, of Alexander and Rufus, two persons who appear to have been well known in the early Church ; let us hope that salvation came to his house when he was compelled to bear the Saviour's cross.

Dear friends, we must remember that, although no one died on the cross with Christ, for atonement must be executed by a solitary Saviour, yet another person did carry the cross for Christ ; for this world, while redeemed by price by Christ, and by Christ alone, is to be redeemed by divine power manifested in the sufferings and labours of the saints as well as those of Christ. Mark you, the *ransom* of men was all paid by Christ ; that was redemption *by price*. But power is wanted to dash down those idols, to overcome the hosts of error ; where is it to be found ? In the Lord of Hosts ; who shews his power in the sufferings of Christ and of his Church. The Church must suffer, that the gospel may be spread by her means. This is what the Apostle meant when he said, " I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." There was nothing behind in the price, but there is something behind in the manifested power, and we must continue to fill up that measure of revealed power, carrying each one of us the cross with Christ, till the last shame shall have been poured upon his cause, and he shall reign for ever and ever. We see in Simon's carrying the cross a picture of what the Church is to do throughout all generations. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer so as to exclude your suffering. He bears a cross, not that you may escape it, but that you may endure it. Christ does exempt you from sin, but not from sorrow ; he does take the curse of the cross. but

he does not take the cross of the curse away from you. Remember that, and expect to suffer.

Beloved, let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, *it is not our cross, but Christ's cross which we carry.* When you are molested for your piety; when your religion brings the trial of cruel mockings upon you; then remember, it is not *your* cross, it is *Christ's* cross; and how delightful is it to carry the cross of our Lord Jesus?

You carry the cross after him. You have blessed company; your path is marked with footprints of your Lord. If you will look, there is the mark of his blood-red shoulder upon that heavy cross. 'Tis *his* cross, and he goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep. Take up your cross daily and follow him.

Do not forget, also, *that you bear this cross in partnership.* It is the opinion of some commentators that Simon only carried one end of the cross, and not the whole of it. That is very possible; Christ may have carried the heavier end, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you; you do but carry the light end of the cross; Christ bore the heavier end.

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

Rutherford says, "Whenever Christ gives us a cross, he cries, 'Halves, my love.'" Others think that Simon carried the whole of the cross. If he carried all the cross, yet he only carried the wood of it; he did not bear the sin which made it such a load. Christ did but transfer to Simon the outward frame, the mere tree; but the curse of the tree, which was our sin and its punishment, rested on Jesus' shoulders still. Dear friend, if you think that you suffer all that a Christian can suffer; if all God's billows roll over you, yet, remember, there is not one drop of wrath in all your sea of sorrow. Jesus took the wrath; Jesus carried the sin; and now all that you endure is but for his sake, that you may be conformed unto his image, and may aid in gathering his people into his family.

Although Simon carried Christ's cross, *he did not volunteer to do it, but they compelled him.* I fear me, beloved, I fear me that the most of us if we ever do carry it, carry it by compulsion; at least when it first comes on to our shoulders we do not like it, and would fain run from it, but the world compels us to bear Christ's cross. Cheerfully accept this burden, ye servants of the Lord. I do not think we should seek after needless persecution. That man is a fool and deserves no pity, who purposely excites the disgust of other people. No, no; we must not make a cross of our own. Let there be nothing but your religion to object to, and then if that offends them let them be offended, it is a cross which you must carry joyfully.

Though Simon had to bear the cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honour. I do not know how far it was from Pilate's house to the Mount of Doom. Romanists pretend to know; in fact they know the very spot where Veronica wiped the blessed face with her handkerchief, and found his likeness impressed upon it; we also know

very well where that was *not* done; in fact they know the very spot where Jesus fainted, and if you go to Jerusalem you can see all these different places if you only carry enough credulity with you; but the fact is the city has been so razed, and burned, and ploughed, that there is little chance of distinguishing any of these positions, with the exception, it may be, of Mount Calvary, which being outside the walls may possibly still remain. The *Via Dolorosa*, as the Romanists call it, is a long street at the present time, but it may have been but a few yards. Simon had to carry the cross but for a very little time, yet his name is in this Book for ever, and we may envy him his honour. Well, beloved, the cross we have to carry is only for a little while at most. A few times the sun will go up and down the hill; a few more moons will wax and wane, and then we shall receive the glory. "I reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." We should love the cross, and count it very dear, because it works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Christians, will you refuse to be cross-bearers for Christ? I am ashamed of some professed Christians, heartily ashamed of them! Some of them have no objection to worship with a poor congregation till they grow rich, and then, forsooth, they must go with the world's church, to mingle with fashion and gentility. There are some who in company hold their tongues, and never say a good word for Christ. They take matters very gently; they think it unnecessary to be soldiers of the cross. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth not after me," says Christ, "is not worthy of me." Some of you will not be baptized because you think people will say, "He is a professor; how holy he ought to be." I am glad the world expects much from us, and watches us narrowly. All this is a blessed clog upon us, and a means of keeping us more near the Lord. Oh! you that are ashamed of Christ, how can you read that text, "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of my Father, and all my holy angels with me." Conceal your religion? Cover it with a cloak? God forbid! Our religion is our glory; the Cross of Christ is our honour, and, while not ostentatiously parading it, as the Pharisees do, we ought never to be so cowardly as to conceal it. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Take up your cross, and go without the camp, following your Lord, even until death.

III. I have now a third picture to present to you—CHRIST AND HIS MOURNERS.

As Christ went through the streets, a great multitude looked on. In the multitude there was a sparse sprinkling of tender-hearted women,

probably those who had been healed, or whose children had been blessed by him. Some of these were persons of considerable rank; many of them had ministered to him of their substance; amidst the din and howling of the crowd, and the noise of the soldiery, they raised an exceeding loud and bitter cry, like Rachel weeping for her children, who would not be comforted, because they were not. The voice of sympathy prevailed over the voice of scorn. Jesus paused, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children." The sorrow of these good women was a very proper sorrow; Jesus did not by any means forbid it, he only recommended another sorrow as being better; not finding fault with this, but still commending that. Let me show what I think he meant. Last Sunday the remark was made to me—"If the story of the sufferings of Christ had been told of any other man, all the congregation would have been in tears." Some of us, indeed, confess that, if we had read this narrative of suffering in a romance, we should have wept copiously, but the story of *Christ's* sufferings does not cause the excitement and emotion one would expect. Now, I am not sure that we ought to blame ourselves for this. If we weep for the sufferings of Christ in the same way as we lament the sufferings of another man, our emotions will be only natural, and may work no good. They would be very proper, very proper; God forbid that we should stay them, except with the gentle words of Christ, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." The most Scriptural way to describe the sufferings of Christ is not by labouring to excite sympathy through highly-coloured descriptions of his blood and wounds. Romanists of all ages have wrought upon the feelings of the people in this manner, and to a degree the attempt is commendable, but if it shall all end in tears of pity, no good is done. I have heard sermons, and studied works by Romish writers upon the passion and agony, which have moved me to copious tears, but I am not clear that all the emotion was profitable. I show unto you a more excellent way.

What, then, dear friends, should be the sorrows excited by a view of Christ's sufferings? They are these—*Weep not because the Saviour bled, but because your sins made him bleed.*

"T were you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear."

When a brother makes confession of his transgressions, when on his knees before God he humbles himself with many tears, I am sure the Lord thinks far more of the tears of repentance than he would do of the mere

drops of human sympathy. "Weep for yourselves," says Christ, "rather than for me."

The sufferings of Christ *should make us weep over those who have brought that blood upon their heads.* We ought not to forget the Jews. Those once highly favoured people of God who cursed themselves with, "His blood be upon us and upon our children," ought to make us mourn when we think of their present degradation. There are no passages in all the public ministry of Jesus so tender as those which have regard to Jerusalem. It is not sorrow over Rome, but Jerusalem. I believe there was a tenderness in Christ's heart to the Jew of a special character. He loved the Gentile, but still Jerusalem was the city of the Great King. It was, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" He saw its streets flowing like bloody rivers; he saw the temple flaming up to heaven; he marked the walls loaded with Jewish captives crucified by command of Titus; he saw the city razed to the ground and sown with salt, and he said, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children, for the day shall come when ye shall say to the rocks, Hide us, and to the mountains, Fall upon us."

Let me add, that when we look at the sufferings of Christ, *we ought to sorrow deeply for the souls of all unregenerate men and women.* Remember, dear friends, that what Christ suffered for us, these unregenerate ones must suffer for themselves, except they put their trust in Christ. The woes which broke the Saviour's heart must crush theirs. Either Christ must die for me, or else I must die for myself the second death; if he did not carry the curse for me, then on me must it rest for ever and ever. Think, dear friends, there are some in this congregation who as yet have no interest in Jesu's blood, some sitting next to you, your nearest friends who, if they were now to close their eyes in death, would open them in hell! Think of that! Weep not for him, but for these. Perhaps they are your children, the objects of your fondest love, with no interest in Christ, without God and without hope in the world! Save your tears for them; Christ asks them not in sympathy for himself. Think of the millions in this dark world! It is calculated that one soul passes from time into eternity every time the clock ticks! So numerous has the family of man now become, that there is a death every second; and when we know how very small a proportion of the human race have even nominally received the cross—and there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved—oh! what a black thought crosses our mind! What a cataract of immortal souls dashes downwards to the pit every hour! Well might the Master say, 'Weep not for me, but for yourselves.' You have, then, no true sym-

pathly for Christ if you have not an earnest sympathy with those who would win souls for Christ. You may sit under a sermon, and feel a great deal, but your feeling is worthless unless it leads you to weep for yourselves and for your children. How has it been with you? Have you repented of sin? Have you prayed for your fellow men? If not, may that picture of Christ fainting in the streets lead you to do so this morning.

IV. In the fourth place, one or two words upon CHRIST'S FELLOW-SUFFERERS.

There were two other cross-bearers in the throng; they were malefactors; their crosses were just as heavy as the Lord's, and yet, at least, one of them had no sympathy with him, and his bearing the cross only led to his death, and not to his salvation. This hint only. I have sometimes met with persons who have suffered much; they have lost money, they have worked hard all their lives, or they have laid for years upon a bed of sickness, and they therefore suppose that because they have suffered so much in this life, they shall thus escape the punishment of sin hereafter. I tell you, sirs, that yonder malefactor carried his cross and died on it; and you will carry your sorrows, and be damned with them, except you repent. That impenitent thief went from the cross of his great agony—and it was agony indeed to die on a cross—he went to that place, to the flames of hell; and you, too, may go from the bed of sickness, and from the abode of poverty, to perdition, quite as readily as from the home of ease and the house of plenty. No sufferings of ours have anything to do with the atonement of sin. No blood but that which *He* has spilt, no groans but those which came from *His* heart, no suffering but that which was endured by *Him*, can ever make a recompense for sin. Shake off the thought, any of you who suppose that God will have pity on you because you have endured affliction. You must consider Jesus, and not yourself; turn your eye to Christ, the great substitute for sinners, but never dream of trusting in yourselves. You may think that this remark is not needed; but I have met with one or two cases where it was required; and I have often said I would preach a sermon for even one person, and, therefore, I make this remark, even though it should rebuke but one.

V. I close with THE SAVIOUR'S WARNING QUESTION—“*If they do these things in the green tree, what will they do in the dry?*” Among other things methinks he meant this—“If I, the innocent substitute for sinners, suffer thus, what will be done when the sinner himself—the dry tree—whose sins are his own, and not merely imputed to him, shall fall into the hands of an angry God.” Oh! ye unregenerate men and women, and there are not a few such here now, remember that when God saw Christ in the sinner's place he did not spare him, and

when he finds you without Christ, he will not spare *you*. You have seen Jesus led away by his enemies; so shall you be dragged away by fiends to the place appointed for you. "Deliver him to the tormentors," was the word of the king in the parable; it shall be fulfilled to you—"Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Jesus was deserted of God; and if he, who was only imputedly a sinner, was deserted, how much more shall you be? "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachihani,*"—what an awful shriek! But what shall be your cry when you shall say, "Good God! good God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and the answer shall come back, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." These are awful words, but they are not mine; they are the very words of God in Scripture. Oh! sinner, if God hides his face from Christ, how much less will he spare you! He did not spare his Son the stripes. Did I not describe last Sabbath the knotted scourges which fell upon the Saviour's back? What whips of steel for you, what knots of burning wire for you, when conscience shall smite you, when the law shall scourge you with its ten-thonged whip! Oh! who would stand in your place, ye richest, ye merriest, ye most self-righteous sinners—who would stand in your place when God shall say, "Awake O sword against the rebel, against the man that rejected me; smite him, and let him feel the smart for ever!" Christ was spit upon with shame; sinner, what shame will be yours! The whole universe shall hiss you; angels shall be ashamed of you; your own friends, yes, your sainted mother, shall say "Amen" to your condemnation; and those who loved you best shall sit as assessors with Christ to judge you and condemn you! I cannot roll up into one word all the mass of sorrows which met upon the head of Christ who died for us, therefore it is impossible for me to tell you what streams, what oceans of grief must roll over *your* spirit, if you die as you now are. You may die so, you may die now. There are more unlikely things than that you will be dead before next Sunday. Some of you will! It does not often happen that five or six thousand people meet together twice; it never does, I suppose; the scythe of death must cut some of you down before my voice shall warn you again! Oh! souls, I do beseech you, by the agonies of Christ, by his wounds and by his blood, do not bring upon yourselves the curse; do not bear in your own persons the awful wrath to come! May God deliver you! Trust in the Son of God and you shall never die.

The Lord bless you, for Jesu's own sake. Amen.

THE GREAT CROSS-BEARER AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 8TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.”—Mark xv. 20.

“And he bearing his cross went forth.”—John xix. 17.

“And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.”—Mark xv. 21.

WHEN our Lord had been condemned to die, the execution of his sentence was hurried. The Jews were in great haste to shed his blood: so intense was the enmity of the chief priests and Pharisees that every moment of delay was wearisome to them. Besides, it was the day of the Passover, and they wished to have this matter finished before they went with hypocritical piety to celebrate the festival of Israel's deliverance. We do not wonder at their eagerness, for they could not bear themselves while he lived, since his very presence reprov'd them for their falsehood and hypocrisy. But at Pilate we do wonder, and herein he is much to be blamed. In all civilized countries there is usually an interval between the sentencing of the prisoner and the time of his putting to death. As the capital sentence is irreversible, it is well to have a little space in which possible evidence may be forthcoming, which may prevent the fatal stroke. In some countries we have thought that there has been a cruelly long delay between the sentence and the execution, but with the Romans it was usual to allow the reasonable respite of ten days. Now, I do not say that it was incumbent upon Pilate according to Roman law to have allowed ten days to a Jew, who had not the rights of Roman citizenship; but I do say that he might have pleaded the custom of his country, and so have secured a delay, and afterwards he might have released his prisoner. It was within his reach to have done so, and he was culpable, as he was all along, in thus yielding to the clamour for an immediate execution for no other reason than this, that he was “willing to content the people.” When once we begin to make the wishes of other men our law we know not to what extremity of criminality we may be led; and so the Saviour's hasty execution is due to Pilate's vacillating spirit, and to the insatiable blood-thirstiness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Being given over to death, our Saviour was led away; and I suppose
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the painters are right when they put a rope about his neck or his loins; for the idea of being *led* in an open street would seem to imply some sort of bond: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter." Alas, that the Emancipator of our race should be led forth as a captive to die!

The direction in which he is led is outside the city. He must not die in Jerusalem, though multitudes of prophets had perished there. Though the temple was the central place of sacrifice, yet must not the Son of God be offered there, for he was an offering of another kind, and must not lie upon their altars. Outside the city, because by the Jews he was treated as a flagrant offender who must be executed at the Tyburn of the city, in the appointed place of doom known as Calvary or Golgotha. When Naboth was unjustly condemned for blasphemy, they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones that he died; and afterwards Stephen,—when they cried out against him as a blasphemer, they cast him out of the city, and there they stoned him. Our Saviour therefore must die in the ordinary place of execution, that in all respects he might be numbered with the transgressors. The rulers of the city so loathed and detested their great Reprover that they rejected him, and would not suffer him to die within their city walls. Alas, poor Jerusalem, in casting out the Son of David, thou didst cast out thy last hope: now art thou bound over to desolation.

He was led outside of the city because from that time no acceptable sacrifice could be offered there. They might go on with their offering of daily lambs, and they might sacrifice their bullocks, and burn the fat of fed beasts; but from that day the substance of the sacrifice had gone away from them, and Israel's offerings were vain oblations. Because the true sacrifice is rejected of them the Lord leaves them nothing but a vain show.

Still more forcible is the fact that our Lord must die outside the city because he was to be consumed as a sin-offering. It is written in the law, "And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire." There were several sorts of offerings under the law: the sweet-savour offerings were presented upon the altar, and were accepted of God, but sin-offerings were burnt without the camp or gate, because God can have no fellowship with sin. Once let sin be imputed to the sacrifice and it becomes abhorrent to God, and must not be presented in the tabernacle or the temple, but burned outside the circle wherein his people have their habitations. And here let our hearts gratefully contemplate how truly our Lord Jesus became a sin-offering for us, and how in every point he followed out the type. With his face turned away from his Father's house he must go to die: with his face turned away from what were once his Father's people he must be led forth to be crucified. Like a thing accursed, he is to be hung up where felons suffer condign punishment. Because we were sinners, and because sin had turned our backs to God, and because sin had broken our communion with God's accepted ones, therefore must he endure this banishment. In that sorrowful march of the cross-bearing Saviour my soul with sorrow sees herself represented as deserving thus to be made to depart unto death; and yet

joy mingles with this emotion, for the glorious Sin-bearer hath thus taken away our sin, and we return from our exile: his substitution is infinitely effectual. Well may those live for whom Jesus died. Well may those return in whose place the Son of God was banished. There is entrance into the holy city now, there is entrance into the temple now, there is access unto God himself now, because the Lord hath put away our sin through him who was led to be crucified outside the city gate.

Nor do I think that even this exhausts the teaching. Jesus dies outside Jerusalem because he died, not for Jerusalem alone, nor for Israel alone. The effect of his atonement is not circumscribed by the walls of a city nor by the bounds of a race. In him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Out in the open he must die, to show that he reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God. "For he is the propitiation for our sins," saith Paul, who was himself a Jew, "and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Had he been the Saviour of Jews only, seclusion in the place of his offering would have been appropriate, but as he dies for all nations, he is hung up without the city.

And yet, once more, he suffered outside the gate that we might go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing," henceforth becomes the command of God to all his sons and daughters: behold the Son of sons, his Only-begotten, leads the way in nonconformity to this present evil world, being himself officially severed from the old Jewish church, whose elders seek his life. He dies in sacred separation from the false and corrupt corporation which vaunted itself to be the chosen of God. He protested against all evil, and for this he died, so far as his murderers were concerned. Even so must his followers take up their cross and follow him whithersoever he goeth, even though it be to be despised and rejected of men. See what instruction is found in the choice of the place wherein our great Redeemer offers himself unto God.

I. Let us draw near to our Lord for awhile, and carefully observe each instructive detail. Our imagination pictures the Blessed One standing outside the gate of Herod's palace in the custody of a band of soldiers with a centurion at their head, and we begin at once to observe HIS DRESS. That may seem a small matter, but it is not without instruction. How is he dressed? Our text tells us that when they had mocked him they took off the purple from him and put his own clothes on him; but we are not told that they took off *the crown of thorns*, and hence it has been currently believed that he continued to wear it to the cross and on the cross. Is not this highly probable? Surely if the thorny crown had been withdrawn this would have been the place to have said, "They took off the purple from him and removed the crown of thorns"; but it is not so written, and therefore we may believe that the sorrowful coronet remained upon him. Pilate wrote upon his accusation "the King of the Jews," and it was not unfitting that he should continue to wear a crown. Jesus died a crowned monarch, king of the curse. The Lord God in justice said to rebel man, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;" and lo, the man by whom we are redeemed is crowned with that product of the earth which came of the curse.

“O sacred head surrounded
By crown of piercing thorn ;
O bleeding head, so wounded,
Reviled and put to scorn.”

Probably also, as I have said, he was *bound*; for they led him as a sheep to the slaughter; but this binding was probably more abundant than that which we have hinted at, if it be indeed true that by Roman custom criminals were bound with cords to the cross which they were doomed to carry. If this was the case, you may picture our Lord with his cross bound to himself, and hear him say, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.”

But the chief point to be noted is that Jesus *wore his own clothes*, the usual garments which he was accustomed to wear, and this no doubt for identification, that all who looked on might know that it was the same person who had preached in their streets and had healed their sick. They were under no misapprehension; they knew that it was Jesus of Nazareth: the keen hate of the scribes and Pharisees would not have permitted any substitution of another. It was none other than he, and his garments were the ensigns of that truth. He wore his own clothes also for another reason, namely, that there might be a fulfilment of prophecy. It may not strike you at first, but you will soon see it. Our Lord must not go to die in the purple: he must march to the cross in that vestment which was without seam and woven from the top through-out, or else the word could not have been fulfilled, “They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.” Other raiment could readily have been rent and divided, but this garment, which was peculiar to the Saviour, could not have been so rent without destroying it, and therefore the soldiers cast lots for it. Little did they who put it on him dream that they were thus accessory to the fulfilment of a prophecy. Does it not strike you as strange that the Pharisees, who were so full of hatred to Christ, did not carefully draw back from the fulfilment of so many types and prophecies? Their rabbis and teachers knew the prophecy of Zechariah, that the Messiah should be sold for thirty pieces of silver: why did it not occur to them to make their bribe to Judas twenty-nine or thirty-one silver pieces? Why, again, did they cast the price unto the potter by buying of him the field of blood? Could they not, so to speak, have balked the prophecy thereby? Here were voluntarily fulfilled by themselves prophecies which condemned them. I shall have to show you the same thing further on; but meanwhile observe that if it had been their object to fulfil type and prophecy they could not have acted more carefully than they did. So they put his own garments on him, and unwittingly they furnished the possibility for the fulfilment of the prophet’s word: “They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

To me there occurs one other thought touching his wearing his own garments. I do not know if I can express it, but it seems to me to indicate that our Lord’s passion was a true and natural part of his life; he died as he lived. His death was not a new departure, but the completion of a life of self-sacrifice, and so he had no need to put on a fresh garb. Look! He goes to die in his ordinary everyday garments! Does not it almost seem as if people put on their Sunday clothes because

they regard religion as something quite distinct from their common life? Do you not wish to see godliness in work-day clothes? religion in its shirt-sleeves? grace in a smock-frock? Do you not almost cry concerning some loud talkers,—“Put his own clothes on him, and then lead him out and let us see him”? It should be an integral part of our life to live and to die for our God. Must we become other men if we are to be God’s men? Can we not wear our own clothes, habits, characteristics, and peculiarities and serve the Lord? Is there not some suspicion of unnaturalness in services which require men to put on a strange, outlandish dress? Surely they find their worship to be on another level than their life; they must step out of their way and dress up to attend to it. It is ill for a man when he cannot lead his fellows in prayer till he has gone to the wardrobe. Time was when vestments meant something; but ever since our great High-priest went up to his one sacrifice wearing his common clothes, all types are fulfilled and laid aside. Now, we pray not officially, or we should need the robe; but we pray personally, and our own clothes suit us well. Jesus continued the unity of his life as he approached its close, and did not even in appearance change his way; he lived to die a sacrifice; this was the climax of his life, the apex of the towering pyramid of his perfect obedience. No mark is set, no line is drawn between his passion and all the rest of his life; nor should there be a screen between our life and death. Somehow, I dread a death which is meant to be pictorial and exhibitional. I am not an admirer of Addison’s death, as some are, who praise him because he sent for a young lord, and cried, “Come, see how a Christian can die!” I like better Bengel’s wish when he desired to die just as a person would slip out from company because some one beckoned him outside. Such a person modestly thinking his presence or absence to be of small account in a great world, quietly withdraws, and friends only observe that he is gone. Death should be part of the usual curriculum, the close of the day’s work, the entrance into harbour which ends the voyage. It is well to feel that you can die easily, because you have done it so many times before. He who dies daily will not fear to die. Bathe in the Jordan often, and you will not dread the fording of it when your hour has come. Our blessed Lord lived such a dying life that he made no show of death, he did not change his tone and spirit any more than his garments, but died as he lived. They put his own clothes on him: he had not himself taken them off; it was no wish of his to wear the purple even for an hour either in reality or in mockery. He was evermore the same, and his own vesture best beseeemed him.

Truly, blessed Master, we may well say, “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia”; even though they take thee not out of “the ivory palaces wherein they have made thee glad”; but out of the common guard-room, where they had made thee to be despised and mocked and spit upon. Come from whence thou mayest, thy vesture hath a fragrant smell about it, and all thy brethren rejoice therein.

II. Brethren, I beg you for a few minutes to look at HIS COMPANY. Who were they that were with our Lord when he came to die? First and nearest to him were *the rough Roman soldiers*, strong, muscular, unfeeling men, ready to shed blood at any moment. In them human affection was kept down by stern discipline, they were the iron instruments

of an empire of iron. They would do what they were bidden, and feeling and sympathy were not allowed to interfere. I do but bid you look at these guards to remind you that from beneath their eagle our Saviour won a trophy; for their centurion at our Lord's death uttered the confession, "Certainly this was the Son of God." This was a blessed confession of faith, and I delight to think of our Lord as thus becoming the conqueror of his conquerors by taking one out of them to be his disciple and witness, as we would fain believe he was. Surely after openly making the clear confession which the evangelist has recorded we may number him with believers.

Next to these guards were *two malefactors*, led out with him to execution. That was intended to increase his scorn. He must not be separated from the basest of men; but he must be led forth between two thieves, having previously had a murderer preferred to him. They seem to have been very hardened scoundrels, for they reviled him. I mention them because our Lord won a trophy by the conversion of one of them, who dying said, "We suffer justly, but this man hath done nothing amiss," and then prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." This dying thief has brought more glory to Christ than hundreds of us, for in every place wherever this gospel has been preached this has been told as a memorial of him, and as a comfort to the guiltiest to look to Jesus. In the act of death he believed in Christ, and believed when the Lord himself was in the act of death, and that day he was with him in paradise. How hast thou conquered, O thou despised of men! How hast thou won by thy gentleness both Roman legionaries and Jewish thieves.

Beyond the prisoners were the *scribes and Pharisees, and high priests*. I could not picture their faces, but surely they must have been about the worst lot of human physiognomies that were ever seen, as with a fiendish delight they stared at Jesus. He had called them "hypocrites": he had spoken of them as "making clean the outside of the cup and platter," while their inner part was very wickedness, and now they are showing their venom, and silencing his reproofs. But their hate was so insatiable that it was accompanied with fear, and that night it was seen that Christ had conquered them, for they crouched before Pilate and begged a guard to prevent their victim from leaving the tomb. In their heart of hearts they feared that after all he might be the Son of God. Thus were they also vanquished: though to them the Lord Jesus was a savour of death unto death, yet they could not but be affected by him and vanquished by his death. Their hate brought with it alarm, and fear, and agitation: they trembled before the Nazarene. Look at the scene! Though the despised and sorrowful One is bowed down beneath his cross you can see at a glance the majesty which dwells in him; but as you look at *them*, the mean, wretched seed of the serpent, they seem to go upon their bellies, and dust is their meat. He is all truth and openness, and they are all cunning and craft. You can see at a glance that as an angel is to the fiends of hell, so is the Christ to his persecutors. That face distained with spittle, and blackened with blows, and encinctured with thorns wears a more than imperial glory, while their faces are as the countenances of slaves and criminals.

Around these there is a *great rabble*, and if you look into the mob you

see with surprise that they are the same crowd, who a week ago shouted "Hosanna! Hosanna!" They have changed their note and cry, "Crucify him: crucify him"; for a few pence they were bribed to do so: they were an ignorant, fickle mob. When such do hiss at you for doing right, forgive them. When they point the finger of scorn at you for being a Christian, regard them not. It little boots what they may say or do: they yelled at him who was their best Benefactor and ours. The Lord Christ endured the popular scorn as he had once received the popular acclamation. He lived above it all, for he knew that men of low degree are vanity. "Vanity of vanities"; all that cometh of vain man is vanity.

Ay, but there was a little change for the better in the company: there was just a streak of light in that cloud, for *kindly women* were in the throng. These were not all his disciples, perhaps few of them were such, for otherwise he would not have bidden them weep over a woe which his disciples escaped; but they were tender-hearted women who could not look upon him without tears: it is said by Luke that they bewailed and lamented him. They knew how innocent he was, and how kind he had been. Perhaps some of them had received favours at his hands, and therefore they wept sore that he should die. It was well done of them. In all the Evangelists there is no instance of a woman that had any hand in the death of Christ. As far as they are connected with the matter they are guiltless, they rather oppose his death than promote it. Woman was last at the cross and first at the sepulchre, and therefore we can never say a word about her being the first in the transgression. Oh, kindly eyes that gave the Lord of love the tribute of their pity! Blessed be ye of compassionate heaven! But the Saviour desired not at that time that human sympathy should be spent upon him, for his great heart was big with sorrows not his own. He knew that when the children of those women had grown up, and while yet some of the younger women would still be alive, their awful woe would make them exclaim, "Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bear, and the paps that never gave suck." When they saw the slain of the Romans, and the slain of their own contending factions then would they mourn. The Master therefore said—

"Weep not for me! Oh! weep not, Salem's daughters,
Faint though ye see me, stay the bursting tear;
Turn the sad tide—the tide of bitter waters—
Back on yourselves for desolation near."

It was well on the woman's part; it was better still on his, that he gently set the draught of sympathy on one side, because their coming sorrow oppressed him more deeply than his own.

We must now leave the company, but not till we have asked, Where are his disciples? Where is Peter? Did he not say, "I will go with thee to prison and to death"? Where is John? Where are they all? They have fled, and have not yet returned to speak a word to him or for him. Holy women are gathering, but where are the men? Though the women are brave and act like men, the men are fearful and act as women. We are poor helpers to our Master. Had we been there, we should have done the same as they did, if not worse, for they were the flower of our Israel. Ah, me, how little worth are we for whom the

Ever-blessed paid so much! Let us give clearer proof of loyalty, and follow our Prince more closely.

III. But now, come closer to the Saviour: break through the company, and hear my third talk with you while you look a little on HIS BURDEN. May the good Spirit teach me how to depict my Lord. We are told by John that our Saviour "went forth bearing his cross." We might have supposed, so far as the other three evangelists are concerned, that Simon the Cyrenian had carried the cross all the way, but John fills up the blank space in their accounts. Our Lord carried his own cross at the commencement of the sorrowful pilgrimage to Calvary.

This was done, first, by way of increasing his *shame*. It was a custom of the Romans to make felons bear their own gibbet, and there is a word in the Latin, *furcifer*, which signifies "gallows bearer," which was hissed at men in contempt, just as nowadays a despised individual might be called a "gallows-bird." Nothing was more disgraceful, and therefore that must be added to the Redeemer's load of shame. He made himself of no reputation for our sakes.

Note, next, its *weight*. Usually only one beam of the cross was carried: it may have been so now. It does not look so, however; for the expression, "bearing his cross," would naturally mean the whole of it. It is highly probable that, although that load could easily be borne by the rough, coarse criminals who ordinarily suffered, yet not so readily by the tender and more exquisite frame of our divine Lord. It is difficult to find any other reason why they should have laid the cross on Simon, unless it be true, as tradition says, that he fainted beneath the burden. I care nothing for tradition, nor even for conjecture; but still there must have been a reason, and as we cannot believe that these people had any real mercy for Christ, we think they must have acted upon the cruel wish that he might not die on the road, but might at least live to be nailed to the tree. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." This I leave.

And now I call your attention to the fact that there was a *typical evidence* about this. If Simon had carried Christ's cross all the way, we should have missed the type of Isaac, for Isaac when he went to Mount Moriah to be offered up by his father carried the wood for his own sacrifice. I think if I had been a Jew, full of hate to Jesus Christ, I would have said, "Do not let him carry his cross: that will be too much like Isaac carrying the wood." No; but knowing the type, they wantonly fulfil it. It is their own will that does it, and yet the predestination of the Eternal is fulfilled in every jot and tittle, and our great Isaac carries the wood with which he is to be offered up by his Father. How marvellous it is that there should be a fixed decree and yet an altogether unlimited free agency.

The *spiritual meaning* of it, of course, was that Christ in perfect obedience was then carrying the load of our disobedience. The cross, which was the curse, for "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," is borne on those blessed shoulders which were submissive to the will of God in all things. Our Lord's cross-bearing is the representation of his bearing all our sin, and therefore in it we rejoice.

It also has a *prophetic meaning*: that cross which he carried through

Jerusalem shall go through Jerusalem again. It is his great weapon with which he conquers and wins the world : it is his sceptre with which he shall rule, governing the hearts of his people by no more forceful means than by the love manifested on his cross. "The government shall be upon his shoulder;" that which he bore on his shoulder shall win obedience, and they that take his yoke upon them shall find rest unto their souls.

IV. I wish I had an hour during which I might speak upon the last head, which bristles with points of interest ; but I must give its lessons to you rather in rough remarks than in studied observations.

The last thing to consider is HIS CROSS-BEARER. We are not told why the Roman soldiers laid the cross on Simon. We have made a conjecture ; but we leave it as a conjecture, although a highly probable one. If it be true, it lets us see how truly human our Master was. He had been all night in the garden, sweating as it were great drops of blood in his anguish : he had been before the Sanhedrim, he had been before Pilate, then before Herod, then before Pilate again ; he had endured scourging ; he had been mocked by the soldiery ; and it would have been a great wonder if the human frame had not shown some sign of exhaustion. Holy Scripture, by its example, teaches us great reticence about the sufferings of Jesus. Some of the mediæval writers and certain good people who write devotional books are too apt to dilate upon every supposed grief of our Master, so as to harrow up your feelings ; but it is the part of wisdom to imitate the ancient painter who, when he depicted Agamemnon as sacrificing his daughter, veiled the father's face. It is indelicate and almost indecent to write as some have done who would seem to be better acquainted with anatomy than awed by divinity. Much that Jesus endured must for ever remain veiled to us ; whether he fainted once or twice or thrice, or did not faint at all, we are not informed ; and therefore we leave the idea in the obscurity of probability, and reverently worship him who was tender in body and soul, and suffered even as we do. Oh, love surpassing knowledge which could make him suffer so !

There was a great singularity in the providence which brought Simon upon the scene just when he appeared. The right man came forward at the right moment. That Simon did not come at first, and that they did not place the cross on him from the beginning was for the fulfilment of the type of Isaac to which allusion has been made : thus providence arranges all things wisely.

Observe that *Simon was pressed into this duty*. The word used signifies that the person is impressed into the royal service. Simon was a pressed man, and probably not a disciple of Christ at the time when he was loaded with the cross. How often has a burden of sorrow been the means of bringing men to the faith of Jesus ! He was coming in from the country about some business or other, and him they compelled to bear his cross, impressing him into the service which else he would have shunned, for "he passed by," and would have gone on if he could. Roman soldiers were not accustomed to make many bones about what they chose to do. It was sufficient for them that he came under their notice, and carry the cross he must.

His name was Simon : and where was that other Simon ? What a silent,

but strong rebuke this would be to him. Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, where wast thou? Another Simon has taken thy place. Sometimes the Lord's servants are backward where they are expected to be forward, and he finds other servitors for the time. If this has ever happened to us it ought gently to rebuke us as long as we live. Brothers and sisters, keep your places, and let not another Simon occupy your room. It is of Judas that it is said, "his bishopric shall another take;" but a true disciple will retain his office. Remember that word of our Lord, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Simon Peter lost a crown here, and another head wore it.

Simon was a Cyrenian—an African—I wonder if he was a black man. In the Acts of the Apostles, at the thirteenth chapter, we find mention of a Simeon that was called Niger, or black. We do not know whether he was the same man or no, but anyhow he was an African, for Cyrene lies just to the west of Egypt, on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. Surely the African has had his full share of cross-bearing for many an age. Oh that the pangs of his sorrow may bring forth a birth of joy! Blessed be he, whether African or Englishman, or who he may, that has the honour of bearing the cross after Christ.

He was coming in from the country. How often the Lord takes into his service the unsophisticated country people who as yet are untainted by the cunning and the vice of the city. Some young man is just come up from the country this very week, and is commencing his apprenticeship in London. How I wish my Master would impress him at the city gates, and do it in that divine way of his to which the will of the impressed person yields a sweet consent. Would God you would come at once and take up the cross of Jesus just at the city gate, before you learn the city's sin and plunge into its dangers. Happy is the Simon coming in from the country who shall this day be led to bear Christ's cross. Good Master, fulfil our heart's desire, and lay thy cross on some unaccustomed shoulder even now.

We are told he was *the father of Alexander and Rufus*. Which, my brethren, is the greater honour to a man, to have a good father, or to be the father of good sons? Under the Old Testament rule we usually read of a man that he is the son of such an one, but here we come to another style, and find it to a man's honour that he is the father of certain well-known brethren,—“the father of Alexander and Rufus.” Surely, Mark knew these two sons, or he would not have cared to mention them; they must have been familiar to the church, or he would not have thus described their father. It was their father who carried the cross. It is exceedingly likely that this Rufus was he of whom Paul speaks in the last chapter of his epistle to the Romans, for Mark was with Paul, and by this means knew Simon and Rufus. Paul writes, “Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” His mother was such a motherly person that she had been a mother to Paul as well as to Rufus. Surely, if she was a mother to Paul, she was another disciple of Jesus, and it would look as if this man, his wife, and his two sons all became converts to our Lord after he had carried his cross. It is certainly not the most unlikely circumstance that has been accepted by us on the ground of probability. Oh, what a blessing to a man to be known by his sons! Pray, dear Christian friends, you that have an Alexander and

a Rufus, that it may be an honour to you to be known as their father.

“Him they compelled to bear his cross,”—perhaps the heavier end of it, if it was really bound to Christ, as they say; or as I judge, the whole of it. It matters little how it was; but Simon is the representative of the church which follows Christ bearing his cross. Here we may recall the language of Paul: “I fill up that which is behind,” may I paraphrase it?—I take the hinder end,—“of the sufferings of Christ for his body’s sake, that is the church.” Everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Jesus said, “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” Here is a representative, then, of all the godly—this Simon bearing Christ’s cross.

Mark, it was not a cross of his own making, like those of monks and nuns who put themselves to pains of their own inventing. It was Christ’s cross; and he carried it not before Christ, as some do who talk of their poverty as though it would get them to heaven, instead of resting on Christ’s cross. He carried it after Christ in its right place. This is the order,—Christ in front bearing all our sin, and we behind enduring shame and reproach for him, and counting it greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

There is Simon, and we will view him as a lesson to ourselves. First, let Simon be an example to us all, and let us readily take up the cross after Christ. Whatever is involved in being a Christian, rejoice at it. If there be any shame, if there be any contumely, if there be any loss, if there be any suffering, even if it were martyrdom, yet gladly take up the cross. Behold, the Father lays it upon you for Christ’s sake.

The next is advice to any of you that have been compelled to suffer as Christians though you are not Christians. I wonder whether there is anybody here who is only a press-man and yet has to bear the cross. A working man became a teetotaler: he did not mean to be a Christian, but when he went to work his mates tempted him to drink, and as he would not join them they attacked him as a Christian, and said, “You are one of those canting hypocrites, those Wesleyans, those Presbyterians, or those Spurgeonites!” This is not true of you: but thus you see the cross is forced on you: had you not better take it up and bear it joyfully? They have pressed you into this service: take it as an index of the will of providence, and say, “I will not be a press-man only; I will be a volunteer, and I will cheerfully carry Christ’s cross.” I know a man who merely comes to this place of worship because he is somewhat interested with the preaching, though he has no idea of being a converted man; yet in the street where he lives nobody ever goes to a place of worship, and therefore they set him down as a pious man, and some have even ridiculed him for it. Friend, you are in for it because you attend here, and you put me in for it too, for if you do anything wrong they are sure to lay all the blame on me. They say—“That is one of Spurgeon’s people.” You are not: I do not own you as yet; but the outsiders have pushed you into the responsibilities of a religious profession, and you had better go in for its privileges. They have laid the cross upon you, do not throw it off. Come on, and bring that dear motherly wife with you, and Alexander and Rufus too. The church will be glad to take you all in, and then as a volunteer you shall bear Christ’s cross. It is, however,

a remarkable thing that some should first of all be forced into it and then become willing followers.

Last of all, if you and I are cross-bearers, here is a sweet thought. Are we carrying a cross which presses us heavily just now? You know you are to be like your Master, and if so there will be someone found to help you bear your cross. They found Simon to bear the cross of Jesus, and there is a Simon somewhere to help you. Only cry to the Lord about it, and he will find you a friend. If Simon is not forthcoming I will tell you what to do. Imitate Simon. If Simon was what I think he was, he became a converted man, and before long found himself in trouble through it, and he at once went to the Lord in prayer, and said, "Lord Jesus, I am resting in thee alone. Thou didst give me the honour to carry *thy* cross once, now, I beseech thee, carry mine!" This is what I want you to do with your crosses at this time. You that have to endure hardness for Christ, and are glad to do it, ask him to bear your burden for you. He has borne your sins, and if you will but commit your troubles to him, joy and peace through believing shall stream into your souls by his Holy Spirit. God bless you, for **Christ's** sake.

UP FROM THE COUNTRY, AND PRESSED INTO
THE SERVICE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 2ND, 1855, BEING
THE DAY PREVIOUS TO THE GENERAL HOLIDAY, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.”—Mark xv. 21.

JOHN tells us that our Saviour went forth bearing his cross (John xix. 17). We are much indebted to John for inserting that fact. The other evangelists mention Simon the Cyrenian as bearing the cross of Christ; but John, who often fills up gaps which are left by the other three, tells us that Jesus set out to Calvary carrying his own cross. Our Lord Jesus came out from Pilate's palace laden with his cross, but he was so extremely emaciated and so greatly worn by the night of the bloody sweat, that the procession moved too slowly for the rough soldiers, and therefore they took the cross from their prisoner and laid it upon Simon; or possibly they laid the long end upon the shoulder of the strong countryman, while the Saviour still continued to bear in part his cross till he came to the place of doom. It is well that we should be told that the Saviour bore his cross; for if it had not been so, objectors would have had ground for disputation. I hear them say: You admit that one of the most prominent types, in the Old Testament, of the sacrifice of the Son of God, was Abraham's offering up his son Isaac; now, Abraham laid the wood upon Isaac his son, and not upon a servant. Should not therefore the Son of God bear the cross himself? Had not our Lord carried his cross, there would have been a flaw in his fulfilment of the type; therefore, the Saviour must bear the wood when he goes forth to be offered up as a sacrifice. One of the greatest of English preachers has well reminded us that the fulfilment of this type appeared to have been in eminent jeopardy, since, at the very first, our Lord's weakness must have been apparent, and the reason which led to the laying of the cross upon the Cyrenian might have prevented our Lord's carrying the cross at all. If the soldiers had a little earlier put the cross upon Simon, which they might very naturally have done, then the prophecy had not been fulfilled; but God has the minds

of men so entirely at his control, that even in the minutest circumstance he can order all things so as to complete the merest jots and tittles of the prophecy. Our Lord was made to be, in all points, an Isaac, and therefore we see him going forth bearing the wood of the burnt-offering. Thus you see that it was important that Jesus should for a while bear his own cross.

But it was equally instructive that some one else should be made a partaker of the burden; for it has always been part of the divine counsel that for the salvation of men from sin the Lord should be associated with his church. So far as atonement is concerned, the Lord hath trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him; but as far as the conversion of the world is concerned, and its rescue from the power of error and wickedness, Christ is not alone. We are workers together with God. We are ourselves to be in the hands of God part bearers of the sorrow and travail by which men are to be delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan, and brought into the liberty of truth and righteousness. Hence it became important that in the bearing of the cross, though not in the death upon it, there should be yoked with the Christ one who should follow close behind him. To bear the cross after Jesus is the office of the faithful. Simon the Cyrenian is the representative of the whole church of God, and of each believer in particular. Often had Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross daily, and follow me, he cannot be my disciple"; and now at last he embodies that sermon in an actual person. The disciple must be as his Master: he that would follow the Crucified must himself bear the cross: this we see visibly set forth in Simon of Cyrene with the cross of Jesus laid upon his shoulder.

"Shall Simon bear the cross alone,

And all the rest go free?

No; there's a cross for every one,

And there's a cross for me."

The lesson to each one of us is to take up our Lord's cross without delay, and go with him, without the camp, bearing his reproach. That many among this vast and mixed congregation may imitate Simon is the anxious desire of my heart. With holy expectancy I gaze upon this throng collected from all parts of the earth, and I long to find in it some who will take my Lord's yoke upon them this day.

I. I will begin with this first remark, that UNEXPECTED PERSONS ARE OFTEN CALLED TO CROSS-BEARING. Like Simon, they are impressed into the service of Christ. Our text says: "They compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross." Simon did not volunteer, but was forced into this work of cross-bearing. It would seem from another evangelist that he speedily yielded to the impressment, and lifted the burden heartily; but at first he was compelled. A rude authority was exercised by the guard; who being upon the Governor's business acted with high-handed rigour, and forced whomsoever they pleased to do their bidding. By the exercise of such irresponsible power they compelled a passing stranger to carry Christ's cross. It was specially singular that the man to have this honour was not Peter, nor James, nor John, nor any one of the many who had for years listened to the

Redeemer's speech; but it was a stranger from Northern Africa, who had been in no way connected with the life or teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

Notice, first, that *he was an unknown man*. He was spoken of "as one Simon." Simon was a very common name among the Jews, almost as common as John in our own country. This man was just "one Simon"—an individual who need not be further described. But the providence of God had determined that this obscure individual, this certain man, or I might better say, this uncertain man, should be selected to the high office of cross-bearer to the Son of God. I have an impression upon my mind that there is "one Simon" here this morning, who has to bear Christ's cross from this time forward. I feel persuaded that I am right. That person is so far unknown that most probably he does not recognise a single individual in all this throng, neither does anybody in this assembly know anything of *him*: certainly the preacher does not. He is one John, one Thomas, or one William; or perhaps, in the feminine, she is one Mary, one Jane, one Maggie. Friend, nobody knows you save our Father who is in heaven, and he has appointed you to have fellowship with his Son. I shall roughly describe you as "one Simon," and leave the Holy Spirit to bring you into your place and service. But this "one Simon" was a very particular "*one* Simon." I lay the emphasis where there might seem to be no need of any: he was one whom God knew, and chose, and loved, and set apart for this special service. In a congregation like the present, there may be somebody whom our God intends to use for his glory during the rest of his life. That person sits in the pew and listens to what I am saying, and perhaps as yet he does not begin to enquire whether he is that "one Simon," that one person; and yet it is so, and ere this sermon is ended, he shall know that the call to bear the cross is for him. Many more unlikely things than this have happened in this house of prayer. I pray that many a man may go out from this house a different man from the man he was when he entered it an hour ago. That man Saul, that great persecutor of the church, afterwards became such a mighty preacher of the gospel that people exclaimed with wonder, "There is a strange alteration in this man." "Why," said one, "when I knew him he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was as bigoted a man as ever wore a phylactery, and he hated Christ and Christians so intensely that he could never persecute the Church sufficiently." "Yes," replied another, "it was so; but he has had a strange twist. They say that he was going down to Damascus to hunt out the disciples, and something happened; we do not know exactly what it was, but evidently it gave him such a turn that he has never been himself since. In fact, he seems turned altogether upside down, and the current of his life is evidently reversed: he lives enthusiastically for that faith which once he destroyed." This speedy change happened to "one Saul of Tarsus." There were plenty of Sauls in Israel, but upon this one Saul electing love had looked in the counsels of eternity; for that Saul redeeming love had shed its heart's blood; and in that Saul effectual grace wrought mightily. Is there another Saul here to-day? The Lord grant that he may now cease to kick against the pricks, and may we soon hear of him, "Behold he prayeth." I feel convinced the counter-

part of that "one Simon" is in this house at this moment, and my prayer goes up to God, and I hope it is attended with the prayers of many thousands besides, that he may at once submit to the Lord Jesus.

It did not seem likely that Simon should bear the cross of Christ, for *he was a stranger who had newly come up from the country*. He probably knew little or nothing of what had been taking place in Jerusalem; for he had come from another continent. He was "one Simon a Cyrenian;" and I suppose that Cyrene could not have been less than eight hundred miles from Jerusalem. It was situated in what is now called Tripoli, in Northern Africa, in which place a colony of Jews had been formed long before. Very likely he had come in a Roman galley from Alexandria to Joppa, and there had been rowed through the surf, and landed in time to reach Jerusalem for the Passover. He had long wanted to come to Jerusalem; he had heard the fame of the temple and of the city of his fathers; and he had longed to see the great Assembly of the tribes, and the solemn Paschal feast. He had travelled all those miles, he had hardly yet got the motion of the ship out of his brain, and it had never entered into his head that he should be impressed by the Roman guard, and made to assist at an execution. It was a singular providence that he should come into the city at the moment of the turmoil about Jesus, and should have crossed the street just as the sad procession started on its way to Golgotha. He passed by neither too soon nor too late; he was on the spot as punctually as if he had made an appointment to be there; and yet, as men speak, it was all by mere chance. I cannot tell how many providences had worked together to bring him there at the nick of time, but so the Lord would have it, and so it came about. He, a man there in Cyrene, in Northern Africa, must at a certain date, at the tick of the clock, be at Jerusalem, in order that he might help to carry the cross up to Mount Calvary; *and he was there*. Ah! my dear friend, I do not know what providences have been at work to bring you here to-day; perhaps very strange ones. If a little something had occurred you had not taken this journey; it only needed a small dust to turn the scale, and you would have been hundreds of miles from this spot, in quite another scene from this. Why you are here you do not yet know, except that you have come to listen to the preacher, and join the throng. But God knoweth why he hath brought you here. I trust it will be read in the annals of the future:

"Thus the eternal mandate ran,
Almighty grace arrest that man."

God has brought you here, that on this spot, by the preaching of the gospel, you may be compelled to bear the cross of Jesus. I pray it may be so. "One Simon a Cyrenian, coming out of the country," is here after a long journey, and this day he will begin to live a higher and a better life.

Further, notice, *Simon had come for another purpose*. He had journeyed to Jerusalem with no thought of bearing the cross of Jesus. Probably Simon was a Jew far removed from the land of his fathers, and he had made a pilgrimage to the holy city to keep the passover. Every Jew loved to be present at Jerusalem at the Paschal feast. So, to put it roughly, it was

holiday-time ; it was a time for making an excursion to the capital : it was a season for making a journey and going up to the great city which was "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Simon from far-off Cyrene must by all means keep the feast at Jerusalem. Mayhap he had saved his money for months, that he might pay his fare to Joppa ; and he had counted down the gold freely for the joy which he had in going to the city of David, and the temple of his God.

He was come for the passover, and for that only ; and he would be perfectly satisfied to go home when once the feast was over, and once he had partaken of the lamb with the tribes of Israel. Then he could say throughout the rest of his life, "I, too, was once at the great feast of our people, when we commemorated the coming up out of Egypt." Brethren, we propose one way, but God hath other propositions. We say, "I will step in and hear the preacher," but God means that the arrows of his grace shall stick fast in our hearts. Many and many a time with no desire for grace men have listened to the gospel, and the Lord has been found of them that sought him not. I heard of one who cared little for the sermon till the preacher chanced to use that word "eternity," and the hearer was taken prisoner by holy thoughts, and led to the Saviour's feet. Men have stepped into places of worship even with evil designs, and yet the purpose of grace has been accomplished ; they came to scoff, but they remained to pray. Some have been cast by the providence of God into positions where they have met with Christian men, and a word of admonition has been blessed to them. A lady was one day at an evening party, and there met with Cæsar Malan, the famous divine of Geneva, who, in his usual manner, enquired of her whether she was a Christian. She was startled, surprised, and vexed, and made a short reply to the effect that it was not a question she cared to discuss ; whereupon, Mr. Malan replied with great sweetness, that he would not persist in *speaking* of it, but he would pray that she might be led to give her heart to Christ, and become a useful worker for him. Within a fortnight she met the minister again, and asked him how she must come to Jesus. Mr. Malan's reply was, "Come to him just as you are." That lady gave herself up to Jesus : it was Charlotte Elliott, to whom we owe that precious hymn—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee—
O Lamb of God, I come."

It was a blessed thing for her that she was at that party, and that the servant of God from Geneva should have been there, and should have spoken to her so faithfully. Oh for many a repetition of the story "of one Simon a Cyrenian," coming, not with the intent to bear the cross, but with quite another mind, and yet being enlisted in the cross-bearing army of the Lord Jesus!

I would have you notice, once more, that this man was at this particular time not thinking upon the subject at all, for *he was at that time merely passing by*. He had come up to Jerusalem, and whatever occupied his mind he does not appear to have taken any notice of the trial of Jesus, or of the sad end of it. It is expressly said that he "passed by." He was not even sufficiently interested in the matter to stand in the crowd

and look at the mournful procession. Women were weeping there right bitterly—the daughters of Jerusalem to whom the Master said, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children”; but this man passed by. He was anxious to hurry away from so unpleasant a sight, and to get up to the temple. He was quietly making his way through the crowd, eager to go about his business, and he must have been greatly surprised and distressed when a rough hand was laid upon him, and a stern voice said, “Shoulder that cross.” There was no resisting a Roman centurion when he gave command, and so the countryman meekly submitted, wishing, no doubt, that he were back in Cyrene tilling the ground. He must needs stoop his shoulder and take up a new burden, and tread in the footsteps of the mysterious personage to whom the cross belonged. He was only passing by, and yet he was enlisted and impressed by the Romans, and, as I take it, impressed by the grace of God for life; for whereas Mark says he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, it would seem that his sons were well known to the Christian people to whom Mark was writing. If his son was the same Rufus that Paul mentions, then he calls her “his mother and mine”; and it would seem that Simon’s wife and his sons became believers and partakers of the sufferings of Christ. His contact with the Lord in that strange compulsory way probably wrought out for him another and more spiritual contact which made him a true cross-bearer. O ye that pass by this day, draw nigh to Jesus! I have no wish to call your attention to myself, far from it; but I do ask your attention to my Lord. Though you only intended to slip into this tabernacle and slip out again, I pray that you may be arrested by a call from my Lord. I speak as my Lord’s servant, and I would constrain you to come to him. Stand where you are a while, and let me beg you to yield to his love, which even now would cast the bands of a man around you. I would compel you, by my Lord’s authority, to take up his cross and bear it after him. It would be strange, say you. Ay, so it might be, but it would be a glorious event. I remember Mr. Knill, speaking of his own conversion, used an expression which I should like to use concerning one of you. Here it is: “It was just a quarter past twelve, August 2nd, when twang went every harp in Paradise; for a sinner had repented.” May it be so with you. Oh that every harp in Paradise may now ring out the high praises of sovereign grace, as you now yield yourself to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! May that divine impressment which is imaged in the text by the compulsion of the Roman soldier take place in your case at this very moment; and may it be seen in your instance that unexpected persons are often called to be cross-bearers!

II. My second observation is—**CROSS-BEARING CAN STILL BE PRACTISED.** Very briefly let me tell you in what ways the cross can still be carried.

First, and chiefly, *by your becoming a Christian.* If the cross shall take you up, you will take up the cross. Christ will be your hope, his death your trust, himself the object of your love. You never become a cross-bearer truly till you lay your burdens down at his feet who bore the cross and curse for you.

Next, you become a cross-bearer *when you make an open avowal of the*

Lord Jesus Christ. Do not deceive yourselves—this is expected of each one of you if you are to be saved. The promise as I read it in the New Testament is not to the believer alone, but to the believer who confesses his faith. “He that with his heart believeth and with his mouth maketh confession of him shall be saved.” He saith, “He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father; but he that denieth me”—and from the connection it should seem to mean, he that does not confess me—“him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.” To quote the inspired Scripture, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” There should be, there must be, the open avowal in Christ’s own way of the secret faith which you have in him. Now this is often a cross. Many people would like to go to heaven by an underground railway; secrecy suits them. They do not want to cross the channel; the sea is too rough; but when there is a tunnel made they will go to the fair country. My good people, you are cowardly, and I must quote to you a text which ought to sting your cowardice out of you: “But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” I say no more, and make no personal applications; but, I beseech you, run no risks. Be afraid to be afraid. Be ashamed of being ashamed of Christ. Shame on that man who counts it any shame to say before assembled angels, and men, and devils, “I am a follower of Christ.” May you who have hitherto been secret followers of the crucified Lord become manifest cross-bearers! Do you not even now cry out, “Set down my name, sir”?

Further, some have to take up their cross by *commencing Christian work*. You live in a village where there is no gospel preaching: preach yourself. You are in a backwoods town where the preaching is very far from being such as God approves of: begin to preach the truth yourself. “Alas!” say you, “I should make a fool of myself.” Are you ashamed to be a fool for Christ? “Oh, but I should break down.” Break down: it will do you good, and perhaps you may break somebody else down. There is no better preaching in the world than that of a man who breaks down under a sense of unworthiness: if that breakdown communicates itself to other people, it may begin a revival. If you are choked by your earnestness others may become earnest too. Do you still murmur, “But I should get the ill-will of everybody”? For Christ’s sake could you not bear that? When the good monk said to Martin Luther, “Go thou home to thy cell and keep quiet,” why did not Martin take the advice? Why, indeed? “It is very bad for young people to be so forward; you will do a great deal of mischief, therefore be quiet, you Martin. Who are you to interere with the great authorities? Be holy for yourself, and don’t trouble others. If you stir up a reformation thousands of good people will be burnt through you. Do be quiet.” Bless God, Martin did not go home, and was not quiet, but went about his Master’s business, and raised heaven and earth by his brave witness-bearing. Where are you, Martin, this morning? I pray God to call you out, and as you have confessed his name, and are his servant, I pray that he may make you bear public testimony for him, and tell out the saving power of the Saviour’s precious blood. Come, Simon, I see you shrink; but the cross has to be carried; therefore bow your back. It is only a wooden

cross, after all, and not an iron one. You can bear it: you **must** bear it. God help you.

Perhaps, too, some brother may have to take up his cross by *bearing witness against the rampant sin which surrounds him*. "Leave all those dirty matters alone; do not say a word about them. Let the people go to the devil, or else you will soil your white kid gloves." Sirs, we will spoil our hands as well as our gloves, and we will risk our characters, if need be; but we will put down the devilry which now defiles London. Truly the flesh does shrink, and the purest part of our manhood shrinks with it, when we are compelled to bear open protest against sins which are done of men in secret. But, Simon, the Master may yet compel you to bear his cross in this respect, and if so, he will give you both courage and wisdom, and your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Sometimes, however, the cross-bearing is of another and more quiet kind, and may be described as *submission to providence*. A young friend is saying, "For me to live at home I know to be my duty; but father is unkind, and the family generally impose upon me. I wish I could get away." Ah! dear sister, you must bear Christ's cross, and it may be the Lord would have you remain at home. Therefore bear the cross. A servant is saying, "I should like to be in a Christian family. I do not think I can stop where I am." Perhaps, good sister, the Lord has put you where you are to be a light in a dark place. All the lamps should not be in one street, or what will become of the courts and alleys? It is often the duty of a Christian man to say, "I shall stop where I am and fight this matter through. I mean by character and example, with kindness and courtesy and love, to win this place for Jesus." Of course the easy way is to turn monk and live quietly in a cloister, and serve God by doing nothing; or to turn nun and dwell in a convent, and expect to win the battle of life by running out of it. Is not this absurd? If you shut yourself away from this poor world, what is to become of it? You men and women that are Christians must stand up and stand out for Jesus where the providence of God has cast you: if your calling is not a sinful one, and if the temptations around you are not too great for you, you must "hold the fort" and never dream of surrender. If your lot is hard, look upon it as Christ's cross, and bow your back to the load. Your shoulder may be raw at first, but you will grow stronger before long, for as your day your strength shall be. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;" but it is good for a man to bear the cross in his old age as well as in his youth; in fact, we ought never to be quit of so blessed a burden. What wings are to a bird, and sails to a ship, that the cross becomes to a man's spirit when he fully consents to accept it as his life's beloved load. Truly did Jesus say, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Now, Simon, where are you? Shoulder the cross, man, in the name of God!

III. Thirdly, TO CROSS-BEARING THERE ARE NOBLE COMPULSIONS. Simon's compulsion was the rough hand of the Roman legionary, and the gruff voice in the Latin tongue, "Shoulder that cross;" but we hear gentler voices which compel us this day to take up Christ's cross.

The first compulsion is this—"the love of Christ constraineth us." He has done all this for you; therefore by sweet but irresistible compulsion you are made to render him some return of love. Does not Jesus

appear to you in a vision as you sit in this house? Do you not see that thorn-crowned head, that visage crimsoned with the bloody sweat, those hands and feet pierced with the nails? Does he not say to you pointedly, "I did all this for thee; what hast thou done for me"? Startled in your seat, you cover your face, and inwardly reply, "I will answer that question by the rest of my life. I will be first and foremost a servant of Jesus: not a trader first and a Christian next, but a Christian first and a business man afterwards." You, my sister, must say, "I will live for Christ as a daughter, a wife, or a mother. I will live for my Lord; for he has given himself for me, and I am not my own, but bought with a price."

The true heart will feel a compulsion arising from a second reflection, namely, *the glory of a life spent for God and for his Christ*. What is the life of a man who toils in business, makes money, becomes rich, and dies? It winds up with a paragraph in the *Illustrated London News*, declaring that he died worth so much: the wretch was not worth anything himself; his estate had value, he had none. Had he been worth anything he would have sent his money about the world doing good; but as a worthless steward he laid his Master's stores in heaps to rot. The life of multitudes of men is self-seeking. It is ill for a man to live the life of swine. What a poor creature is the usual ordinary man! But a life spent for Jesus, though it involve cross-bearing, is noble, heroic, sublime. The mere earth-worm leads a dunghill life. A life of what is called pleasure is a mean, beggarly business. A life of keeping up respectability is utter slavery—as well be a horse in a pug-mill. A life wholly consecrated to Christ and his cross is life indeed; it is akin to the life of angels; ay, higher still, it is the life of God within the soul of man. O ye that have a spark of true nobility, seek to live lives worth living, worth remembering, worthy to be the commencement of eternal life before the throne of God.

Some of you ought to feel the cross coming upon your shoulders this morning when you think of *the needs of those among whom you live*. They are dying, perishing for lack of knowledge, rich and poor alike ignorant of Christ; multitudes of them wrapped up in self-righteousness. They are perishing, and those who ought to warn them are often dumb dogs that cannot bark. Do you not feel that you ought to deliver the sheep from the wolf? Have you no bowels of compassion? Are your hearts turned to steel? I am sure you cannot deny that the times demand of you earnest and forceful lives. No Christian man can now sit still without incurring awful guilt. Whether you live in London or in any other great town amidst reeking sin, or dwell in the country amidst the dense darkness which broods over many rural districts, you are under bonds to be up and doing. It may be a cross to you, but for Jesus' sake you must uplift it, and never lay it down till the Lord calls you home.

Some of you should bear the cross of Christ *because the cause of Christ is at a discount where you dwell*. I delight in a man in whom the lordlier chivalry has found a congenial home. He loves to espouse the cause of truth in the cloudy and dark day. He never counts heads, but weighs arguments. When he settles down in a town he never enquires, "Where is the most respectable congregation? Where shall I meet

with those who will advantage me in business?" No, he studies his conscience rather than his convenience. He hears one say, "There is a Nonconformist chapel, but it is down a back street. There is a Baptist church, but the members are nearly all poor, and no gentlefolk are among them. Even the evangelical church is down at the heel: the best families attend the high church." I say he hears this, and his heart is sick of such talk. He will go where the gospel is preached, and nowhere else. Fine architecture has scant charms for him, and grand music is no part of his religion: if these are substitutes for the gospel, he abhors them. It is meanness itself for a man to forsake the truth for the sake of respectability. Multitudes who ought to be found maintaining the good old cause are recreant to their convictions, if indeed they ever had any. For this cause the true man resolves to stick to truth through thick and thin, and not to forsake her because her adherents are poor and despised. If ever we might temporize, that time is past and gone. I arrest yonder man this morning, who has long been a Christian, but has concealed half his Christianity in order to be thought respectable, or to escape the penalties of faithfulness. Come out from those with whom you are numbered, but with whom you are not united in heart. Be brave enough to defend a good cause against all comers; for the day shall come when he shall have honour for his guerdon who accepted dishonour that he might be true to his God, his Bible, and his conscience. Blessed be he that can be loyal to his Lord, cost him what it may—loyal even in those matters which traitors call little things. We would compel that Simon the Cyrenian this day to bear the cross, because there are so few to bear it in these degenerate days.

Besides, I may say to some of you, you ought to bear the cross because you know you are not satisfied; *your hearts are not at rest*. You have prospered in worldly things, but you are not happy; you have good health, but you are not happy; you have loving friends, but you are not happy. There is but one way of getting rest to the heart, and that is, to come to Jesus. That is his word: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If after this you need a further rest for other and higher longings, then you must come again to the same Saviour, and hearken to his next word: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Some of you professors have not yet found perfect rest, and the reason is because you have looked to the cross for pardon, but you have never taken to cross-bearing as an occupation. You are hoping *in* Christ but not living *for* Christ. The finding of rest unto your soul will come to you in having something to do or to bear for Jesus. "Take my yoke upon you: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

There are many ways, then, of bearing the cross for Christ, and there are many reasons why some here present should begin at once to carry the load.

IV. To close: bear with me a minute or two while I say that **CROSS-BEARING IS A BLESSED OCCUPATION**. I feel sure that Simon found it so. Let me mention certain blessings which must have attended the

special service of Simon. First, *it brought him into Christ's company.* When they compelled him to bear his cross, he was brought close to Jesus. If it had not been for that compulsion he might have gone his way, or might have been lost in the crowd; but now he is in the inner circle, near to Jesus. For the first time in his life he saw that blessed form, and as he saw it I believe his heart was enamoured with it. As they lifted the cross on his shoulders he looked at that sacred Person, and saw a crown of thorns about his brow; and as he looked at his fellow-sufferer, he saw all down his cheeks the marks of bloody sweat, and black and blue bruises from cruel hands. As for those eyes, they looked him through and through! That face, that matchless face, he had never seen its like. Majesty was therein blended with misery, innocence with agony, and love with sorrow. He had never seen that countenance so well, nor marked the whole form of the Son of man so clearly if he had not been called to bear that cross. It is wonderful how much we see of Jesus when we suffer or labour for him. Believing souls, I pray that this day you may be so impressed into my Lord's service, that you may have nearer and dearer fellowship with him than in the past. If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine. They see Jesus best who carry his cross most.

Be-side, *the cross held Simon in Christ's steps.* Do you catch it? If Jesus carried the front part of the cross and Simon followed behind, he was sure to put his feet down just where the Master's feet had been before. The cross is a wonderful implement for keeping us in the way of our Lord. As I was turning this subject over I was thinking how often I had felt a conscious contact between myself and my Lord when I have had to bear reproach for his sake; and how at the same time I have been led to watch my steps more carefully because of that very reproach. Brethren, we do not want to slip from under the cross. If we did so, we might slip away from our Lord and from holy walking. If we can keep our shoulder beneath that sacred load, and see our Lord a little on before, we shall be making the surest progress. This being near to Jesus is a blessed privilege, which is cheaply purchased at the price of cross-bearing. If you would see Jesus, bestir yourselves to work for him. Boldly avow him, cheerfully suffer for him, and then you shall see him, and then you shall learn to follow him step by step. O blessed cross, which holds us to Jesus and to his ways!

Then Simon had this honour, that *he was linked with Christ's work.* He could not put away sin, but he could assist weakness. Simon did not die on the cross to make expiation, but he did live under the cross to aid in the accomplishment of the divine purpose. You and I cannot interfere with Jesus in his passion, but we can share with him in his compassion; we cannot purchase liberty for the enslaved, but we can tell them of their emancipation. To have a finger in Christ's work is glory. I invite the man that seeks honour and immortality, to seek it thus. To have a share in the Redeemer's work is a more attractive thing than all the pomp and glitter of this world, and the kingdoms thereof. Where are the men of heavenly mind who will covet to be joined unto the Lord in this ministry? Let them step out and say, "Jesus, I my cross have taken. Henceforth I will follow thee. Come life or death, I will carry thy cross till thou shalt give me the crown."

While Simon was carrying the cross through the crowd, I doubt not that the rough soldiery would deal him many a kick or buffet; but I feel equally sure that the dear Master sometimes stole a glance at him. *Simon enjoyed Christ's smile.* I know the Lord so well, that I feel sure he must have done so: he would not forget the man who was his partner for the while. And oh, that look! How Simon must have treasured up the remembrance of it. "I never carried a load that was so light," says he, "as that which I carried that morning; for when the Blessed One smiled at me amidst his woes, I felt myself to be strong as Hercules." Alexander, his first-born, and that red-headed lad Rufus, when they grew up both felt it to be the honour of the family that their father carried the cross after Jesus. Rufus and Alexander had a patent of nobility in being the sons of such a man. Mark recorded the fact that Simon carried the cross, and that such and such persons were his sons. Methinks when the old man came to lie upon his death-bed he said: "My hope is in him whose cross I carried. Blessed burden! Lay me down in my grave. This body of mine cannot perish, for it bore the cross which Jesus carried, and which carried *him*. I shall rise again to see him in his glory, for his cross has pressed me, and his love will surely raise me." Happy are we if we can while yet we live be co-workers together with him, that when he cometh in his kingdom we may be partakers of his glory. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." God bless you, and especially you who have come out of the country. God bless you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xv. 1—38-

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122, 670, 660.

THE DETERMINATION OF CHRIST TO SUFFER FOR
HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 15TH, 1895,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh : but he received it not.”—
Mark xv. 23.

OUR Saviour, before he was nailed to the cross, and on the cross, several times had drinks of different sorts offered to him. Whilst they were nailing him to the cross, they endeavoured to make him drink wine, or vinegar as it is called, mingled with gall ; and when he had tasted of it,—he did taste it,—he would not drink it. When he was on the cross, the soldiers, mocking him, offered him vinegar, or their weak drink of which they ordinarily partook, pledging him in their cups with scorn. And once more, when he said, “I thirst,” they took a sponge filled with vinegar, dipped it in hyssop, and put it to his lips.

This occasion of offering the wine mingled with myrrh is, I believe, different from all the rest. This wine mingled with myrrh was given to him as an act of mercy. Matthew Henry seems to think that it was prepared by those holy women who were wont to attend to the necessities of our Lord. They had followed him in all his footsteps whithersoever he went ; it was by their bounty that the bag which Judas kept was generally as full as it was required to be, so that out of the store they could go and buy meat for their Master and for his disciples. It was these holy women who prepared the spices to embalm him at his burial ; and Matthew Henry thinks that these women, prompted by their compassion for him, got ready this cup of wine mingled with myrrh, that he might be strengthened for his miseries, and that those miseries might in some degree be alleviated by the partial stupefaction which a strong draught of wine and myrrh would give to him.

No. 2,443.

This time, our Saviour positively declined the cup: "he received it not." The wormwood he tasted, but this he received not at all; he would have nothing to do with it. Why? The answer is not to be found in our Saviour's abstemiousness, for he was not abstemious; he was never self-indulgent, but he certainly was never abstemious. He was "the Son of man" who "came eating and drinking;" he felt no repugnance to wine; he himself made it, he himself drank it; he even earned for himself the name, "a gluttonous man and a winebibber"; not deservedly, but because, in contrast to John, who abstemiously refrained from ordinary food, Jesus Christ sat down with publicans and sinners, feasted with the feasters, and ate and drank like other men. Nor do I think the reason is to be found in any love of pain that Christ had, nor in any heartless bravado, which would lead him to say, "I will suffer, and I will put the cup away from me." Far be that from Christ; he never thrust himself in the way of suffering when it was unnecessary; he did not go to give himself up into the hands of his enemies before his hour was come; he avoided persecution when the avoidance of the persecution would not be an injury to his cause; he withdrew out of Judæa, and would not walk in that land, because of Herod, who sought to slay him. I believe that, if our Saviour had not been the atoning sacrifice, if his sufferings had been merely those of a martyr, he would have quaffed to the very dregs the cup that was offered him, and would not have left any of it. The reason why he refused the cup, I think, is to be found in another thing altogether.

There is a glorious idea couched in the fact that the Saviour put the myrrhed wine-cup entirely away from his lips. On the heights of heaven the Son of God stood of old, and he looked down and measured how far it was to the utmost depths of misery; he cast up the sum total of all the agonies which a man must endure to descend to the utmost depths of pain and misery. He determined that, to be a faithful High Priest, and also to be a suffering one, he would go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, "from the highest throne in glory to the cross of deepest woe." This myrrhed cup would just have stopped him within a little of the utmost limit of misery; therefore, he said, "I will not stop half-way, but I will go all the way; and if this cup can mitigate my sorrow, that is just the reason why I will not drink it, for I have determined that to the utmost lengths of misery I will go, that I will do, and bear, and suffer all that Incarnate God can bear for my people, in my own mortal body."

Now, beloved, it is this fact that I wish to bring out before you—the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer, and that because the myrrhed cup would have prevented him from reaching the lowest step of misery, "he received it not." I shall have to show you, first, that this was very frequently the case throughout his life, that he would not take a step which would have diminished his miseries, because *he was determined to go the whole length of suffering*. Secondly, I shall try to show you *the reason for this determination*. Then, thirdly, I shall close up by speaking of *the lesson that we may learn from it*.

I. OUR SAVIOUR WOULD GO THE WHOLE LENGTH OF MISERY; he would suffer in every respect like as we suffer; he would bear the whole of

the tortures of atonement, without even the slightest shadow of mitigation or alleviation. Now, I think I can show you that, on many occasions in Christ's life, he determined to be tempted in every point in which men are tempted, and to be tempted to the utmost limit of the power of temptation; nor would he even accept anything which would have limited the force of the temptation upon man. I will give you some proofs of this.

First, *Christ knew that you and I would be exposed to peril*; he therefore determined that he would be exposed to peril, too, and that he would not by any means, when it was in his power, escape from the peril. Let me show him to you high up there, on the pinnacle of the temple; there stands our Master, and a fiend by his side, on a giddy eminence, with but little beneath his feet; he stands poised aloft, he looks down the hill on which the temple is built, into the depths below; and the enemy says, "Cast thyself down, commit thyself to the care of the angels." It was like this myrrhed cup—"Do not stand in this peril; cast thyself upon that promise, and risk thyself upon the angels' wings, for they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" But like as he would not receive this cup, so neither would he receive this deliverance from his peril; but there he stood erect, confident in his God, not using the means of deliverance which the tempter wished him to exercise, even as he would not drink this cup.

Take another case: *Jesus Christ knew that many of his people would have to suffer bodily wants, and poverty, and woe*. He therefore hungered; after forty days' fast, when he might have delivered himself from his hunger by turning stones into bread, one would have said, "It would have been a very innocent act to turn stones into bread, and feed himself;" but, "No," says Christ to the gnawing pangs of hunger, "I will let you go as far as you can; I will not turn these stones into bread; I will let hunger exercise all its power upon me; I will let my body be gnawed by its fierce teeth; I will not mitigate its misery." He would not receive that wine mingled with myrrh that the devil offered him in the wilderness, when he tempted him to make the stones into bread; he would not take the mitigation of his misery.

I will tell you another case. Many men have attempted to have their lives cut short because they have so much misery, and no more hope of being happy, therefore they have wished for death; they have wished that they might be as the untimely birth, that they might be shut up in the bowels of the earth for ever. *They have longed for death, and desired it*; and if an opportunity had cast itself in their way in which they might have died with honour, without having even the disgrace of suicide, how many would have accepted the alternative of death! Here is our Saviour in the same condition; for he is dragged to the brow of the hill of Nazareth. O Son of man, thy wisest choice is to be dashed down the sides of the hill on which the city is built! If thou art wise, thou wilt let them hurl thee headlong; there would be an end of all thy misery, for there are years before thee through which thou wilt be roasted at the slow fire of persecution, and afterwards thou wilt have to pass through floods of deepest misery. Do you

not think the temptation started up in his mind, "Let yourself be cast down"? He knew all about it. Had he been cast down, he would have died an honourable death, like the death of a prophet slain in his own country; but no, "passing through the midst of them, he went his way," because, as he refused the wine-cup, so he refused a hasty death, which would have delivered him from his miseries.

Do you not observe that I have only just given you specimens? You will find that *all through the Saviour's life it was just the same*. You will not find him in one instance working a miracle to lessen his own bodily fatigue, or to alleviate his own bodily wants and necessities, but always letting the ills of this life wreak themselves upon him with all their fury. He hushed the winds once, but it was for his disciples, not for himself; he lay in the ship asleep, and let the waves toss him up and down as much as they pleased. He multiplied the loaves and fishes: but it was for the multitude, not for himself. He could find money in a fish's mouth: but it was to pay the tribute, not for himself. He could scatter mercies wherever he went,—open men's eyes, and deliver many of them from pains: he never exercised any of his skill upon himself. If the wind blew, he let it spend itself upon his cheeks, and crack them; if the cold was bitter, he let the cold come round him, as it did in the garden of Gethsemane; if journeying was troublesome, he journeyed where he might have travelled as his Father did; as old Thomas Sternhold says in his fine translation of the Psalms—

"The Lord descended from above,
And bow'd the heavens most high,
And underneath his feet he cast
The darkness of the sky.

"On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally he rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."

So might Jesus, if he pleased, but he journeyed on in weariness. He might have made the water leap out of the well to his hand, but there he sat and thirsted, while he had power to make fountains gush even from the stone on which he sat. On the cross, "I thirst," was his cry; and yet, if he pleased, he might have opened in himself rivers of living water; he had them for others, but he had none for himself. You will observe this fact that, in all the history of Christ, never once did he take anything which could have lessened his miseries, but he went the whole length; and as on this occasion he refused the wine drugged with myrrh, so never did he receive anything that had a tendency to prevent him from going to the requisite lengths of suffering.

II. Now let me show you ~~THE~~ REASON FOR THIS. Was it out of any love to suffering that he thus refused the wine-cup? Ah, no; Christ had no love of suffering. He had a love of souls, but like us he turned away from suffering, he never loved it. We see he did not, for even in the garden he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was his human nature struggling against suffering, as human nature rightfully does. God has made us so that we do not naturally love suffering, and it is not wrong for us to feel some

repugnance to it, for God has implanted that repugnance in us. Christ did not suffer because he loved suffering. Why, then, did he suffer? For two reasons: because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to the completion of the atonement, which saves to the utmost; and because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to perfect his character as "a merciful High Priest" who has to compassionate souls that have gone to the utmost of miseries themselves; that he might know how to succour them that are tempted.

First, I say it was *necessary to make the atonement complete*. I do think that, if our Saviour had drunk this myrrh cup, the atonement would not have been valid. It strikes me that, if he had drunk this wine mingled with myrrh, he could not have suffered to the extent that was absolutely necessary. We believe Christ did, on the cross, suffer just enough, and not one particle more than was necessary for the redemption of his people. If, then, this wine-cup had taken away a part of his sufferings, the ransom price would not have been fully complete, it would not have been fully paid. And if it had but taken away so much as a grain, the atonement would not have been sufficiently satisfactory. If a man's ransom is to be paid, it must be all paid; for though but one single farthing be left unpaid, the man is not fully redeemed, and he is not yet totally free. If, then, this drinking of the wine-cup had taken out the smallest amount from that fearful price of agony which our Saviour paid, the atonement would have been insufficient—insufficient only to a degree, but even insufficiency to a degree, however small, would have been enough to have caused perpetual despair, yea, enough to have shut the gates of heaven against all believers. The utmost farthing must be paid; inexorable justice never did yet omit so much as a fraction of its claim. Nor would it in this case have exonerated in any measure; Christ must pay it all. The wine-cup would have prevented his doing that, therefore he would suffer and go the whole length of suffering; he would not stop, but would go through it all.

Again, I say it was *that he might be made a compassionate High Priest*. Someone might have said, "When my Master died, he did not suffer much. He suffered somewhat, but the wine-cup prevented much suffering. I dare not touch the wine-cup; at least, I dare not take it so as to alleviate my sufferings at all; then I must suffer more than he, for that drugged wine I must not drink. Surely, then, my Master cannot sympathize with me, if I for conscientious motives bear suffering without accepting alleviations which some think are wrong." "Nay," said the Master, "nay, you shall never say that. If you have to suffer without a comfort, I will let you know that I suffered without a comfort, too." You say, "Oh, if I had some myrrh given me which could mitigate my woe, it were well!" "Ah!" says the Saviour, "but I have had it offered to me, and I will not drink it, in order that you may see that I suffered woe without the comfort, without the cordial, without the consolation, which you think would enable you to endure it." O blessed Lord Jesus, thou wast "tempted in all points like as we are"! Blessed be thy name! This myrrh-cup could have put a plate of steel upon thy breast, it would have blunted many darts of suffering; therefore thou didst put it aside that thou mightest, naked,

suffer every shaft to find its target in thy heart. This myrrh-cup would have steeled thy feelings, so that thou couldst not be rent by the whips of anguish; therefore thou wouldst not take its steeling influence, its hardening qualities. Thou, who didst stoop to become a poor, weak worm, "a worm and no man," didst bear the agony, without making the agony less, or strengthening thine own body to bear it. O blessed High Priest! Go to him, ye tried and tempted ones; go to him, and cast your burdens on him; he can bear them, he has borne burdens heavier than yours before. Cast your burden on the Lord, as his shoulders can sustain it; and his shoulders, that have borne trouble without comfort, can bear your troubles, though they be comfortless ones, too. Do but tell them to your Master, and you shall never find a lack of sympathy in him.

III. And now, what have we to say by way of A LESSON for this short discourse?

When Christ was offered this cup, he would not receive it. Sometimes, beloved, it is in your power to escape from sufferings for Christ's sake; and you may rightly do so, if you can escape from them without injuring the mission upon which your Father has sent you; for as he sent his Son into the world, even so has he sent you into the world. You have your mission; and there are times when the acceptance of a cordial, or the reception of an escape from peril, would be a degradation to your high dignity, an injury to your office; and therefore there are times when you should decline even the cup of consolation itself. You and I are called to hold fellowship with Christ in his sufferings; perhaps our business places us where we have to hold fellowship with Christ in the suffering of contempt. The finger is pointed at us; the lip is sometimes protruded in derision; sometimes an expression is used towards us, calling us a hypocrite, a cant, a formalist. You may be apt to think, "Oh, that I could avoid all this! I wish I could escape." Can you avoid it, and serve your Master as well? If you can, then drink the myrrh-cup, and avoid the misery; but if you cannot, and if it is proven that your position is one of duty, and one in which you can honour your Master, it is at your peril that you exchange your situation for an easier one, if you exchange it for one less useful.

"Oh!" says one, "I work among wicked men, and I have to bear a testimony for truth in their midst; may I not leave the place at once? I feel that I am doing good there; but the jeers and taunts are so hard to bear, that the good I do seems to be always counter-balanced by the misery I suffer." Take care, take care, lest you let the flesh prevail over the spirit. It would be like a myrrh-cup to you, for you to leave your situation, and go to another; it would be the removal of your pain; ponder a long time before you do it, weigh it well. If your Maker has put you there, to suffer for his name's sake, come not down from the cross to which he has nailed you by a daily crucifixion, till you have suffered all; and take not the myrrh-cup of an escape until you have borne all for Christ. I think it was holy Polycarp who, when the soldiers came to him to take him to prison, made his escape; but when he found afterwards that his doing so had dispirited some Christians, and had been attributed to his cowardice,

when next the soldiers presented themselves, and he had an opportunity to escape, "No," he said, "let me die." It had been foolhardy of him, if he had run into the teeth of men the first time, in order to be put to death; but when he saw that he would serve his Master better by his death than by his life, it would have been an unrighteous thing if he had drunk of the wine-cup, if he had made his escape, and not died for his Master's sake.

O my brethren, I do think that there are many cordials which the world, too, has to offer to the Christian which he must not drink at all, because if his Master wishes him to have fellowship with him in his suffering, it is his to suffer so far as his Master wills. You are perhaps a man or a woman of a sorrowful spirit; you are given to solitude and loneliness. There are certain amusements, which some men say are harmless; they tell you that they are meant for you, and ask you to go and take them. You think, "Well, in my low state, surely I might take these things. If I were happy and joyous, I should not need them; but surely, my Father, 'like as a father pitieth his children,' will pity me; and if I do these things, and do them merely for temporary comfort, my heart seems as though it would break if I had not this little temporary excitement." Take care, take care, that it is not the wine-cup that prevents you, my friends. If your Master gives you the wine-cup, the golden wine-cup filled with the precious wine of the covenant, the strong promises, and sweet fellowship in Christ, drink it without a moment's hesitation. Drink it and be glad, for God has said, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish;" and this is the strong drink he gives to you in the golden wine-cup of the Saviour's fellowship. Drink it, and be happy. But if men would offer it to you, look many a time before you drink it. It may be, you may be right in drinking it, it may not be a wrong thing; but it may be, too, that even a thing that is innocent to others, may be wrong to you; and the taking of that amusement and pleasure into your hand, might be like our Saviour's taking the myrrh-cup and drinking it. It would be a stultifying you, a preventing you from learning all the lessons of your misery, from going in all the steps of your Redeemer, who wishes us to follow him through all the miseries which he has ordained for us, that they may be the means of fellowship with him in his suffering.

This is the only lesson I desire to give you at this time. If the Lord impress it on our minds, it may be of use to us. Only let me say, how many there are who would have drunk this wine-cup, if it had been offered to them! Your Saviour has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke; he has robbed you of one who is dear and near to you. Say, Christian, if you had had the myrrh-cup put before you, if it had been said, "If you like, that loved one of yours shall live," if it had been offered to you that the life that has been taken away should be spared, could you with fortitude have said, "Not my will, but thine, be done"? Could you have put it away, and said, "No, my Master, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done. And what is more, if it may pass from me, if I need not suffering, yet if I can honour thee more by suffering, and if the loss of my beloved one will serve thee and please thee, then so let it be.

I refuse the comfort, when it comes in the way of thine honour; I reject the favoured mercy if it comes in the teeth of thy glory. I am willing to suffer; thy consolations I care not for; if I can honour thee better without them, I will do without them?"

There are some among you in the habiliments of mourning. Let me just, in conclusion, note a very beautiful thought of a good man on a passage of Scripture. Jesus says in his prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Do you know why good men die? Do you know why the righteous die? Shall I tell you what it is that kills them? It is Christ's prayer—"Father, I will that they be with me." It is that that fetches them up to heaven. They would stop here, if Christ did not pray them to death. Every time a believer mounts from this earth to heaven, it is caused by Christ's prayer. "Now," says this good old divine, "many times Christ and his people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knee in prayer, and say, 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;'" Christ bends his knee, and says, 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.'" So, you see, one gets hold of him, and the other, too. He cannot be in both places; the beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you, too. Now, what shall be the answer? Put the prayers side by side; you are praying, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;" and there is your Saviour, praying that they may be with him where he is. Now, if you had your choice; if the King should step from his throne, and say, "Here are two supplicants; they are praying opposite to one another; their prayers are clearly contrary to each other; I cannot answer them both;" oh, I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, "Jesus, not my will, but thine, be done." You would give up your prayer for your sick husband's life, for your sick wife's life, for your dying child's life, if you could realize the thought that Christ was praying in the opposite direction, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

And now we come to the supper of our Master; oh, may the Master give us fellowship with him! Poor sinners that know not Christ, I have hardly a moment in which to address you; but remember, the separation which will be made between you and the church to-night is but a picture of an awful separation which shall be made between you and the church at the last great day. You will sit upstairs, some of you, to look down upon the solemnity: remember, you may look upon it here, but you will not look upon it in heaven, unless your hearts be made new by Christ, and unless you be washed in his precious blood.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

MARK XV. 15—39; AND LUKE XXIII. 27—49.

We will read two short passages from the Gospels this evening. May the blessed Spirit, who taught the Evangelists to record the sad story of our Lord's sufferings and death, give us fully to enter into the blessed meaning of it while we read it! First turn to Mark xv., verse 15.

Mark xv. Verses 15, 16. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Prætorium;*

The guard-room of Herod's palace, where the Prætorian guards were wont to gather.

16—20. *And they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him,*

To the utmost, and gone the full length of their cruel scorn,

20—23. *They took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.*

They did for him what they did for others who were crucified, they gave him myrrh wine, as a stupefying draught; "but he received it not." He came to suffer, and he would bear even to the end the full tale of his suffering.

24—27. *And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.*

They gave him the place of eminence, as if he were a greater offender than either of the two thieves.

28. *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

Sinners to the right of him, sinners to the left of him, sinners all round him, compassed about with those who sinned in the very highest degree by putting him to death: "He was numbered with the transgressors." Oh, that sweet word! It is the hope of transgressors now that he was counted with them, and for his sake all the benefactions of heaven now descend upon transgressors who accept him as their Substitute and Saviour.

29. *And they that passed by railed on him,*

Not only those who sat down to gloat their cruel eyes upon his miseries, but even the passers-by, "They that passed by, railed on him,"—

29, 30. *Wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.*

He never said he would destroy the literal temple. He did, however, say concerning the temple of his body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," and he did raise it up in three days after they had destroyed it.

31. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.*

What they said in bitter scorn was true; for mighty love had bound his hands for self-salvation. Infinite in love, found guilty of excess of love to men, "He saved others; himself he could not save."

32, 33. *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.*

A supernatural darkness, which could not have occurred according to the laws of nature. It did, as it were, "set a tabernacle for the sun,"—the Sun of Righteousness was canopied a while in darkness, that no longer might those horrible eyes gaze upon his terrible anguish.

34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

There was a denser darkness over his spirit than was over all the land, and out of that darkness came this cry of agony.

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

Ah, me! This was either a cruel jest upon our Saviour's prayer, or an utter misapprehension of it.

36. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.*

Jesus did receive this vinegar, and so fulfilled Ps. lxxix. 21: "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

37, 38. *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

Even as the flesh of Christ, which is the veil of the Incarnate God, was rent, so now was the veil of mystery taken away. The temple in her sorrow rent her veil. The old ceremonial law passed away with this token of grief by the rending of the veil. It was a strong, I might say, a massive veil; it could not have been rent by any ordinary means; but when the hand of God takes hold upon the veil of Jewish types, it readily rends, and into the innermost mystery of the holy of holies we may gaze, yea, and through it we may enter.

39. *And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Convinced by the cross. Oh, the triumphs of Christ! The last word he speaks won this testimony from the centurion in charge of the crucifixion.

Now we will read part of Luke's narrative.

Luke xxiii. Verses 27—31. *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

Our Saviour, even amidst the greatest sufferings, seemed almost to forget

them in the deep sympathy that he had for the people around him. He pictured in his mind's eye that awful siege of Jerusalem. Who can read it, as Josephus describes it, without feeling the deepest horror? Oh, the misery of the women and of the children in that dreadful day when the zealots turned against each other within the city, and fought to the death, and when the Roman soldiery, pitiless as wolves, at last stormed the place! Truly did the Saviour say of it that there should be no day like to it; neither was there. It was the concentration of human misery, and our Lord wept because he foresaw what it would be, and he bade these poor women reserve their tears for those awful sorrows.

32, 33 *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

O blessed Master they did not spare thee any scorn! There was no mode of expressing their contempt which their malignity did not invent. Truly, "he was numbered with the transgressors." You could not count the three sufferers on Calvary without counting him; he was so completely numbered with the others that he must be reckoned as one of them.

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

It was all that he could say in their favour, and he did say that. If there is anything to be said in thy favour, O my fellow-sinner, Christ will say it; and if there is nothing good in thee that his eyes can light upon, he will pray on his own account, "Father, forgive them for my sake."

34. *And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

His garments were the executioners' perquisites; pitilessly they took them from him, and left him naked in his shameful sorrow.

35. *And the people stood beholding.*

There was no pity in their eyes. No one of them turned away his face because he could not look upon so disgraceful a deed.

35. *And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*

I have already reminded you that there was a deep truth hidden away in what these cruel mockers said, for Jesus must give himself up as a ransom if we were to be redeemed.

36—38. *And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,*

For these were the three languages known to the throng, and Pilate invited them all to read in "Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,"—

38, 39. *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

Poor man; even though he is dying a felon's death, he must be in the swim with the multitude, he must keep in with the fashion, so strong, so powerful, is the popular current with all mankind.

40—42. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

It was strange that Christ should find a friend dying on the cross by his

side. Nobody else spoke to him about a kingdom. I am afraid that even his former followers began to think that it was all a delusion; but this dying thief cheers the heart of Jesus by the mention of a kingdom, and by making a request to him concerning that kingdom even when the King was in his death agony.

43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

The Master, you see, uses his old phraseology. In his preaching, he had been accustomed to say, "Verily, verily," and here he is, even on the cross, the same Preacher still, for there was such assurance, such confidence, such verity, in all his words, that he never had to alter his style of speaking. "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Well does our poet put it,—

"He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree, and bleeds and groans,"

He was distributing these crowns and thrones even while hanging on the tree. "Tell it out among the nations that the Lord reigneth from the tree," may not be an exact translation of the Psalm, but it is true, Psalm or no Psalm.

44. *And it was about the sixth hour,*

About noon, when the sun was at its height.

44. *And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.*

Three o'clock in the afternoon.

45. *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*

As if the great light of heaven and the pattern of heavenly things were both disturbed. The sun puts on mourning, and the temple rends her veil in horror at the awful deed enacted on the cross.

46. *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father,*

Is it not sweet to see how Jesus begins and ends his prayers on the cross with "Father"?

46—48. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.*

A strange ending to that day, was it not? The three hours' darkness and the death-cry of the Christ had not converted them, but it had convicted them of sin. They felt that a great and heinous crime had been committed; and, though they had come together as to a mere show or sight, they went away from the spectacle impressed as they had never been before: "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

49. *And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.*

In these doings on Calvary you and I have a share,—in their guilt, or else in their merit. Oh, that we may not be condemned with those who were guilty of his death, but may we be cleansed by that precious blood which puts away the sin of all who believe on him!

CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 3RD, 1892,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 5th, 1890.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—
Luke xxiii. 34.

WHAT tenderness we have here; what self-forgetfulness; what almighty love! Jesus did not say to those who crucified him, "Begone!" One such word, and they must have all fled. When they came to take him in the garden, they went backward, and fell to the ground, when he spoke but a short sentence; and now that he is on the cross, a single syllable would have made the whole company fall to the ground, or flee away in fright.

Jesus says not a word in his own defence. When he prayed to his Father, he might justly have said, "Father, note what they do to thy beloved Son. Judge them for the wrong they do to him who loves them, and who has done all he can for them." But there is no prayer against them in the words that Jesus utters. It was written of old, by the prophet Isaiah, "He made intercession for the transgressors;" and here it is fulfilled. He pleads for his murderers, "Father, forgive them."

He does not utter a single word of upbraiding. He does not say, "Why do ye this? Why pierce the hands that fed you? Why nail the feet that followed after you in mercy? Why mock the Man who loved to bless you?" No; not a word even of gentle upbraiding, much less of anything like a curse. "Father, forgive them." You notice, Jesus does not say, "I forgive them," but you may read that between the lines. He says that all the more because he does not say it in words. But he has laid aside his majesty, and is fastened to the cross; and therefore he takes the humble position of a suppliant, rather than the more lofty place of one who had power to forgive. How often, when men say, "I forgive you," is there a kind of selfishness about it! At any rate, self is asserted in the very act of forgiving. Jesus takes the place of a pleader, a pleader for those who were committing murder upon himself. Blessed be his name!

No. 2,263.

This word of the cross we shall use to-night, and we shall see if we cannot gather something from it for our instruction; for, though we were not there, and we did not actually put Jesus to death, yet we really caused his death, and we, too, crucified the Lord of glory; and his prayer for us was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I am not going to handle this text so much by way of exposition, as by way of experience. I believe there are many here, to whom these words will be very appropriate. This will be our line of thought. First, *we were in measure ignorant*; secondly, *we confess that this ignorance is no excuse*; thirdly, *we bless our Lord for pleading for us*; and fourthly, *we now rejoice in the pardon we have obtained*. May the Holy Spirit graciously help us in our meditation!

I. Looking back upon our past experience, let me say, first, that WE WERE IN MEASURE IGNORANT. We who have been forgiven, we who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, we once sinned, in a great measure, through ignorance. Jesus says, "They know not what they do." Now, I shall appeal to you, brothers and sisters, when you lived under the dominion of Satan, and served yourselves and sin, was there not a measure of ignorance in it? You can truly say, as we said in the hymn we sang just now,—

"Alas! I knew not what I did."

It is true, first, that we were ignorant of *the awful meaning of sin*. We began to sin as children; we knew that it was wrong, but we did not know all that sin meant. We went on to sin as young men; peradventure we plunged into much wickedness. We knew it was wrong; but we did not see the end from the beginning. It did not appear to us as rebellion against God. We did not think that we were presumptuously defying God, setting at naught his wisdom, defying his power, deriding his love, spurning his holiness; yet we were doing all that. There is an abysmal depth in sin. You cannot see to the bottom of it. When we rolled sin under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we did not know all the terrible ingredients compounded in that deadly bittersweet. We were in a measure ignorant of the tremendous crime we committed when we dared to live in rebellion against God. So far, I think, you go with me.

We did not know, at that time, *God's great love to us*. I did not know that he had chosen me from before the foundation of the world; I never dreamed of that. I did not know that Christ stood for me as my Substitute, to redeem me from among men. I did not know that he had espoused me unto himself in righteousness and in faithfulness, to be one with him for ever. You, dear friends, who now know the love of Christ, did not understand it then. You did not know that you were sinning against eternal love, against infinite compassion, against a distinguishing love such as God had fixed on you from eternity. So far, we knew not what we did.

I think, too, that we did not know all that we were doing in *our rejection of Christ, and putting him to grief*. He came to us in our youth; and impressed by a sermon we began to tremble, and to seek his face; but we were decoyed back to the world, and we refused Christ. Our

mother's tears, our father's prayers, our teacher's admonitions, often moved us; but we were very stubborn, and we rejected Christ. We did not know that, in that rejection, we were virtually putting him away and crucifying him. We were denying his Godhead, or else we should have worshipped him. We were denying his love, or else we should have yielded to him. We were practically, in every act of sin, taking the hammer and the nails, and fastening Christ to the cross; but we did not know it. Perhaps, if we had known it, we should not have crucified the Lord of glory. We did know we were doing wrong; but we did not know all the wrong that we were doing.

Nor did we know fully *the meaning of our delays*. We hesitated; we were on the verge of conversion; we went back, and turned again to our old follies. We were hardened, Christless, prayerless still; and each one of us said, "Oh, I am only waiting a little while till I have fulfilled my present engagements, till I am a little older, till I have seen a little more of the world!" The fact is, we were refusing Christ, and choosing the pleasures of sin instead of him; and every hour of delay was an hour of crucifying Christ, grieving his Spirit, and choosing this harlot world in the place of the lovely and ever-blessed Christ. We did not know that.

I think we may add one thing more. *We did not know the meaning of our self-righteousness*. We used to think, some of us, that we had a righteousness of our own. We had been to church regularly, or we had been to the meeting-house whenever it was open. We were christened; we were confirmed; or, peradventure, we rejoiced that we never had either of those things done to us. Thus, we put our confidence in ceremonies, or the absence of ceremonies. We said our prayers; we read a chapter in the Bible night and morning; we did—oh, I do not know what we did not do! But there we rested; we were righteous in our own esteem. We had not any particular sin to confess, nor any reason to lie in the dust before the throne of God's majesty. We were about as good as we could be; and we did not know that we were even then perpetrating the highest insult upon Christ; for, if we were not sinners, why did Christ die; and, if we had a righteousness of our own which was good enough, why did Christ come here to work out a righteousness for us? We made out Christ to be a superfluity, by considering that we were good enough without resting in his atoning sacrifice. Ah, we did not think we were doing that! We thought we were pleasing God by our religiousness, by our outward performances, by our ecclesiastical correctness; but all the while we were setting up anti-Christ in the place of Christ. We were making out that Christ was not wanted; we were robbing him of his office and glory! Alas! Christ could say of us, with regard to all these things, "They know not what they do." I want you to look quietly at the time past wherein you served sin, and just see whether there was not a darkness upon your mind, a blindness in your spirit, so that you did not know what you did.

II. Well now, secondly, WE CONFESS THAT THIS IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE. Our Lord might urge it as a plea; but we never could. We did not know what we did, and so we were not guilty to the fullest possible extent; but we were guilty enough, therefore let us own it.

For first, remember, *the law never allows this as a plea*. In our own English law, a man is supposed to know what the law is. If he breaks it, it is no excuse to plead that he did not know it. It may be regarded by a judge as some extenuation; but the law allows nothing of the kind. God gives us the law, and we are bound to keep it. If I erred through not knowing the law, still it was a sin. Under the Mosaic law, there were sins of ignorance, and for these there were special offerings. The ignorance did not blot out the sin. That is clear in my text; for, if ignorance rendered an action no longer sinful, then why should Christ say, "Father, forgive them"? But he does; he asks for mercy for what is sin, even though the ignorance in some measure be supposed to mitigate the criminality of it.

But, dear friends, *we might have known*. If we did not know, it was because we would not know. There was the preaching of the Word; but we did not care to hear it. There was this blessed Book; but we did not care to read it. If you and I had sat down, and looked at our conduct by the light of Holy Scripture, we might have known much more of the evil of sin, and much more of the love of Christ, and much more of the ingratitude which is possible in refusing Christ, and not coming to him.

In addition to that, *we did not think*. "Oh, but," you say, "young people never do think!" But young people should think. If there is anybody who need not think, it is the old man, whose day is nearly over. If he does think, he has but a very short time in which to improve; but the young have all their life before them. If I were a carpenter, and had to make a box, I should not think about it after I had made the box; I should think, before I began to cut my timber, what sort of box it was to be. In every action, a man thinks before he begins, or else he is a fool. A young man ought to think more than anybody else, for now he is, as it were, making his box. He is beginning his life-plan; he should be the most thoughtful of all men. Many of us, who are now Christ's people, would have known much more about our Lord if we had given him more careful consideration in our earlier days. A man will consider about taking a wife, he will consider about taking a business, he will consider about buying a horse or a cow; but he will not consider about the claims of Christ, and the claims of the Most High God; and this renders his ignorance wilful, and inexcusable.

Beside that, dear friends, although we have confessed to ignorance, *in many sins we did know a great deal*. Come, let me quicken your memories. There were times when you knew that such an action was wrong, when you started back from it. You looked at the gain it would bring you, and you sold your soul for that price, and deliberately did what you were well aware was wrong. Are there not some here, saved by Christ, who must confess that, at times, they did violence to their conscience? They did despite to the Spirit of God, quenched the light of heaven, drove the Spirit away from them, distinctly knowing what they were doing. Let us bow before God in the silence of our hearts, and own to all this. We hear the Master say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us add our own tears as we say, "And forgive us, also, because in some

things we did know; in all things we might have known; but we were ignorant for want of thought, which thought was a solemn duty which we ought to have rendered to God."

One thing more I will say on this head. When a man is ignorant, and does not know what he ought to do, what should he do? Well, he should do nothing till he does know. But here is the mischief of it, that *when we did not know, yet we chose to do the wrong thing*. If we did not know, why did we not choose the right thing? But, being in the dark, we never turned to the right; but always blundered to the left, from sin to sin. Does not this show us how depraved our hearts are? Though we are seeking to be right, when we are let alone, we go wrong of ourselves. Leave a child alone; leave a man alone; leave a tribe alone without teaching and instruction; what comes of it? Why, the same as when you leave a field alone. It never, by any chance, produces wheat or barley. Leave it alone, and there are rank weeds, and thorns, and briars, showing that the natural set of the soil is towards producing that which is worthless. O friends, confess the innate evil of your hearts as well as the evil of your lives, in that, when you did not know, yet, having a perverse instinct, you chose the evil, and refused the good; and, when you did not know enough of Christ, and did not think enough of him to know whether you ought to have him or not, you would not come unto him that you might have life. You needed light; but you shut your eyes to the sun. You were thirsty; but you would not drink of the living spring; and so your ignorance, though it was there, was a criminal ignorance, which you must confess before the Lord. Oh, come ye to the cross, ye who have been there before, and have lost your burden there! Come and confess your guilt over again; and clasp that cross afresh, and look to him who bled upon it, and praise his dear name that he once prayed for you, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Now, I am going a step further. We were in a measure ignorant; but we confess that that measurable ignorance was no excuse.

III. Now, thirdly, WE BLESS OUR LORD FOR PLEADING FOR US.

Do you notice when it was that Jesus pleaded? It was, *while they were crucifying him*. They had just driven in the nails, they had lifted up the cross, and dashed it down into its socket, and dislocated all his bones, so that he could say, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint." Ah, dear friends, it was then that, instead of a cry or a groan, this dear Son of God said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They did not ask forgiveness for themselves; Jesus asked forgiveness for them. Their hands were imbrued in his blood; and it was then, even then, that he prayed for them. Let us think of the great love wherewith he loved us, even while we were yet sinners, when we rioted in sin, when we drank it down as the ox drinketh down water. Even then he prayed for us. "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Bless his name to-night. He prayed for you when you did not pray for yourself. He prayed for you when you were crucifying him.

Then think of his plea, *he pleads his Sonship*. He says, "Father,

6 forgive them." He was the Son of God, and he puts his divine Sonship into the scale on our behalf. He seems to say, "Father, as I am thy Son, grant me this request, and pardon these rebels. Father, forgive them." The filial rights of Christ were very great. He was the Son of God, not as we are, by adoption, but by nature; by eternal filiation, he was the Son of the Highest, "Light of light, very God of very God", the second Person in the Divine Trinity; and he puts that Sonship here before God, and says, "Father, Father, forgive them." Oh, the power of that word from the Son's lip when he is wounded, when he is in agony, when he is dying! He says, "Father, Father, grant my one request; O Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" and the great Father bows his awful head, in token that the petition is granted.

Then notice, that Jesus here, silently, but really *pleads his sufferings*. The attitude of Christ when he prayed this prayer is very noteworthy. His hands were stretched upon the transverse beam; his feet were fastened to the upright tree; and there he pleaded. Silently his hands and feet were pleading, and his agonized body from every sinew and muscle pleaded with God. His sacrifice was presented there before the Father's face; not yet complete, but in his will complete; and so it is his cross that takes up the plea, "Father, forgive them." O blessed Christ! It is thus that we have been forgiven, for his Sonship and his cross have pleaded with God, and have prevailed on our behalf.

2 I love this prayer, also, because of the *indistinctness* of it. It is "Father, forgive them." He does not say, "Father, forgive the soldiers who have nailed me here." He includes them. Neither does he say, "Father, forgive the people who are beholding me." He means them. Neither does he say, "Father, forgive sinners in ages to come who will sin against me." But he means them. Jesus does not mention them by any accusing name: "Father, forgive my enemies. Father, forgive my murderers." No, there is no word of accusation upon those dear lips. "Father, forgive them." Now into that pronoun "them" I feel that I can crawl. Can you get in there? Oh, by a humble faith, appropriate the cross of Christ by trusting in it; and get into that big little word "them"! It seems like a chariot of mercy that has come down to earth, into which a man may step, and it shall bear him up to heaven. "Father, forgive them."

Notice, also, what it was that Jesus asked for; to omit that, would be to leave out the very essence of his prayer. *He asked for full absolution for his enemies*: "Father, forgive them. Do not punish them; forgive them. Do not remember their sin; forgive it, blot it out; throw it into the depths of the sea. Remember it not, my Father. Mention it not against them any more for ever. Father, forgive them." Oh, blessed prayer, for the forgiveness of God is broad and deep! When man forgives, he leaves the remembrance of the wrong behind; but when God pardons, he says, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." It is this that Christ asked for you and me long before we had any repentance, or any faith; and in answer to that prayer, we were brought to feel our sin, we were brought to confess it, and to believe in him; and

now, glory be to his name, we can bless him for having pleaded for us, and obtained the forgiveness of all our sins.

IV. I come now to my last remark, which is this, **WE NOW REJOICE IN THE PARDON WE HAVE OBTAINED.**

Have you obtained pardon? Is this your song?

“Now, oh joy! my sins are pardon'd,
Now I can, and do believe.”

I have a letter, in my pocket, from a man of education and standing, who has been an agnostic; he says that he was a sarcastic agnostic, and he writes praising God, and invoking every blessing upon my head for bringing him to the Saviour's feet. He says, “I was without happiness for this life, and without hope for the next.” I believe that that is a truthful description of many an unbeliever. What hope is there for the world to come apart from the cross of Christ? The best hope such a man has is that he may die the death of a dog, and there may be an end of him. What is the hope of the Romanist when he comes to die? I feel so sorry for many devout and earnest friends, for I do not know what their hope is. They do not hope to go to heaven yet, at any rate; some purgatorial pains must be endured first. Ah, this is a poor, poor faith to die on, to have such a hope as that to trouble your last thoughts. I do not know of any religion but that of Christ Jesus which tells us of sin pardoned, absolutely pardoned. Now, listen. Our teaching is not that, when you come to die, you may, perhaps, find out that it is all right, but, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” He has it now, and he knows it, and he rejoices in it. So I come back to the last head of my discourse, we rejoice in the pardon Christ has obtained for us. We are pardoned. I hope that the larger portion of this audience can say, “By the grace of God, we know that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

Pardon has come to us through Christ's plea. Our hope lies in the plea of Christ, and specially in his death. If Jesus paid my debt, and he did if I am a believer in him, then I am out of debt. If Jesus bore the penalty of my sin, and he did if I am a believer, then there is no penalty for me to pay, for we can say to him,—

“Complete atonement thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whate'er thy people owed:
Nor can his wrath on me take place,
If shelter'd in thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with thy blood.

“If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine:
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.”

If Christ has borne my punishment, I shall never bear it. Oh, what joy there is in this blessed assurance! Your hope that you are

pardoned lies in this, that Jesus died. Those dear wounds of his bleed life for you.

We praise him for our pardon because *we do know now what we did*. Oh, brethren, I know not how much we ought to love Christ, because we sinned against him so grievously! Now we know that sin is "exceeding sinful." Now we know that sin crucified Christ. Now we know that we stabbed our heavenly Lover to his heart. We slew, with ignominious death, our best and dearest Friend and Benefactor. We know that now; and we could almost weep tears of blood to think that we ever treated him as we did. But it is all forgiven, all gone. Oh, let us bless that dear Son of God, who has put away even such sins as ours! We feel them more now than ever before. We know they are forgiven, and our grief is because of the pain that the purchase of our forgiveness cost our Saviour. We never knew what our sins really were till we saw him in a bloody sweat. We never knew the crimson hue of our sins till we read our pardon written in crimson lines with his precious blood. Now, we see our sin, and yet we do not see it; for God has pardoned it, blotted it out, cast it behind his back for ever.

Henceforth *ignorance*, such as we have described, *shall be hateful to us*. Ignorance of Christ and eternal things shall be hateful to us. If, through ignorance, we have sinned, we will have done with that ignorance. We will be students of his Word. We will study that masterpiece of all the sciences, the knowledge of Christ crucified. We will ask the Holy Ghost to drive far from us the ignorance that gendereth sin. God grant that we may not fall into sins of ignorance any more; but may we be able to say, "I know whom I have believed; and henceforth I will seek more knowledge, till I comprehend, with all saints, what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ, and know the love of God, which passeth knowledge"!

I put in a practical word here. If you rejoice that you are pardoned, *show your gratitude by your imitation of Christ*. There was never before such a plea as this, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Plead like that for others. Has anybody been injuring you? Are there persons who slander you? Pray to-night, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us always render good for evil, blessing for cursing; and when we are called to suffer through the wrong-doing of others, let us believe that they would not act as they do if it were not because of their ignorance. Let us pray for them; and make their very ignorance the plea for their forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I want you also to think of the millions of London just now. See those miles of streets, pouring out their children this evening; but look at those public-houses with the crowds streaming in and out. Go down our streets by moonlight. See what I almost blush to tell. Follow men and women, too, to their homes, and be this your prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." That silver bell—keep it always ringing. What did I say? That silver bell? Nay, it is the *golden* bell upon the priest's garments. Wear it

on your garments, ye priests of God, and let it always ring out its golden note, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." If I can set all God's saints imitating Christ with such a prayer as this, I shall not have spoken in vain.

Brethren, I see *reason for hope in the very ignorance that surrounds us*. I see hope for this poor city of ours, hope for this poor country, hope for Africa, China, and India. "They know not what they do." Here is a strong argument in their favour, for they are more ignorant than we were. They know less of the evil of sin, and less of the hope of eternal life, than we do. Send up this petition, ye people of God! Heap your prayers together with cumulative power, send up this fiery shaft of prayer, straight to the heart of God, while Jesus from his throne shall add his prevalent intercession, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

If there be any unconverted people here, and I know that there are some, we will mention them in our private devotion, as well as in the public assembly; and we will pray for them in words like these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XXIII. 33—46. JOHN XIX. 25—30.

We have often read the story of our Saviour's sufferings; but we cannot read it too often. Let us, therefore, once again repair to "the place which is called Calvary." As we just now sang,—

"Come, let us stand beneath the cross;
So may the blood from out his side
Fall gently on us drop by drop;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified."

We will read, first, Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion and death.

Luke xxiii. Verse 33. *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

They gave Jesus the place of dishonour. Reckoning him to be the worst criminal of the three, they put him between the other two. They heaped upon him the utmost scorn which they could give to a malefactor; and in so doing they unconsciously honoured him. Jesus always deserves the chief place wherever he is. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. He is King of sufferers as well as King of saints.

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

How startled they must have been to hear such words from one who was about to be put to death for a supposed crime! The men that drove the nails, the men that lifted up the tree, must have started back with amazement when they heard Jesus talk to God as his Father, and pray for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Did ever Roman legionary hear such words before? I should say not. They were so distinctly and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of Rome. There it was blow for blow; only in the case of Jesus they gave blows where none had been received. The crushing cruelty of the Roman must have been startled indeed at such words as these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

34, 35. *And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.*

The gambling soldiers little dreamed that they were fulfilling the Scriptures while they were raffling for the raiment of the illustrious Sufferer on the cross; yet so it was. In the twenty-second Psalm, which so fully sets forth our Saviour's sufferings, and which he probably repeated while he hung on the tree, David wrote, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." "And the people stood beholding," gazing, looking on at the cruel spectacle. You and I would not have done that; there is a public sentiment which has trained us to hate the sight of cruelty, especially of deadly cruelty to one of our own race; but these people thought that they did no harm when they "stood beholding." They also were thus fulfilling the Scriptures; for the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second Psalm says, "They look and stare upon me."

35. *And the rulers also with them derided him,
Laughed at him, made him the object of coarse jests.*

35, 36. *Saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,*

In mockery, not giving it to him, as they did later on, in mercy; but in mockery, pretending to present him with weak wine, such as they drank.

37. *And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.*

I fancy the scorn that they threw into their taunt: "If thou be the king of the Jews;" that was a bit of their own. "Save thyself;" that they borrowed from the rulers. Sometimes a scoffer or a mocker cannot exhibit all the bitterness that is in his heart except by using borrowed terms, as these soldiers did.

38. *And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

John tells us that Pilate wrote this title, and that the chief priests tried in vain to get him to alter it. It was written in the three current languages of the time, so that the Greek, the Roman, and the Jew might alike understand who he was who was thus put to death. Pilate did not know as much about Christ as we do, or he might have written, *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS, AND OF THE GENTILES, TOO.*

39. *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

He, too, borrows his speech from the rulers who derided Christ, only putting the words "and us" as a bit of originality. "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

40, 41. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

A fine testimony to Christ: "This man hath done nothing amiss;" nothing unbecoming, nothing out of order, nothing criminal, certainly; but nothing even "amiss." This testimony was well spoken by this dying thief.

42—46. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*

He yielded his life. He did not die, as we have to do, because our appointed time has come, but willingly the great Sacrifice parted with his life: "He gave up the ghost." He was a willing sacrifice for guilty men.

Now let us see what John says concerning these hours of agony, these hours of triumph.

John xix. Verse 25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

Last at the cross, first at the sepulchre. No woman's lip betrayed her Lord; no woman's hand ever smote him; their eyes wept for him; they gazed upon him with pitying awe and love. God bless the Marys! When we see so many of them about the cross, we feel that we honour the very name of Mary.

26. *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

Sad, sad spectacle! Now was fulfilled the word of Simeon, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Did the Saviour mean, as he gave a glance to John, "Woman, thou art losing one Son; but yonder stands another, who will be a son to thee in my absence"? "Woman, behold thy son!"

27. *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!*

"Take her as thy mother, stand thou in my place, care for her as I have

cared for her." Those who love Christ best shall have the honour of taking care of his church and of his poor. Never say of any poor relative or friend, the widow or the fatherless, "They are a great burden to me." Oh, no! Say, "They are a great honour to me; my Lord has entrusted them to my care." John thought so; let us think so. Jesus selected the disciple he loved best to take his mother under his care. He selects those whom he loves best to-day, and puts his poor people under their wing. Take them gladly, and treat them well.

27. *And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

You expected him to do it, did you not? He loved his Lord so well.

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

There was a prophecy to that effect in the Psalms, and he must needs fulfil that. Think of a dying man prayerfully going through the whole of the Scriptures, and carefully fulfilling all that is there written concerning him: "That the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith, I thirst."

29, 30. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,*

For he did receive it. It was a weak kind of wine, commonly drunk by the soldiery. This is not that mixed potion which he refused, wine mingled with myrrh, which was intended to stupefy the dying in their pains: "When he had tasted thereof, he would not drink;" for he would not be stupefied. He came to suffer to the bitter end the penalty of sin; and he would not have his sorrow mitigated; but when this slight refreshment was offered to him, he received it. Having just expressed his human weakness by saying, "I thirst," he now manifests his all-sufficient strength by crying, with a loud voice, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke all testify.

30. *He said, It is finished:*

What "it" was it that was finished? I will not attempt to expound it. It is the biggest "it" that ever was. Turn it over, and you will see that it will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow, till it fills the whole earth: "It is finished."

30. *And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

He did not give up the ghost, and then bow his head because he was dead; but he bowed his head as though in the act of worship, or as leaning it down upon his Father's bosom, and then he gave up the ghost.

Thus have we had two gospel pictures of our dying Lord. May we remember them, and learn the lessons they are intended to teach!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—561, 279, 278.

THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24TH, 1869, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”—
[Luke xxiii. 34.]

OUR Lord was at that moment enduring the first pains of crucifixion; the executioners had just then driven the nails through his hands and feet. He must have been, moreover, greatly depressed, and brought into a condition of extreme weakness by the agony of the night in Gethsemane, and by the scourgings and cruel mockings which he had endured all through the morning, from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and the Prætorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past, nor the pain of the present, could prevent him from continuing in prayer. The Lamb of God was silent to men, but he was not silent to God. Dumb as a sheep before her shearers, he had not a word to say in his own defence to man, but he continues in his heart crying unto his Father, and no pain and no weakness can silence his holy supplications. Beloved, what an example our Lord herein presents to us! Let us continue in prayer so long as our heart beats; let no excess of suffering drive us away from the throne of grace, but rather let it drive us closer to it.

“Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live.”

To cease from prayer is to renounce the consolations which our case requires. Under all distractions of spirit, and overwhelmings of heart, great God, help us still to pray, and never from the mercy-seat may our footsteps be driven by despair. Our blessed Redeemer persevered in prayer even when the cruel iron rent his tender nerves, and blow after blow of the hammer jarred his whole frame with anguish; and this perseverance may be accounted for by the fact that he was so in the habit of prayer that he could not cease from it; he had acquired a mighty velocity of intercession which forbade him to pause. Those long nights upon the cold mountain side, those many days which had been spent in solitude, those perpetual ejaculations which he was wont to dart up to heaven, all these had formed in him a habit so powerful, that the severest torments could not stay its force. Yet it was more than habit. Our Lord was baptised in the spirit of prayer; he lived in

it, it lived in him, it had come to be an element of his nature. He was like that precious spice, which, being bruised, doth not cease to give forth its perfume, but rather yieldeth it all the more abundantly because of the blows of the pestle, its fragrance being no outward and superficial quality, but an inward virtue essential to its nature, which the pounding in the mortar did but fetch from it, causing it to reveal its secret soul of sweetness. So Jesus prays, even as a bundle of myrrh gives forth its smell, or as birds sing because they cannot do otherwise. Prayer enwrapped his very soul as with a garment, and his heart went forth in such array. I repeat it, let this be our example—never, under any circumstances, however severe the trial, or depressing the difficulty, let us cease from prayer.

Observe, further, that our Lord, in the prayer before us, remains in the vigour of faith as to his Sonship. The extreme trial to which he now submitted himself could not prevent his holding fast his Sonship. His prayer begins, "Father." It was not without meaning that he taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," for our prevalence in prayer will much depend upon our confidence in our relationship to God. Under great losses and crosses, one is apt to think that God is not dealing with us as a father with a child, but rather as a severe judge with a condemned criminal; but the cry of Christ, when he is brought to an extremity which we shall never reach, betrays no faltering in the spirit of sonship. In Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, his bitterest cry commenced with, "*My Father,*" asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from him; he pleaded with the Lord as his Father, even as he over and over again had called him on that dark and doleful night. Here, again, in this, the first of his seven expiring cries, it is "Father." O that the Spirit that makes us cry, "Abba, Father," may never cease his operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, "If thou be the Son of God;" or if the tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which crieth, "Abba, Father," repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live; but never may we become captives to the spirit of bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in his adoption.

2 More remarkable, however, is the fact that our Lord's prayer to his Father was not for himself. He continued on the cross to pray for himself, it is true, and his lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" shows the personality of his prayer; but the first of the seven great cries on the cross has scarcely even an indirect reference to himself. It is, "Father, forgive *them.*" The petition is altogether for others, and though there is an allusion to the cruelties which they were exercising upon himself, yet it is remote; and you will observe, he does not say, "I forgive them"—that is taken for granted—he seems to lose sight of the fact that they were doing any wrong to himself, it is the wrong which they were doing to the Father that is on his mind, the insult which they are paying to the Father, in the person of the Son; he thinks not of himself at all. The

cry, "Father, forgive them," is altogether unselfish. He himself is, in the prayer, as though he were not; so complete is his self-annihilation, that he loses sight of himself and his woes. My brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of man when he might have rigidly confined his prayer to himself, without any one cavilling thereat, surely it was when he was beginning his death throes. We could not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first, and even his last and all his prayers, were for support under so arduous a trial. But see, the Lord Jesus began his prayer by pleading for others. See ye not what a great heart is here revealed! What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how divine! Was there ever such a one before him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as his first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you also, my brethren. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Love your neighbours as yourselves, and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow him, treading in his steps.

There is, however, a crowning jewel in this diadem of glorious love. The Sun of Righteousness sets upon Calvary in a wondrous splendour; but amongst the bright colours which glorify his departure, there is this one—the prayer was not alone for others, but it was for his cruellest enemies. His enemies, did I say, there is more than that to be considered. It was not a prayer for enemies who had done him an ill deed years before, but for those who were there and then murdering him. Not in cold blood did the Saviour pray, after he had forgotten the injury, and could the more easily forgive it, but while the first red drops of blood were spurting on the hands which drove the nails; while yet the hammer was bestained with crimson gore, his blessed mouth poured out the fresh warm prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I say, not that that prayer was confined to his immediate executioners. I believe that it was a far-reaching prayer, which included Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles—yea, the whole human race in a certain sense, since we were all concerned in that murder; but certainly the immediate persons, upon whom that prayer was poured like precious nard, were those who there and then were committing the brutal act of fastening him to the accursed tree. How sublime is this prayer if viewed in such a light! It stands alone upon a mount of solitary glory. No other had been prayed like it before. It is true, Abraham, and Moses, and the prophets had prayed for the wicked; but not for wicked men who had pierced their hands and feet. It is true, that Christians have since that day offered the same prayer, even as Stephen cried, "Lay not this sin to their charge;" and many a martyr has made his last words at the stake words of pitying intercession for his persecutors; but you know where they learnt this, let me ask you where did *he* learn it? Was not Jesus the divine original? He learnt it nowhere; it leaped up from his own Godlike nature. A compassion peculiar to himself dictated this originality of prayer; the inward royalty of his love suggested to him so memorable an intercession, which may serve us for a pattern, but of which no pattern had existed before. I

feel as though I could better kneel before my Lord's cross at this moment than stand in this pulpit to talk to you. I want to adore him; I worship him in heart for that prayer; if I knew nothing else of him but this one prayer, I must adore him, for that one matchless plea for mercy convinces me most overwhelmingly of the deity of him who offered it, and fills my heart with reverent affection.

Thus have I introduced to you our Lord's first vocal prayer upon the cross. I shall now, if we are helped by God's Holy Spirit, make some use of it. First, we shall view it as *illustrative of our Saviour's intercession*; secondly, we shall regard the text as *instructive of the church's work*; thirdly, we shall consider it as *suggestive to the unconverted*.

I. First, my dear brethren, let us look at this very wonderful text as **ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION.**

He prayed for his enemies then, he is praying for his enemies now; the past on the cross was an earnest of the present on the throne. He is in a higher place, and in a nobler condition, but his occupation is the same; he continues still before the eternal throne to present pleas on the behalf of guilty men, crying, "Father, O forgive them." All his intercession is in a measure like the intercession on Calvary, and Calvary's cries may help us to guess the character of the whole of his intercession above.

The first point in which we may see the character of his intercession is this—it is *most gracious*. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve his prayer. They had done nothing which could call forth from him a benediction as a reward for their endeavours in his service; on the contrary, they were most undeserving persons, who had conspired to put him to death. They had crucified him, crucified him wantonly and malignantly; they were even then taking away his innocent life. His clients were persons who, so far from being meritorious, were utterly undeserving of a single good wish from the Saviour's heart. They certainly never asked him to pray for them—it was the last thought in their minds to say, "Intercede for us, thou dying King! Offer petitions on our behalf, thou Son of God!" I will venture to believe the prayer itself, when they heard it, was either disregarded, and passed over with contemptuous indifference, or perhaps it was caught at as a theme for jest. I admit that it seems to be too severe upon humanity to suppose it possible that such a prayer could have been the theme for laughter, and yet there were other things enacted around the cross which were quite as brutal, and I can imagine that this also might have happened. Yet our Saviour prayed for persons who did not deserve the prayer, but, on the contrary, merited a curse—persons who did not ask for the prayer, and even scoffed at it when they heard it. Even so in heaven there stands the great High Priest, who pleads for guilty men—for *guilty* men, my hearers. There are none on earth that deserve his intercession. He pleads for none on the supposition that they do deserve it. He stands there to plead as the just One on the behalf of the unjust. Not if any man be righteous, but "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Remember, too, that our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked him to plead for them. His elect, while yet dead in trespasses and sins, are the objects of his

compassionate intercessions, and while they even scoff at his gospel, his heart of love is entreating the favour of heaven on their behalf. See, then, beloved, if such be the truth, how sure you are to speed with God who earnestly ask the Lord Jesus Christ to plead for you. Some of you, with many tears and much earnestness, have been beseeching the Saviour to be your advocate? Will he refuse you? Stands it to reason that he can? He pleads for those that reject his pleadings, much more for you who prize them beyond gold. Remember, my dear hearer, if there be nothing good in you, and if there be everything conceivable that is malignant and bad, yet none of these things can be any barrier to prevent Christ's exercising the office of Intercessor for you. Even for you he will plead. Come, put your case into his hands; for you he will find pleas which you cannot discover for yourselves, and he will put the case to God for you as for his murderers, "Father, forgive them."

A second quality of his intercession is this—*its careful spirit*. You notice in the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Our Saviour did, as it were, look his enemies through and through to find something in them that he could urge in their favour; but he could see nothing until his wisely affectionate eye lit upon their ignorance: "they know not what they do." How carefully he surveyed the circumstances, and the characters of those for whom he importuned! Just so it is with him in heaven. Christ is no careless advocate for his people. He knows your precise condition at this moment, and the exact state of your heart with regard to the temptation through which you are passing; more than that, he foresees the temptation which is awaiting you, and in his intercession he takes note of the future event which his prescient eye beholds. "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Oh, the condescending tenderness of our great High Priest! He knows us better than we know ourselves. He understands every secret grief and groaning. You need not trouble yourself about the wording of your prayer, he will put the wording right. And even the understanding as to the exact petition, if you should fail in it, he cannot, for as he knoweth what is the mind of God, so he knoweth what is your mind also. He can spy out some reason for mercy in you which you cannot detect in yourselves, and when it is so dark and cloudy with your soul that you cannot discern a foothold for a plea that you may urge with heaven, the Lord Jesus has the pleas ready framed, and petitions ready drawn up, and he can present them acceptable before the mercy-seat. His intercession, then, you will observe is very gracious, and in the next place it is very thoughtful.

We must next note its *earnestness*. No one doubts who reads these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that they were heaven-piercing in their fervour. Brethren, you are certain, even without a thought, that Christ was terribly in earnest in that prayer. But there is an argument to prove that. Earnest people are usually witty, and quick of understanding, to discover anything which may serve their turn. If you are pleading for life, and an argument for your being spared be asked of you, I will warrant you that you will think of one when no one else might. Now, Jesus was so in earnest for the salvation of his enemies, that he struck upon an argument for

mercy which a less anxious spirit would not have thought of: "They know not what they do." Why, sirs, that was in strictest justice but a scant reason for mercy; and indeed, ignorance, if it be wilful, does not extenuate sin, and yet the ignorance of many who surrounded the cross was a wilful ignorance. They might have known that he was the Lord of glory. Was not Moses plain enough? Had not Esaias been very bold in his speech? Were not the signs and tokens such that one might as well doubt which is the sun in the firmament as the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah? Yet, for all that, the Saviour, with marvellous earnestness and consequent dexterity, turns what might not have been a plea into a plea, and puts it thus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, how mighty are his pleas in heaven, then, in their earnestness! Do not suppose that he is less quick of understanding there, or less intense in the vehemence of his entreaties. No, my brethren, the heart of Christ still labours with the eternal God. He is no slumbering intercessor, but, for Zion's sake, he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, he doth not cease, nor will he, till her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of his intercession in heaven as to its *continuance*, perseverance, and perpetuity. As I remarked before, if our Saviour might have paused from intercessory prayer, it was surely when they fastened him to the tree; when they were guilty of direct acts of deadly violence to his divine person, he might then have ceased to present petitions on their behalf. But sin cannot tie the tongue of our interceding Friend. Oh, what comfort is here! You have sinned, believer, you have grieved his Spirit, but you have not stopped that potent tongue which pleads for you. You have been unfruitful, perhaps, my brother, and like the barren tree, you deserve to be cut down; but your want of fruitfulness has not withdrawn the Intercessor from his place. He interposes at this moment, crying, "Spare it yet another year." Sinner, you have provoked God by long rejecting his mercy and going from bad to worse, but neither blasphemy nor unrighteousness, nor infidelity, shall stay the Christ of God from urging the suit of the very chief of sinners. He lives, and while he lives he pleads; and while there is a sinner upon earth to be saved, there shall be an intercessor in heaven to plead for him. These are but fragments of thought, but they will help you, I hope, to realise the intercession of your great High Priest.

Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like his prayer in heaven, because of its *wisdom*. He seeks the best thing, and that which his clients most need, "Father, forgive them." That was the great point in hand; they wanted most of all there and then forgiveness from God. He does not say, "Father, enlighten them, for they

know not what they do," for mere enlightenment would but have created torture of conscience and hastened on their hell; but he crieth, "Father, forgive;" and while he used his voice, the precious drops of blood which were then distilling from the nail wounds were pleading too, and God heard, and doubtless did forgive. The first mercy which is needful to guilty sinners is forgiven sin. Christ wisely prays for the boon most wanted. It is so in heaven; he pleads wisely and prudently. Let him alone, he knows what to ask for at the divine hand. Go you to the mercy-seat, and pour out your desires as best you can, but when you have done so always put it thus, "O my Lord Jesus, answer no desire of mine if it be not according to thy judgment; and if in aught that I have asked I have failed to seek for what I want, amend my pleading, for thou art infinitely wiser than I." Oh, it is sweet to have a friend at court to perfect our petitions for us before they come unto the great King. I believe that there is never presented to God anything but a perfect prayer now; I mean, that before the great Father of us all, no prayer of his people ever comes up imperfect; there is nothing left out, and there is nothing to be erased; and this, not because their prayers were originally perfect in themselves, but because the Mediator makes them perfect through his infinite wisdom, and they come up before the mercy-seat moulded according to the mind of God himself, and he is sure to grant such prayers.

Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like to his universal intercession in the matter of its *prevalence*. Those for whom he prayed were many of them forgiven. Do you remember that he said to his disciples when he bade them preach, "beginning at Jerusalem," and on that day when Peter stood up with the eleven, and charged the people that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Saviour, three thousand of these persons who were thus justly accused of his crucifixion became believers in him, and were baptised in his name. That was an answer to Jesus' prayer. The priests were at the bottom of our Lord's murder, they were the most guilty; but it is said, "a great company also of the priests believed." Here was another answer to the prayer. Since all men had their share representatively, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the death of Jesus, the gospel was soon preached to the Jews, and within a short time it was preached to the Gentiles also. Was not this prayer, "Father, forgive them," like a stone cast into a lake, forming at first a narrow circle, and then a wider ring, and soon a larger sphere, until the whole lake is covered with circling waves? Such a prayer as this, cast into the whole world, first created a little ring of Jewish converts and of priests, and then a wider circle of such as were beneath the Roman sway; and to-day its circumference is wide as the globe itself, so that tens of thousands are saved through the prevalence of this one intercession

“Father, forgive them.” It is certainly so with him in heaven, he never pleads in vain. With bleeding hands, he yet won the day; with feet fastened to the wood, he was yet victorious; forsaken of God and despised of the people, he was yet triumphant in his pleas; how much more so now the tiara is about his brow, his hand grasps the universal sceptre, and his feet are shod with silver sandals, and he is crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords! If tears and cries out of weakness were omnipotent, even more mighty if possible must be that sacred authority which as the risen Priest he claims when he stands before the Father’s throne to mention the covenant which the Father made with him. O ye trembling believers, trust him with your concerns! Come hither, ye guilty, and ask him to plead for you. O you that cannot pray, come, ask him to intercede for you. Broken hearts and weary heads, and disconsolate bosoms, come ye to him who into the golden censer will put his merits, and then place your prayers with them, so that they shall come up as the smoke of perfume, even as a fragrant cloud into the nostrils of the Lord God of hosts, who will smell a sweet savour, and accept you and your prayers in the Beloved. We have now opened up more than enough sea-room for your meditations at home this afternoon, and, therefore we leave this first point. We have had an illustration in the prayer of Christ on the cross of what his prayers always are in heaven.

II. Secondly, the text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH’S WORK.

As Christ was, so his church is to be in this world. Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister, not to be honoured, but to save others. His church, when she understands her work, will perceive that she is not here to gather to herself wealth or honour, or to seek any temporal aggrandisement and position; she is here unselfishly to live, and if need be, unselfishly to die for the deliverance of the lost sheep, the salvation of lost men. Brethren, Christ’s prayer on the cross I told you was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember himself in it. Such ought to be the church’s life-prayer, the church’s active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but ever for the lost sons of men. Imagine you that churches are formed to maintain ministers? Do you conceive that the church exists in this land merely that so much salary may be given to bishops, and deans, and prebends, and curates, and I know not what? My brethren, it were well if the whole thing were abolished if that were its only aim. The aim of the church is not to provide out-door relief for the younger sons of the nobility; when they have not brains enough to win anyhow else their livelihood, they are stuck into family livings. Churches are not made that men of ready speech may stand up on Sundays and talk, and so win daily bread from their admirers. Nay, there is another end and aim from this. These

places of worship are not built that you may sit here comfortably, and hear something that shall make you pass away your Sundays with pleasure. A church in London which does not exist to do good in the slums, and dens, and kennels of the city, is a church that has no reason to justify its longer existing. A church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood, a church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness, is a church that has no right to be. Not for thyself, O church, dost thou exist, any more than Christ existed for himself. His glory was that he laid aside his glory, and the glory of the church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity, and counts it to be her glory to gather together the outcasts, and her highest honour to seek amid the foulest mire the priceless jewels for which Jesus shed his blood. To rescue souls from hell and lead to God, to hope, to heaven, this is her heavenly occupation. O that the church would always feel this! Let her have her bishops and her preachers, and let them be supported, and let everything be done for Christ's sake decently and in order, but let the end be looked to, namely, the conversion of the wandering, the teaching of the ignorant, the help of the poor, the maintenance of the right, the putting down of the wrong, and the upholding at all hazards of the crown and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the prayer of Christ had a *great spirituality of aim*. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, "Father, *forgive* them." And I believe the church will do well when she recollects that she wrestles not with flesh and blood, nor with principalities and powers, but with spiritual wickedness, and that what she has to dispense is not the law and order by which magistrates may be upheld, or tyrannies pulled down, but the spiritual government by which hearts are conquered to Christ, and judgments are brought into subjection to his truth. I believe that the more the church of God strains after, before God, the forgiveness of sinners, and the more she seeks in her life prayer to teach sinners what sin is, and what the blood of Christ is, and what the hell that must follow if sin be not washed out, and what the heaven is which will be ensured to all those who are cleansed from sin, the more she keeps to this the better. Press forward as one man, my brethren, to secure the root of the matter in the forgiveness of sinners. As to all the evils that afflict humanity, by all means take your share in battling with them; let temperance be maintained, let education be supported; let reforms, political and ecclesiastical, be pushed forward as far as you have the time and effort to spare, but the first business of every Christian man and woman is with the hearts and consciences of men as they stand before the everlasting God. O let nothing turn you aside from your divine errand of mercy to undying

souls. This is your one business. Tell to sinners that sin will damn them, that Christ alone can take away sin, and make this the one passion of your souls, "Father, forgive them, forgive them! Let them know how to be forgiven. Let them be actually forgiven, and let me never rest except as I am the means of bringing sinners to be forgiven, even the guiltiest of them."

Our Saviour's prayer teaches the church that while her spirit should be unselfish, and her aim should be spiritual, *the range of her mission* is to be unlimited. Christ prayed for the wicked, what if I say the most wicked of the wicked, that ribald crew that had surrounded his cross! He prayed for the ignorant. Doth he not say, "They know not what they do"? He prayed for his persecutors; the very persons who were most at enmity with him, lay nearest to his heart. Church of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words; your mission is not to the *élite* and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticise your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching; your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately, not to these I mean alone, though certainly to these as among the rest; but your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched. If no one else cares for these, the church always must, and if there be any who are first in her prayers it should be these who alas! are generally last in our thoughts. The ignorant we ought diligently to consider. It is not enough for the preacher that he preaches so that those instructed from their youth up can understand him; he must think of those to whom the commonest phrases of theological truth are as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue; he must preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension; and if the ignorant many come not to hear him, he must use such means as best he may to induce them, nay, compel them to hear the good news. The gospel is meant also for those who persecute religion; it aims its arrows of love against the hearts of its foes. If there be any whom we should first seek to bring to Jesus, it should be just these who are the farthest off and most opposed to the gospel of Christ. "Father, forgive *them*; if thou dost pardon none besides, yet be pleased to forgive *them*."

So, too, the church should be *earnest* as Christ was; and if she be so, she will be quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with, quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation.

She must be *hopeful* too, and surely no church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the church of this present age. If ignorance be a plea with God, look on the heathen at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah's name. Forgive them, great God, indeed they

know not what they do. If ignorance be some ground for hope, there is hope enough in this great city of London, for have we not around us hundreds of thousands to whom the simplest truths of the gospel would be the greatest novelties? Brethren, it is sad to think that this country should still lie under such a pall of ignorance, but the sting of so dread a fact is blunted with hope when we read the Saviour's prayer aright—it helps us to hope while we cry, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is the church's business to seek after the most fallen and the most ignorant, and to seek them perseveringly. She should never stay her hand from doing good. If the Lord be coming to-morrow, it is no reason why you Christian people should subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort, and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls. If it be true that this world is going to pieces in a fortnight, and that Louis Napoleon is the Apocalyptic beast, or if it be not true, I care not a fig, it makes no difference to my duty, and does not change my service. Let my Lord come when he will, while I labour for him I am ready for his appearing. The business of the church is still to watch for the salvation of souls. If she stood gazing, as modern prophets would have her; if she gave up her mission to indulge in speculative interpretations, she might well be afraid of her Lord's coming; but if she goes about her work, and with incessant toil searches out her Lord's precious jewels, she shall not be ashamed when her Bridegroom cometh.

My time has been much too short for so vast a subject as I have undertaken, but I wish I could speak words that were as loud as thunder, with a sense and earnestness as mighty as the lightning. I would fain excite every Christian here, and kindle in him a right idea of what his work is as a part of Christ's church. My brethren, you must not live to yourselves; the accumulation of money, the bringing up of your children, the building of houses, the earning of your daily bread, all this you may do; but there must be a greater object than this if you are to be Christlike, as you should be, since you are bought with Jesus' blood. Begin to live for others, make it apparent unto all men that you are not yourselves the end-all and be-all of your own existence, but that you are spending and being spent, that through the good you do to men God may be glorified, and Christ may see in you his own image and be satisfied.

III. Time fails me, but the last point was to be a word SUGGESTIVE TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Listen attentively to these sentences. I will make them as terse and condensed as possible. Some of you here are not saved. Now, some of you have been very ignorant, and when you sinned you did not know what you did. You knew you were sinners, you knew that, but you did

not know the far-reaching guilt of sin. You have not been attending the house of prayer long, you have not read your Bible, you have not Christian parents. Now you are beginning to be anxious about your souls. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, "Forgive them;" they must be forgiven, even those that know not what they do, hence they are individually guilty; but still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. The God whom you have ignorantly forgotten is willing to pardon and ready to forgive. The gospel is just this, trust Jesus Christ who died for the guilty, and you shall be saved. O may God help you to do so this very morning, and you will become new men and new women, a change will take place in you equal to a new birth; you will be new creatures in Christ Jesus.

But ah! my friends, there are some here for whom even Christ himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," for you have known what you did, and every sermon you hear, and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the gospel, adds to your responsibility, and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do. Ah! sirs, you know that there is the world and Christ, and that you cannot have both. You know that there is sin and God, and that you cannot serve both. You know that there are the pleasures of evil and the pleasures of heaven, and that you cannot have both. Oh! in the light which God has given you, may his Spirit also come and help you to choose that which true wisdom would make you choose. Decide to-day for God, for Christ, for heaven. The Lord decide you for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiii. 1—34.

CRIES FROM THE CROSS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 27TH, 1898,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On Lord's-day Evening, November 2nd, 1856.*

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”—Psalm xxii. 1.

WE here behold the Saviour in the depths of his agonies and sorrows. No other place so well shows the griefs of Christ as Calvary, and no other moment at Calvary is so full of agony as that in which this cry rends the air, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” At this moment, physical weakness, brought upon him by fasting and scourging, was united with the acute mental torture which he endured from the shame and ignominy through which he had to pass; and as the culmination of his grief, he suffered spiritual agony which surpasses all expression, on account of the departure of his Father from him. This was the blackness and darkness of his horror; then it was that he penetrated the depths of the caverns of suffering.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There is something in these words of our Saviour always calculated to benefit us. When we behold the sufferings of men, they afflict and appal us; but the sufferings of our Saviour, while they move us to grief, have about them something sweet, and full of consolation. Here, even here, in this black spot of grief, we find our heaven, while gazing upon the cross. This, which might be thought a frightful sight, makes the Christian glad and joyous. If he laments the cause, yet he rejoices in the consequences.

* This was the first evening Sermon preached by MR. SPURGEON after the fatal calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, a fortnight previously. On commencing his discourse, he said, “The observations I have to make will be very brief, seeing that afterwards we are to partake of the Lord's supper. I shall make no allusion to the recent catastrophe,—that theme of my daily thoughts and nightly dreams, ever since it has occurred. I hope, however, to improve that event at some future period.” This MR. SPURGEON did, in many memorable utterances which will be included in Vol. II. of his *Autobiography*, now in course of compilation

I. First, in our text, there are THREE QUESTIONS to which I shall call your attention.

The first is, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" By these words we are to understand that our blessed Lord and Saviour was at that moment forsaken by God in such a manner as he had never been before. He had battled with the enemy in the desert, but thrice he overcame him, and cast him to the earth. He had striven with that foe all his life long, and even in the garden he had wrestled with him till his soul was "exceeding sorrowful." It is not till now that he experiences a depth of sorrow which he never felt before. It was necessary that he should suffer, in the stead of sinners, just what sinners ought to have suffered. It would be difficult to conceive of punishment for sin apart from the frown of Deity. With crime we always associate anger, so that, when Christ died, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,"—when our blessed Saviour became our Substitute, he became, for the time, the victim of his Father's righteous wrath, seeing that our sins had been imputed to him, in order that his righteousness might be imputed to us. It was necessary that he should feel the loss of his Father's smile,—for the condemned in hell must have tasted of that bitterness;—and therefore the Father closed the eye of his love, put the hand of justice before the smile of his face, and left his Son to cry, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

There is no man living who can tell the full meaning of these words; not one in heaven or on earth,—I had almost said, in hell; there is not a man who can spell these words out with all their depth of misery. Some of us think, at times, that *we* could cry, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" There are seasons when the brightness of our Father's smile is eclipsed by clouds and darkness. But let us remember that God never does really forsake us. It is only a seeming forsaking with us, but in Christ's case it was a real forsaking. God only knows how much we grieve, sometimes, at a little withdrawal of our Father's love; but the real turning away of God's face from his Son,—who shall calculate how deep the agony which it caused him when he cried, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

In our case, this is the cry of unbelief; in his case, it was the utterance of a fact, for God had really turned away from him for a time. O thou poor, distressed soul, who once lived in the sunshine of God's face, but art now in darkness,—thou who art walking in the valley of the shadow of death, thou hearest noises, and thou art afraid; thy soul is startled within thee, thou art stricken with terror if thou thinkest that God has forsaken thee! Remember that he has not really forsaken thee, for—

"Mountains when in darkness shrouded,
Are as real as in day."

God in the clouds is as much our God as when he shines forth in all the lustre of his benevolence; but since even the *thought* that he has forsaken us gives us agony, what must the agony of the Saviour have been when he cried, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

The next question is, "*Why art thou so far from helping me?*" Hitherto, God had helped his Son, but now he must tread the wine-press alone, and even his own Father cannot be with him. Have you not felt, sometimes, that God has brought you to do some duty, and yet has apparently not given you the strength to do it? Have you never felt that sadness of heart which makes you cry, "Why art thou so far from helping me?" But if God means you to do anything, you can do it, for he will give you the power. Perhaps your brain reels; but God has ordained that you must do it, and you shall do it. Have you not felt as if you must go on even while, every step you took, you were afraid to put your foot down for fear you should not get a firm foothold? If you have had any experience of divine things, it must have been so with you. We can scarcely guess what it was that our Saviour felt when he said, "Why art thou so far from helping me?" His work is one which none but a Divine Person could have accomplished, yet his Father's eye was turned away from him! With more than herculean labours before him, but with none of his Father's might given to him, what must have been the strain upon him! Truly, as Hart says, he—

"Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

The third enquiry is, "*Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring?*" The word here translated "roaring" means, in the original Hebrew, that deep, solemn groan which is caused by serious sickness, and which suffering men utter. Christ compares his prayers to those roarings, and complains that God is so far from him that he does not hear him. Beloved, many of us can sympathize with Christ here. How often have we on our knees asked some favour of God, and we thought we asked in faith, yet it never came! Down we went upon our knees again. There is something which withholds the answer; and, with tears in our eyes, we have wrestled with God again; we have pleaded, for Jesu's sake, but the heavens have seemed like brass. In the bitterness of our spirit, we have cried, "Can there be a God?" And we have turned round, and said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring?" Is this like thee? Dost thou ever spurn a sinner? Hast thou not said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto thee?' Art thou reluctant to be kind? Dost thou withhold thy promise?" And when we have been almost ready to give up, with everything apparently against us, have we not *groaned*, and said, "Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring?" Though we know something, it is not much that we can truly understand of those direful sorrows and agonies which our blessed Lord endured when he asked these three questions, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"

II. Let us now, in the second place, ANSWER THESE THREE QUESTIONS.

The answer to the first question I have given before. Methinks I hear the Father say to Christ, "*My Son, I forsake thee because thou standest in the sinner's stead.*" As thou art holy, just, and true, I never

would forsake *thee*; I would never turn away from *thee*; for, even as a man, thou hast been holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; but on thy head doth rest the guilt of every penitent, transferred from him to thee; and thou must expiate it by thy blood. Because thou standest in the sinner's stead, I will not look at thee till thou hast borne the full weight of my vengeance. *Then*, I will exalt thee on high, far above all principalities and powers."

O Christian, pause here, and reflect! Christ was punished in this way for thee! Oh, see that countenance so wrung with horror; those horrors gather there for thee! Perhaps, in thine own esteem, thou art the most worthless of the family; certainly, the most insignificant; but the meanest lamb of Christ's flock is as much the object of purchase as any other. Yes, when that black darkness gathered round his brow, and when he cried out, "Eloi, Eloi," in the words of our text, for the Lord Omnipotent to help him; when he uttered that awfully solemn cry, it was because he loved *thee*, because he gave himself for *thee*, that thou mightest be sanctified here, and dwell with him hereafter. God forsook him, therefore, first, because he was the sinner's Substitute.

The answer to the second question is, "*Because I would have thee get all the honour to thyself*; therefore I will not help thee, lest I should have to divide the spoil with thee." The Lord Jesus Christ lived to glorify his Father, and he died to glorify himself, in the redemption of his chosen people. God says, "No, my Son, thou shalt do it alone; for thou must wear the crown alone; and upon thy person shall all the regalia of thy sovereignty be found. I will give thee all the praise, and therefore thou shalt accomplish all the labour." He was to tread the winepress alone, and to get the victory and glory alone to himself.

The answer to the third question is essentially the same as the answer to the first. *To have heard Christ's prayers at that time, would have been inappropriate.* This turning away of the Divine Father from hearing his Son's prayer, is just in keeping with his condition; as the sinner's Surety, his prayer must not be heard; as the sinner's Surety, he could say, "Now that I am here, dying in the sinner's stead, thou sealest thine ears against my prayer." God did not hear his Son, because he knew his Son was dying to bring us near to God, and the Son therefore cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

III. In conclusion, I shall offer you A WORD OF EARNEST EXPOSTULATION AND OF AFFECTIONATE WARNING.

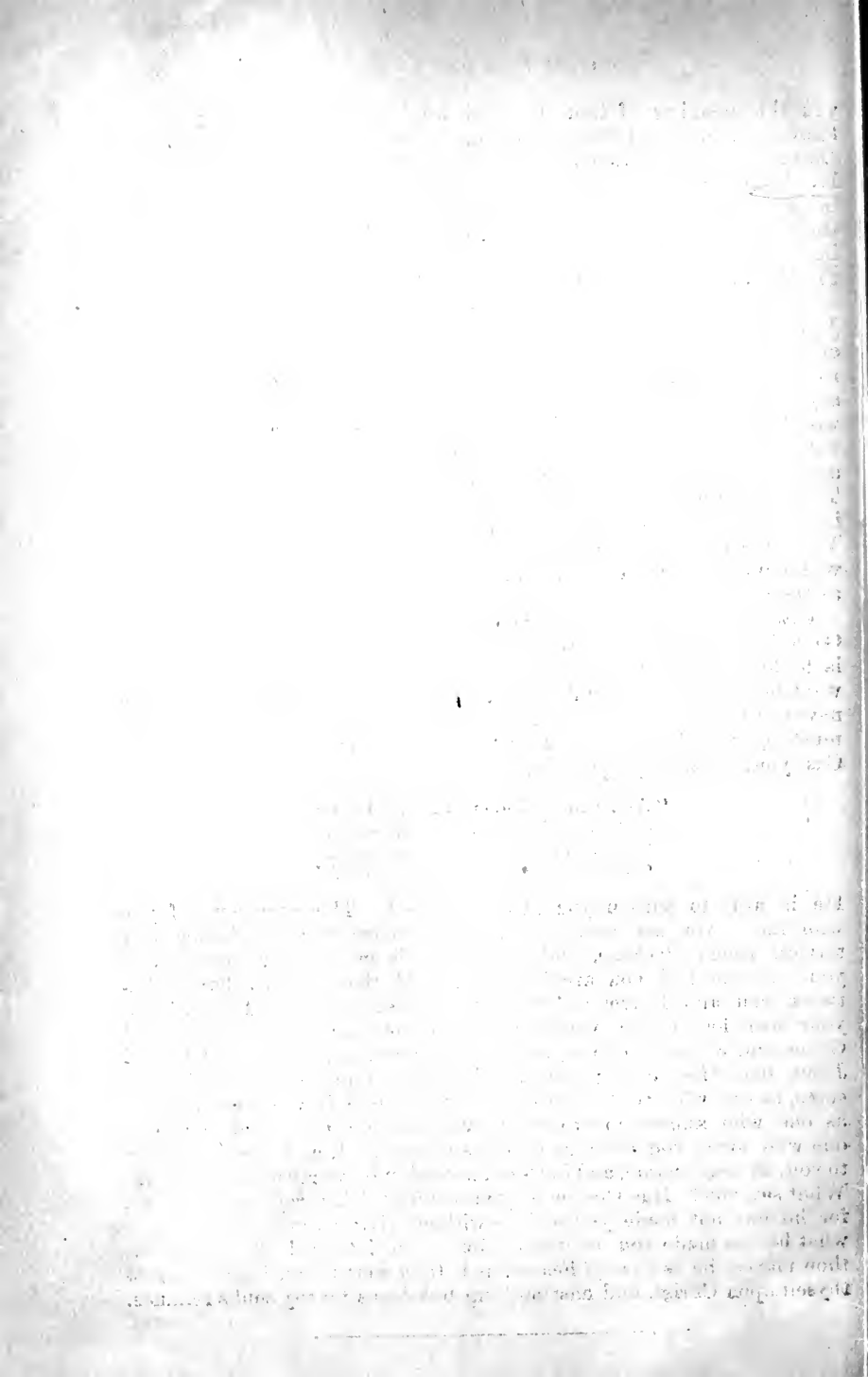
Is it nothing to some of you that Jesus should die? You hear the tale of Calvary; but, alas! you have dry eyes. You never weep concerning it. Is the death of Jesus nothing to you? Alas! it seems to be so with many. Your hearts have never throbbed in sympathy with him. O friends, how many of you can look on Christ, thus agonising and groaning, and say, "He is *my* Ransom, *my* Redeemer"? Could you say, with Christ, "*My* God"? Or is God another's, and not yours? Oh, if you are out of Christ, hear me speak one word, it is a word of *warning*! Remember, *to be out of Christ, is to be without hope*; if you die unsprinkled with his blood, you are lost. *And what is it to be lost?* I shall not try to tell

you the meaning of that dreadful word "*lost*." Some of you may know it before another sun has risen. God grant that you may not! Do you desire to know how you may be saved? Hear me. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To be baptized is to be buried in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Have you believed in Christ? Have you professed faith in Christ? Faith is the grace which rests alone on Christ. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should feel himself to be lost,—that he should know himself to be a ruined sinner, and then he should believe this: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief. You want no mediator between yourselves and Christ. You may come to Christ just as you are,—guilty, wicked, poor; just as you are, Christ will take you. There is no necessity for washing beforehand. You want no riches; in him you have *all* you require, will you bring anything to "*all*"? You want no garments; for in Christ you have a seamless robe which will amply suffice to cover even the biggest sinner upon earth, as well as the least.

Come, then, to Jesus at once. Do you say you do not know *how* to come? Come just as you are. Do not wait to *do* anything. What you want is to leave off doing, and let Christ do all for you. What do you want to do, when he has done all? All the labour of your hands can never fulfil what God commands. Christ died for sinners, and you must say, "Sink or swim, I will have no other Saviour but Christ." Cast yourself wholly upon him.

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool humbly bow,
O sinner! sinner! *prostrate now!*"

He is able to pardon you at this moment. There are some of you who know you are guilty, and groan concerning it. Sinner, why tarriest thou? "Come, and welcome!" is my Master's message to you. If you feel you are lost and ruined, there is not a barrier between you and heaven; Christ has broken it down. If you know your own lost estate, Christ has died for you; believe, and come! Come, and welcome, sinner, come! O sinner, come! Come! Come! Jesus bids thee come; and as his ambassador to thee, I bid thee come, as one who would *die* to save your souls if it were necessary,—as one who knows how to groan over you, and to weep over you,—one who loves you even as he loves himself,—I, as his minister, say to you, in God's name, and in Christ's stead, "Be ye reconciled to God." What say you? Has God made you willing? Then rejoice! Rejoice, for he has not made you willing without giving you the power to do what he has made you willing to do. Come! Come! This moment thou mayest be as sure of heaven as if thou wert there, if thou castest thyself upon Christ, and hast nothing but Jesus for thy soul's reliance.



FAITH AMONG MOCKERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”—Psalm xxii. 8.

DAVID experienced what Paul afterwards so aptly described as “cruel mockings.” Note the adjective *cruel*: it is well chosen. Mockings may not cut the flesh, but they tear the heart; they may shed no blood, but they cause the mind to bleed internally. Fetters gall the wrists, but the iron of scorn entereth into the soul. Ridicule is a poisoned bullet which goes deeper than the flesh, and strikes the centre of the heart. David in the wilderness hunted by Saul, and on the throne abused by Shimei, knew what it was to be the butt of scorn, the football of contempt. Many a time and oft was he the song of the drunkard, and the byword of the scoffer.

But what have I to do with the son of Jesse? my heart remembers the Son of man. What if David suffered despising and scorn? He knew it but in small measure compared with our blessed Lord. Well is it said, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.” It is not wonderful that such an one as David should have to cry, “My soul is among lions,” when the Lord of all, the perfectly pure and Holy One, was driven to utter the same cry, saying, “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” My brethren and sisters in Christ, if you have to pass through a like painful experience, count it no strange thing, for a strange thing it is not. Reproach is the common heritage of the godly. Do not think that this fire which you suffer is the first that ever burned a saint. Others have had to bear the enmity of the world long before you. Remember that, of old, from the first moment when sin came into the world, there were two seeds, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; and between these two seeds there is an enmity of the most deadly kind, which will never cease. It may assume different forms, and it may be held in check by many forces, but it will always continue for ever the same while men are men, and sin is sin, and God and the devil are opposed. It was so, you know, in the house of Abraham: he was a man that walked before God,

and was perfect in his generation, and yet in his family there were the two opposing powers: Ishmael, born after the flesh, mocked him that was born after the Spirit. When Rebekah had brought forth twin sons, yet the fact of their being twin sons of holy Isaac did not prevent the enmity that arose between Jacob and Esau. Nothing will prevent the seed of the serpent from exhibiting its spite towards the seed of the woman; even kinship and brotherhood go for little in this strife; in fact, a man's foes full often are they of his own household. Count it no marvel, then, if you are derided! It seems to be a necessity of the holy nature of God that it should incur the enmity of the evil nature of fallen man, and that this evil nature should show itself by direct and bitter attack. Remember "him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Henceforth, bow your shoulders to the yoke; expect that if you follow the Crucified you will have to bear the cross, for so it will be. I trust that our present meditation may be useful to any of God's servants who are feeling the sharp lash of envious tongues, that they may not be driven from their steadfastness thereby. If any in their hearts are bowed down because they are conscious that possibly they have given the scoffers some opportunity to mock at them, may they even in this take heart, for David had done so, and yet he was not crushed by the blasphemies of the wicked.

The first thing to which I shall call your attention at this time is, that a truly gracious man is like David and like the Lord Jesus, in that HIS TRUST IN GOD IS KNOWN. Even the enemies of this holy man who is mentioned in the text, and, as I interpret it, even the enemies of our divine Lord and Master, never denied that he trusted in God. This, indeed, is the commencement of their scoff: "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." From which I gather that every gracious man should have an apparent, manifest, public trust in God. He should not merely trust him in his heart alone, but that trust should so enter into his entire nature that he does not conceal it nor think of concealing it. He should be so open in the avowal of his confidence that his enemies, before whom he is naturally restrained and on his guard, nevertheless are able to spy out this precious thing within him, and are forced to bear their witness, though it be mockingly and jestingly, that "He trusted on the Lord." Such a testimony is all the more valuable as coming from an enemy. You know our character is not likely to be drawn too prettily by those who hate us; the utmost will be sure to be said against us; but if even our enemies say of us, "He trusted on the Lord," we may be very thankful that we have so lived as to extort this testimony from their lips.

What, then, ought a child of God to do in order to show that he really does trust in the Lord? How did Jesus do this? Well, I think that in our Lord's case it was *his wonderful calmness* which compelled everybody to see that "he trusted on the Lord." You never find him in a hurry; he is never worried nor confused. He is beset behind and before with men who try to catch him, but he is as self-possessed as if he spoke among friends. He does not appear to be the least upon his guard, and yet instead of their catching him, before long he either catches them, or else they retire saying, "Never man spake like this Man." He was

always cool, peaceful, ready, self-composed. You notice his inward quietude not only when enemies are round about him, but when he is surrounded by a great mob of people all hungry, starving, famishing: he breaks the bread and multiplies it; but not before he has made them all sit down on the green grass by hundreds and by fifties. He will have them in companies, arranged in ranks, for convenient distribution; and when they are all placed in order, as if it had been a well-marshalled royal entertainment, then it is that he takes the bread, and, looking up to heaven, with all deliberation asks a blessing, and breaks and gives the food to the disciples. The disciples make no scramble of it: it is an orderly festival, and the thousands are all fed in order due, in majestic decorum; for Christ was calm, and therefore master of the situation. He never looks as if he had fallen into difficulties, and then adopted expedients to get out of them; but his whole life is pre-arranged and ordered in the most prudent and peaceful manner. Nothing upon this earth, although he was so reduced that he had nowhere to lay his head, although he was sometimes so weary that he sat down upon a well to rest, could put him out of the way, or disarrange his perfect collectedness. He was always ready for every emergency; in fact, nothing was an emergency to him. What a beautiful picture that is of Christ on board ship in a storm! While they that are with him are afraid that they will go down, that the wind will blow them into the water, or blow the water over them, so that they will certainly be drowned, what is he doing? Why, he is asleep: not because he forgot them—no; but because he knew that the vessel was in the great Father's hands. It was his time for sleep; he was weary and needed it, and so he carried out that which was the nearest duty, and in all peacefulness laid his head on a pillow, and slumbered. His sleep ought to have made them feel at ease. Whenever the captain can afford to go to sleep, the passengers may go to sleep too. Depend upon it, he that manages everything would not have gone to bed if he had not felt that it was all right in the hands of the Highest, who at any moment could stay the raging storm. I wish we could be similarly restful; for then even our enemies would say of us, "He trusted on the Lord." I wish we could have that steadfast, imperturbable frame of mind, in which our Lord untied the knots wherewith his foes would have bound him; for then our assailants would marvel at our quiet confidence. Jesus knew no hurry, but calmly and deliberately he met each matter as it came, and grandly kept himself free from all entanglement. Oh, for the holy quiet which would prevent our going about our business in haste! "He that believeth shall not make haste," but do everything as in the infinite leisure of the Eternal, who never is before his time, and never is behind. If we could do that, and did not get so flurried and worried, and tossed about and driven to our wit's end, then our enemies would say with astonishment, "He trusted on the Lord."

Brethren, this ought also to come out not merely in our calm and quiet manner, but also *by our distinct avowal*. I do not think that any man has a right to be a secret believer in the Lord Jesus Christ at this time. You will tell me that Nicodemus was so; that Joseph of Arimathea was so, and I answer "Yes"; but therein they are not our exemplars. These weak brethren were forgiven and strengthened; but

we may not therefore presume. Times, however, are different now: by the death of Christ the thoughts of many hearts were revealed, and from that day those secret disciples were among the foremost to avow their faith. Nicodemus brought the spices, and Joseph of Arimathea went in boldly and begged the body of Jesus. Since that day when the Christ was openly revealed upon the cross, the thoughts of other men's hearts are revealed too; and it is not now permissible for us to play hide-and-seek with Christ. No; "He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved;" "He that with his heart believeth and *with his mouth maketh confession of him*, shall be saved." The open confession is constantly, in Scripture, joined with the secret faith. The Lord Jesus Christ puts it, "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny"; and if you read it, the text sets denying in opposition to confession, so that it really means, "He that does not confess me before men, him will I not confess when I come in the glory of the Father." Our Lord does not reckon upon leading a body of followers who will always keep behind the hedge, hiding themselves in holes and corners whenever there is anything to be done for his glory, and only running out at meal-times when there is something to be got for themselves. I know some professors of that sort, but I have very little to say to their credit: they are a cowardly crew. No, no. We ought distinctly to declare that we believe in God, and we should take opportunities, as prudence dictates, of telling to our friends and neighbours what our experience has been about trusting in God; telling them of deliverances we have received, of prayers which have been answered, and of many other tokens for good which have come to us as the result of our faith in God. To trust in man is a thing of which we may be ashamed, for we find man to be as a broken reed, or as a spear that pierces us to our heart when we lean thereon; but blessed are they that trust in the Lord, for they shall be as trees planted by the rivers of water, they shall bring forth their fruit in their season, and even their leaf shall not wither. God, in whom they trust, will honour their faith, and bless them yet more and more; let them therefore honour their God, and never hesitate to speak well of his name. So, then, I say first a calm belief, and, secondly, an open avowal should cause even our adversaries to know that we have trusted in the Lord.

And, then, I will add to that, that *our general conduct should reveal our faith*. The whole of our life should show that we are men who rejoice in the Lord; for trusting the Lord, as I understand it, is not a thing for Sundays and for places of worship alone: we are to trust in the Lord about everything. If I trust the Lord about my soul I must trust him about my body, about my wife, about my children, and all my domestic and business affairs. It would have been a terrible thing if the Lord had drawn a black line around our religious life, and had said, "You may trust me about that, but with household matters I will have nothing to do." We need the whole of life to be within the ring-fence of divine care. The perfect bond of divine love must tie up the whole bundle of our affairs, or the whole will slip away. Faith is a thing for the closet, and the parlour, and the counting-house, and the farmhouse; it is a light for dark days, and a shade for bright days; you may carry it with you everywhere, and everywhere it shall be your help. Oh, that we did so trust in the Lord that people noticed it as much as

they notice our temper, our dress, or our tone. The pity is that too often we go forward helter-skelter, following our own wisdom, whereas we ought to say, "No, I must wait a little while, till I ask counsel of the Lord." It should be seen and known that we are distinctly waiting upon God for guidance. What a stir this would make in some quarters! I wish that without any desire to be Pharisaical, or to display our piety, we nevertheless did unconsciously show the great principle which governs us. Just as one man will say, "Excuse me, I must consult a friend," or, "I must submit the case to my solicitor," so it ought to be habitual with a Christian before he replies to an important matter, to demand a moment wherein he may wait upon God and obtain direction. In any case I wish that it may be so usual with us to ask guidance from above that it may be noticed as our habit to trust on the Lord.

Once more, I think this ought to come out most distinctly in our *behaviour during times of trouble*; for then it is that our adversaries are most likely to notice it. You, dear sister, have lost a child. Well now, remember that you are a Christian woman, and sorrow not as those that are without hope. Do let the difference be real and true, and do not be ashamed that others should observe it. When your neighbour lost her child it occasioned a quarrel between her and God, but it is not so with you, is it? Will you quarrel with God about your baby? Oh, no; you love him too well. And you, brother, you are perplexed in business, and you know what a worldling does: if he has nothing more than outward religion, he complains bitterly that God deals hardly with him, and he quarrels with God; or, perhaps, to make things better, he does what he ought not to do in business, and makes them a great deal worse. Many a man has plunged into rash speculations until he has destroyed himself commercially; but you, as a Christian man, must take matters calmly and quietly: it is not yours to speculate, but to confide. Your strength lies in saying—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." You must not be so eager to be rich that you would put forth your hand to do iniquity in order to seize the golden apples: that is the reverse of faith. You are now to play the man, and in the power of the Holy Ghost you are now with resignation—with more than that—with a sweet acquiescence in the Divine will—to show men how a Christian can behave himself. I have never admired Addison's words as some have done, who, when he came to die, sent for a lord of his acquaintance, and said, "See how a Christian can die." There is a little parade about *that*; but I do desire that every Christian should say in his soul, "I will show men how a Christian can live. I will let them see what it is to live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me. Those who do not believe there is a God shall yet be led to feel there must be a God, because my faith in him doth speed so well, and I obtain such unnumbered blessings as the result of it." I say, most earnestly, that especially in the time of sorrow and bereavement, when other people are sore put to it because they have lost their joy, and the light of their house is quenched, it is the believer's duty and privilege by his holy calm of heart to show his trust in God. If religion cannot help you in trouble, it is not worth having; if the Spirit of God does not sustain you when you lose your dearest friend, you ought to question whether it is the

Spirit of God; you ought to ask, "Can this be the Spirit which bore up the martyrs at the stake?" if now that you are passing through these waters you are carried away by them? If our faith shines out in dark times, even as the stars are seen by night, then is it well with us.

Oh, that you and I might in all these ways so live that all who see us should know that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! It would be ridiculous if a man went into society with a label on his breast, "*This man trusts in God,*" and it would be a pretty clear sign that he needed to be thus ticketed. I would have you shun all distinctive phylacteries in matters of religion as too much flavoured with the leaven of the Pharisees; but when the possession of godliness proclaims its own self, even as a box of precious spikenard tells its own tale, you need not be ashamed of it. Display and ostentation are vicious, but the unrestrained use of influence and example is commendable. In these days when men glory in their unbelief, let us not be bashful with our faith. If, in a free country, men should not persecute an infidel, they certainly ought not to silence a believer. We do not intend to smuggle our religion through the land. It is not contraband, and therefore we shall bear it with us openly in the sight of all men, and let them say if they please, "He trusted on the Lord."

II. Secondly, THIS TRUST ON THE PART OF BELIEVING MEN IS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THE WORLD. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." Observe that they restricted the Saviour's trust to that point—"He trusted on the Lord *that he would deliver him.*" But now, in the first place, *our faith is not confined to merely receiving from God.* No, brethren; if the Lord does not deliver us we will trust him. See how firmly Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood to it that they would not bow before the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But *if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." There was great faith in that "if not." We must not live and wait upon God with a kind of cupboard love, just as a stray dog might follow a man for bones; but we must speak well of our God even if he scourge us, for therein lies both the truth and the strength of faith. Job has put it—"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Whatever happens to us, if our faith is the work of the Holy Spirit we shall hold on to our trust in God.

Neither is our faith limited to what men call deliverance. It is a misrepresentation when his enemies say, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him;" because though it is the truth, it is not the whole truth. Our blessed Lord continued to trust in the Father though the cup did not pass from him, and though no legions of angels were sent to deliver him from Pilate. Though the enemy was permitted to exercise all his malice upon him until his blessed body was nailed to the accursed tree, yet the faith of our divine Lord and Master was not moved from its steadfastness. He trusted in God for something higher than deliverance from death, for he looked beyond the grave, and said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy

One to see corruption." In all his pains his heart said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." The blind world cannot understand this. They say, like their father, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" They insinuate that Christian people trust God for what they get out of him. Now I have often thought that if the devil could have put it the other way he would have been very rejoiced to do so. Suppose he could have said, "Job serves God for nought," then the ungodly world would have shouted, "We told you so. God is a bad Paymaster: his servants may serve him as perfectly as Job, but he never gives them any reward." Happily the accuser's grumble is of quite the opposite kind. Neither one way nor another is there any pleasing the devil, and it is not a thing we desire to do. Let him put it as he likes. We serve God and we have our reward; but if the Lord does not choose to give us exactly what we look for, still will we trust in him, for it is our delight. It is a misrepresentation to say of a believer that "he trusted on the Lord *that he would deliver him,*" if he is supposed to trust for no other reason.

And, dear friends, *our faith is not tied to time.* That is the mistake of the statement in the text. They said, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him"—as much as to say, "If God does not deliver him *now* his trust will have been a folly, and God will not have answered to his confidence." But it is not so. Brethren, if we are in the fire to-night, and we are trusting in God, our faith does not mean that we expect to come forth from the furnace at this very hour. Nay, we may not come out to-night, nor to-morrow, nor next month, it may be not for years. We do not tie God down to conditions, and expect him to do this and that, and then if he does not in his wisdom see fit to do it, threaten that we will trust him no more. The very worst we could do would be to make the Eternal God a slave to time, as though he must do everything at our bidding, and measure his divine movements by the ticking of a clock. The Lord did deliver his Son Jesus Christ, but he suffered him to die first; he was put into the grave before he was uplifted from the power of death; and if it had not been that he died and lay in the tomb he could not have had that splendid deliverance which his Father did vouchsafe him when he raised him again from the dead; had he not yielded to death there could have been no resurrection for him or for us. So, beloved, it may be God has not effected his purpose with you yet, nor has he quite prepared you for the height of blessing to which he has ordained you. Receive what he is going to give you, and take gratefully the painful preliminaries. High palaces must have deep foundations, and it takes a long time to excavate a human soul so deep that God can build a gorgeous palace of grace therein. If it be a mere cottage that the Lord is to build in you, you may escape with small troubles; but if he is going to make you a palace to glorify himself withal, then you may expect to have long trials. Coarse pottery needs not the laborious processes which must be endured by superior vessels. Iron which is to become a sword for a hero must know more of the fire than the metal which lies upon the road as a rail. Your eminence in grace can only come by affliction. Will you not have trust in God if severe trials are ordained for you? Yes, of course you will. The Holy Spirit will be the all-sufficient helper of your infirmities. I say it is

misrepresentation if we limit the Holy One of Israel to any form for our deliverance, or to any time for our deliverance. Let not the Lord of love be treated like a child at school, as if he could be taught anything by us!

So, also, *our faith must not judge at all by present circumstances.* The ungodly world judges that God has not delivered us because we are now in trouble, and are at present distressed by it. Oh, how wrongly the world judged of Christ when it judged of him by his condition! Covered with a bloody sweat and groaning out his soul to God beneath the olives at midnight—why, they that passed by who did not know him must have judged him to be a man accursed of God. “See,” they would have said, “we never heard of a man that sweat blood before—sweat blood in prayer; and yet listen to his groaning; he is not heard by God, for evidently the cup does not pass from him.” If any man had looked at our Lord Jesus when he was on the cross and had heard him cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” they would have certainly concluded that he was the most ungracious and undeserving of men; for had he been a saint, surely, they say, God would not have forsaken him. Yes, but you see they only saw a little of our blessed Master’s career; they only looked upon a span of his existence; what a grievous error it was to have estimated his life by his brief passion, knowing nothing of its grand intent! See him now while harps unnumbered sound his praises and all heaven rejoices to behold his glory, and the Father looks upon him with ineffable delight! This is the same Jesus who was crucified! What think you of him now? You must not measure a man by a little bit of his life, nor even by the whole of his earthly career; for it is nothing compared with the hidden future of his life in eternity. These men measured David’s faith, and measure our faith by what they see of us on one day: we are sick, we are sorry, we are poor, we are troubled, and then they say, “We told you so! This faith of theirs is not worth having, or else they would not fare so roughly or be found in so much heaviness.” Faith and feeling are in contrast. Outward circumstances must never be made the tests of the value of pious trust in our God. We must not judge God by his dealings with us nor judge ourselves thereby; but let us still hold on to this pure, simple faith that the Lord is good to Israel. Let us love the Lord for a whole eternity of his love, and then for everything, for every turn of his hand, for every frown and stroke and rebuke; for he is good in everything, unalterably good. If with this faith of ours we are praying and pleading and God does not answer us, does not help us, but leaves us in the dark, yet still let not our trust waver. If any man walk in darkness and see no light, let him trust and trust on until the light shall come.

So, then, we have just touched upon two points—that a true man’s faith is soon made known, but that, though it be known, it is usually misunderstood. We live among blind men; let us not be angry because they cannot see.

III. Thirdly, **THIS TRUE FAITH WILL, IN ALL PROBABILITY, BE MOCKED AT SOME TIME OR OTHER.** It is a great honour to a man to trust in God, and so to have his name written upon the Arch of Triumph which Paul has erected in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, where

you see name after name of the heroes who served God by faith. It is a glorious thing to mingle our bones with those who are buried in that mausoleum which bears this epitaph, "These all died in faith." It is an honourable thing to be a believer in God, but there are some who think the very reverse, and these begin to scoff at the believer. Sometimes *they scoff at faith itself*: they count faith itself to be a folly of weak minds. Or else they insult over one particular Christian's faith. "Oh," they say, "*he* professes to trust in God. This man talks after this mad fashion! Why, he is a working man like other people—works in a shop along with me. What has he to do with trusting God any more than I have? He is conceited and fanatical." Or in other circles they cry, "This is a man of business; he keeps a shop, and I dare say he knows as much of the tricks of the trade as we do, and yet he talks about trusting in God. No doubt he pretends to this faith to win religious customers." Sometimes the mockery comes from one of your own family, for faith's foes live in the same house with her. The husband has been known to say to his wife, "Ridiculous nonsense, your trusting in God!" Ay, and parents have said the like to holy children; and, alas! children have grown up to speak in like fashion to their parents to the wounding of their hearts. As if faith in God were a thing that could be scoffed at, instead of being the most wise, and proper, and rational thing under heaven. Faith in God is a thing to be revered rather than reviled. True religion is sanctified common-sense. It is the most common-sense thing in the world to put your trust in One that cannot lie. If I trust myself, or trust my fellow-man, I am thought to be in the first case self-reliant, and in the second case I am judged to have a charitable disposition; yet in either case I shall, sooner or later, prove my folly; but if I trust God, who can bring a reason against my confidence? What is there to be ridiculed in a man's trusting his Maker? Can HE fail that created the blue heavens, that settled the foundations of the earth and poured out the waters of the great sea? Can the Almighty retract his promise because he is unable to fulfil it? Can he break his word because circumstances master him and prevent his performance of it? "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." The day shall come when it will be known by all intelligent beings that unbelief of God is folly, but that faith in the Eternal is essential wisdom. God give us more faith in himself. No doubt we may expect to have all the more of the laughter of the ungodly, who will make a spectacle of us for our faith: but what of that? We can bear mockery and much more for his sake who died for us.

And then *men scoff at the very idea of divine interposition*. They judge the Lord's deliverance to be the main point of our faith. "He trusted God that he would deliver him." "Look," they say, "he fancies that God will deliver *him*, as if the Creator had not something else to do besides looking after *him*, poor miserable creature that he is! He is nothing to God—a mere speck—the insect of an hour, and yet he trusts in God to interfere on his behalf." The philosophers laugh whenever you speak of divine interposition, and count that we must be in the last stage of lunacy to expect anything of the kind. They believe in laws, they say—irreversible, immutable laws, that grind on, like the

great cogs of a machine which, when once they are set in motion, tear everything to pieces that comes in their way. They do not believe that God fulfils promises, or answers prayers, or delivers his people. Their God is a dead force, without mind, or thought, or love, or care. He who in nature acts according to law is yet believed to have no power to carry out his own word, which must always be law to a truthful being. Why, some of us are as sure that God has interposed for us as if he had rent the heavens and thrust forth his right hand visibly before the eyes of all beholders. The wise ones laugh at us for this, but we are not abashed; rather do we reply, "Laugh if you like, and as long as you like; but we daily receive unnumbered blessings from God in answer to our cries, and your laughter no more affects us than the noise of the dogs by the Nile disturbs the flow of the river. We shall believe for all your merriment, and if it please you to go on with your laughter we also will go on with our faith." The object of the ungodly man's scorn is the idea that God should ever interfere to help his people in human affairs; but do you stand to it, O true believers; for he does still show himself strong on the behalf of them that trust in him. Let them say, and laugh at you as they say it, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him;" but let none of these things move you.

Further, we have known this mockery to extend to *all kinds of faith in the divine love*. "Let him deliver him," they say, "seeing that he delighted in him." Perhaps you have unwisely told out the tale of God's special love to those who are now making merriment of you; you have cast your pearls before swine, and they turn again to rend you. They say, "This man says God loves him above others; that he chose him before the world began; that he redeemed him from among men with the blood of Christ; that he has called him by his Holy Spirit; that he has admitted him into his secrets and made him his child;" and then they laugh again right lustily, as if it were a rare jest. How the world rages against electing love! It cannot endure any speciality in grace. The idea that one man should be more beloved of heaven than another it scouts as horrible. The heathen could not make out a certain brave saint because he called himself Theophorus, or "God-bearer;" but he stuck to it that he was so, and this made his foes the more wrathful. God dwelt in him, he said, and he would not give up his happy belief, therefore they ceased not to mock. It was a carrying out of our text, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him." Well, well; we can afford to bear these mockings; for if we are beloved by a king it will not much matter if we are sneered at by his subjects; if we are beloved by God it is a small concern though all men should make us the subject of their jest.

Ungodly men are exceedingly apt to find *amusement in the trials involved in the life and walk of faith*. Their cry of "Let him deliver him" implies that their victim was in serious difficulty from which he could not extricate himself. This is no novelty to the believer, but it makes rare fun for the ungodly. What is the good of faith if the believer suffers like others, and endures the same pains, and losses, and diseases as others? So the men of the world argue. They would be believers too if it would bring them in a fortune, or a handsome salary, or at least a loaded table and a full cup. But when they

see a saint on the dunghill with Job, or in the pit with Joseph, or in the dungeon with Jeremiah, or among the dogs with Lazarus, they sneer and cry, Is this the reward of piety? Is this the recompense of godliness? They like to spy us out in our time of trouble and taunt us with our confidence in God; and, alas, there is so much unbelief in us that we are all too prone in such seasons to question the justice and faithfulness of the Lord, and to say with David, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." It seems hard for us to be mocked by the base ones of the earth, to become the song and the byword of the ungodly; yet this has happened to the excellent of the earth and will happen yet again. Set your account that this is a part of the covenanted heritage, and accept it with joy for Christ's sake.

IV. Now, I must close with this point (though there is much more to be said): THE TIME SHALL COME WHEN THE FAITH OF THE MAN WHO HAS TRUSTED IN GOD SHALL BE ABUNDANTLY JUSTIFIED. I think it is no small thing to have *the ungodly bearing witness* that "He trusted in God that he would deliver him." I have known what it is to be exceedingly grateful to ungodly men for helping me to believe that I am truly a child of God. Somebody, years ago, uttered an atrocious lie against me—an abominable slander. I was very low and heavy of spirit at the time; but when I read it I clapped my hands for joy, for I felt, "Now I have one of the marks and seals of a child of God, for it is written, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.'" The love of the Lord's brethren and the hatred of the Lord's enemies are two things to be desired. We may gather that we are not of the wicked when they will not endure us in their company, when our very presence irritates them, and they begin to rail and jeer. It has happened unto us even as Jesus said: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." So that there is justification, as it were, of our faith even from the lips of adversaries, and we ought to be thankful for it instead of being downcast about it.

Another justification awaits us, and in due season it will come. Brethren, the day will come when *God will deliver his people*. You will be brought out of your trouble—it may not be immediately, but it will be seasonably. You may most wisely in the meantime learn to glory in your tribulation; your bitters shall turn into sweets, and your losses into gains; your sorrows shall be your joys, your struggles your triumphs—perhaps in this life this transformation may occur, even as the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before; but certainly in the life to come you will find the tables turned. Then, what will the ungodly say? They say now, "He trusted on God that he would deliver him;" but they will be compelled to say as they gnash their teeth, "God has delivered him."

Whereas the ungodly ridicule the idea that God delights in his people, the day shall come when they shall be made to see that he does delight in them. When the Lord appears on behalf of his people, and gives them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning," the wicked shall gnash their teeth, and be filled with confusion. When the Lord shall turn again our captivity, even our most desperate foes shall be made to

say, "The Lord hath done great things for them." They shall wonder and be sore vexed to see how the Lord hath a favour to his chosen. If they do not see it in this life, oh, what an exhibition ungodly men will see of his delight in his people in the world to come! Dives sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom: what a sight for him! They that scoff at God's poor people here, shall see them exalted to be kings and priests, to reign with Christ for ever and ever, and what will they say then? What can they say but be compelled to bear witness that their faith was justified.

Brethren, at the last great day ungodly men will be witnesses on behalf of the saints. If any doubt whether the saints trusted in God, the wicked will be compelled to come forward and say, "They did trust, for we laughed at them for it." Of this and that man they shall say, "He trusted on God that he would deliver him." In that day the unbelieving will be swift witnesses against themselves; for as they ridiculed the children of God here, they will have it read out before them as evidence of their enmity against the Lord: and how will they answer it? A man is generally much grieved with any one who injures his children. I have known a man behave patiently to his neighbours, and put up with a great deal from them; but when one of them has struck his child I have seen him incensed to the last degree. He has said, "I cannot stand *that*, I will not look on and see my own children ill-used." The Lord says, "He that touches you touches the apple of my eye." Jesus rises from his throne in glory and stands up indignantly while his servant Stephen is being stoned. If I had no other amusement whatever, I would not for merriment sake mock the people of God; for it will go hard with those who make unhallowed mirth out of the saints of the Most High. If any of you have ever done so—if you have done so ignorantly—the Lord forgive you, and bring you to be numbered among his people, as was Saul of Tarsus; and if any of you have done so knowingly, be humble and penitent, and the Lord will forgive you and receive you amongst his people.

But whether ye revile or flatter, it is all one to us. We are at a pass with you: we do trust in God that he will deliver us, and we cannot be removed from this confidence. O ye mockers, we will not be fooled out of our hope, nor jested out of our peace. We cannot find any one like our God to trust to, and so we will not depart from him in life or death, but will rest in him, come what may, even till we see him face to face.

“LET HIM DELIVER HIM NOW.”

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 17TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.”—Matthew xxvii. 43.

THESE words are a fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the twenty-second Psalm. Read from the seventh verse—“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” Thus to the letter doth our Lord answer to the ancient prophecy.

It is very painful to the heart to picture our blessed Master in his death-agonies, surrounded by a ribald multitude, who watched him and mocked him, made sport of his prayer and insulted his faith. Nothing was sacred to them: they invaded the Holy of holies of his confidence in God, and taunted him concerning that faith in Jehovah which they were compelled to admit. See, dear friends, what an evil thing is sin, since the Sin-bearer suffers so bitterly to make atonement for it! See, also, the shame of sin, since even the Prince of Glory, when bearing the consequences of it, is covered with contempt! Behold, also, how he loved us! For our sake he “endured the cross, despising the shame.” He loved us so much that even scorn of the most cruel sort he deigned to bear, that he might take away our shame and enable us to look up unto God.

Beloved, the treatment of our Lord Jesus Christ by men is the clearest proof of total depravity which can possibly be required or discovered. Those must be stony hearts indeed which can laugh at a dying Saviour, and mock even at his faith in God! Compassion would seem to have deserted humanity, while malice sat supreme on the throne. Painful as the picture is, it will do you good to paint it. You will need neither canvas, nor brush, nor palette, nor colours. Let your thoughts draw the outline, and your love fill in the detail; I shall not complain if imagination heightens the colouring. The Son of God, whom angels adore with veiled faces, is pointed at with scornful fingers by men who thrust out the tongue and mockingly exclaim,

“He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

While thus we see our Lord in his sorrow and his shame as our substitute, we must not forget that he also is there as our representative. That which appears in many a psalm to relate to David is found in the Gospels to refer to Jesus, our Lord. Often and often the student of the Psalm will say to himself, “Of whom speaketh the prophet this?” He will have to disentangle the threads sometimes, and mark off that which belongs to David and that which relates to the Son of God; and frequently he will not be able to disentangle the threads at all, because they are one, and may relate both to David, and to David’s Lord. This is meant to show us that the life of Christ is an epitome of the life of his people. He not only suffers for us as our substitute, but he suffers before us as our pattern. In him we see what we have in our measure to endure. “As he is, so are we also in this world.” We also must be crucified to the world, and we may look for somewhat of those tests of faith and taunts of derision which go with such a crucifixion. “Marvel not if the world hate you.” You, too, must suffer without the gate. Not for the world’s redemption, but for the accomplishment of divine purposes in you, and through you to the sons of men, you must be made to know the cross and its shame. Christ is the mirror of the church. What the head endured every member of the body will also have to endure in its measure. Let us read the text in this light, and come to it saying to ourselves, “Here we see what Jesus suffered in our stead, and we learn hereby to love him with all our souls. Here, too, we see, as in a prophecy, how great things we are to suffer for his sake at the hands of men.” May the Holy Spirit help us in our meditation, so that at the close of it we may more ardently love our Lord, who suffered for us, and may the more carefully arm ourselves with the same mind which enabled him to endure such contradiction of sinners against himself.

Coming at once to the text, first, *observe the acknowledgment* with which the text begins: “He trusted in God.” The enemies of Christ admitted his faith in God. Secondly, consider *the test which is the essence of the taunt*: “Let him deliver him, if he will have him.” When we have taken those two things into our minds, then let us for a while consider *the answer* to that test and taunt: God does assuredly deliver his people: those who trust in him have no reason to be ashamed of their faith.

I. First, then, my beloved brethren, you who know the Lord by faith and live by trusting in him, let me invite you to OBSERVE THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT which these mockers made of our Lord’s faith: “He trusted in God.” Yet the Saviour did not wear any peculiar garb or token by which he let men know that he trusted in God. He was not a recluse, neither did he join some little knot of separatists, who boasted their peculiar trust in Jehovah. Although our Saviour was separate from sinners, yet he was eminently a man among men, and he went in and out among the multitude as one of themselves. His one peculiarity was that “he trusted in God.” He was so perfectly a man that, although he was undoubtedly a Jew, there were no Jewish peculiarities about him. Any nation might claim him; but no nation

could monopolize him. The characteristics of our humanity are so palpably about him that he belongs to all mankind. I admire the Welch sister who was of opinion that the Lord Jesus must be Welch. When they asked her how she proved it, she said that he always spoke to her heart in Welch. Doubtless it was so, and I can, with equal warmth, declare that he always speaks to me in English. Brethren from Germany, France, Sweden, Italy—you all claim that he speaks to you in your own tongue. This was the one thing which distinguished him among men—“he trusted in God,” and he lived such a life as naturally grows out of faith in the Eternal Lord. This peculiarity had been visible even to that ungodly multitude who least of all cared to perceive a spiritual point of character. Was ever any other upon a cross thus saluted by the mob who watched his execution? Had these scorners ever mocked anyone before for such a matter as this? I trow not. Yet faith had been so manifest in our Lord’s daily life that the crowd cried out aloud, “He trusted in God.”

How did they know? I suppose they could not help seeing that *he made much of God* in his teaching, in his life, and in his miracles. Whenever Jesus spoke it was always godly talk; and if it was not always distinctly about God, it was always about things that related to God, that came from God, that led to God, that magnified God. A man may be fairly judged by that which he makes most of. The ruling passion is a fair gauge of the heart. What a soul-ruler faith is! It sways the man as the rudder guides the ship. When a man once gets to live by faith in God, it tinctures his thoughts, it masters his purposes, it flavours his words, it puts a tone into his actions, and it comes out in everything by ways and means most natural and unconstrained, till men perceive that they have to do with a man who makes much of God. The unbelieving world says outright that there is no God, and the less impudent, who admit his existence, put him down at a very low figure, so low that it does not affect their calculations; but to the true Christian, God is not only much, but all. To our Lord Jesus, God was all in all; and when you come to estimate God as he did, then the most careless onlooker will soon begin to say of you, “He trusted in God.”

In addition to observing that Jesus made much of God, men came to note that he was a *trusting man, and not self-confident*. Certain persons are very proud because they are self-made men. I will do them the credit to admit that they heartily worship their maker. Self made them, and they worship self. We have among us individuals who are self-sufficient, and almost all-sufficient; they sneer at those who do not succeed, for *they* can succeed anywhere at anything. The world to them is a football which they can kick where they like. If they do not rise to the very highest eminence it is simply out of pity to the rest of us, who ought to have a chance. A vat of sufficiency ferments within their ribs! There was nothing of that sort of thing in our Lord. Those who watched him did not say that he had great self-reliance and a noble spirit of self-confidence. No, no! They said, “He trusted in God.” Indeed it was so. The words that he spake he spake not of himself, and the great deeds that he did he never

boasted of, but said "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." He was a truster in God, not a boaster in self. Brethren and sisters, I desire that you and I may be just of that order. Self-confidence is the death of confidence in God; reliance upon talent, tact, experience, and things of that kind, kills faith. Oh that we may know what faith means, and so look out of ourselves and quit the evil confidence which looks within!

On the other hand, we may wisely remember that, while our Lord Jesus was not self-reliant, *he trusted, and was by no means despondent*: he was never discouraged. He neither questioned his commission, nor despaired of fulfilling it. He never said, "I must give it up: I can never succeed." No; "He trusted in God." And this is a grand point in the working of faith, that while it keeps us from self-conceit, it equally preserves us from enfeebling fear. When our blessed Lord set his face like a flint; when, being baffled, he returned to the conflict; when, being betrayed, he still persevered in his love, then men could not help seeing that he trusted in God. His faith was not mere repetition of a creed, or profession of belief, but it was childlike reliance upon the Most High. May ours be of the same order!

It is evident that the Lord Jesus *trusted in God openly*, since even yonder gibing crowd proclaimed it. Some good people try to exercise faith on the sly: they practise it in snug corners, and in lonely hours, but they are afraid to say much before others, for fear their faith should not see the promise fulfilled. They dare not say, with David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." This secrecy robs God of his honour. Brethren, we do not glorify our God as he ought to be glorified. Let us trust in him, and own it. Wherefore should we be ashamed? Let us throw down the gauge of battle to earth and hell. God, the true and faithful, deserves to be trusted without limit. Trust your all with him, and be not ashamed of having done so. Our Saviour was not ashamed of trusting in his God. On the cross he cried, "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast." Jesus lived by faith. We are sure that he did, for in the Epistle to the Hebrews he is quoted as saying, "I will put my trust in him." If so glorious a personage as the only begotten Son of God lived here by faith in God, how are you and I to live except by trust in God? If we live unto God, this is the absolute necessity of our spiritual life: "the just shall live by faith." Shall we be ashamed of that which brings life to us? The cruel ones who saw Jesus die did not say, "He now and then trusted in God"; nor "he trusted in the Lord years ago"; but they admitted that faith in God was the constant tenor of his life: they could not deny it. Even though, with malicious cruelty, they turned it into a taunt, yet they did not cast a question upon the fact that "he trusted in God." Oh, I want you so to live that those who dislike you most may, nevertheless, know that you do trust in God! When you come to die, may your dear children say of you, "Our dear mother did trust in the Lord"! May that boy, who has gone furthest away from Christ, and grieved your heart the most, nevertheless say in his heart, "There may be hypocrites in the world, but my dear father does truly trust in God"! Oh, that our faith may be known unmistakably!

We do not wish it to be advertised to our own honour. That be far from our minds. But yet we would have it known that others may be encouraged, and that God may be glorified. If nobody else trusts in God, let us do so; and thus may we uplift a testimony to the honour of his faithfulness. When we die, may this be our epitaph—“He trusted in God.”

David, in the twenty-second Psalm, represents the enemies as saying of our Lord—“He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him.” This *practical faith* is sure to be known wherever it is in operation, because it is exceedingly rare. Multitudes of people have a kind of faith in God, but it does not come to the practical point of trusting that God will deliver them. I see upon the newspaper placards, “*Startling News! People in the Planets!*” Not a very practical discovery. For many a day there has been a tendency to refer God’s promises and our faith to the planets, or somewhere beyond this present every-day life. We say to ourselves, “Oh yes, God delivers his people.” We mean that he did so in the days of Moses, and possibly he may be doing so now in some obscure island of the sea. Ah me! The glory of faith lies in its being fit for every-day wear. Can it be said of you, “He trusted in God, that he would deliver him”? Have you faith of the kind which will make you lean upon the Lord in poverty, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in slander, in contempt? Have you a trust in God to bear you up in holy living at all costs, and in active service even beyond your strength? Can you trust in God definitely about this and that? Can you trust about food, and raiment, and home? Can you trust God even about your shoes, that they shall be iron and brass, and about the hairs of your head that they are all numbered? What we need is less theory and more actual trust in God.

The faith of the text was personal: “that he would deliver him.” Blessed is that faith which can reach its arm of compassion around the world, but that faith must begin at home. Of what use were the longest arm if it were not fixed to the man himself at the shoulder? If you have no faith about yourself, what faith can you have about others? “He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him.” Come, beloved, have you such a faith in the living God? Do you trust in God through Christ Jesus that he will save you? Yes, you poor, unworthy one, the Lord will deliver you if you trust him. Yes, poor woman, or unknown man, the Lord can help you in your present trouble, and in every other, and he will do so if you trust him to that end. May the Holy Spirit lead you to first trust the Lord Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then to trust in God for all things.

Let us pause a minute. Let a man trust in God; not in fiction but in fact, and he will find that he has solid rock under his feet. Let him trust about his own daily needs and trials, and rest assured that the Lord will actually appear for him, and he will not be disappointed. Such a trust in God is a very *reasonable* thing; its absence is most unreasonable. If there be a God, he knows all about my case. If he made my ear he can hear me; if he made my eye he can see me; and therefore he perceives my condition. If he be my Father, as he says he is, he will certainly care for me, and will help me in my hour

of need if he can. We are sure that he can, for he is omnipotent. Is there anything unreasonable, then, in trusting in God that he will deliver us? I venture to say that if all the forces in the universe were put together, and all the kindly intents of all who are our friends were put together, and we were then to rely upon those united forces and intents, we should not have a thousandth part so much justification for our confidence as when we depend upon God, whose intents and forces are infinitely greater than those of all the world beside. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." If you view things in the white light of pure reason, it is infinitely more reasonable to trust in the living God than in all his creatures put together.

Certainly, dear friends, it is extremely *comfortable* to trust in God. I find it so, and therefore speak. To roll your burden upon the Lord, since he will sustain you, is a blessed way of being quit of care. We know him to be faithful, and as powerful as he is faithful; and our dependence upon him is the solid foundation of a profound peace.

While it is comfortable, it is also *uplifting*. If you trust in men, the best of men, you are likely to be lowered by your trust. We are apt to cringe before those who patronize us. If your prosperity depends upon a person's smile, you are tempted to pay homage even when it is undeserved. The old saying mentions a certain person as "knowing on which side his bread is buttered." Thousands are practically degraded by their trusting in men. But when our reliance is upon the living God we are raised by it, and elevated both morally and spiritually. You may bow in deepest reverence before God, and yet there will be no fawning. You may lie in the dust before the Majesty of heaven, and yet not be dishonoured by your humility; in fact, it is our greatness to be nothing in the presence of the Most High.

This confidence in God makes men *strong*. I should advise the enemy not to oppose the man who trusts in God. In the long run he will be beaten, as Haman found it with Mordecai. He had been warned of this by Zeresh, his wife, and his wise men, who said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Contend not with a man who has God at his back. Years ago the Mentonese desired to break away from the dominion of the Prince of Monaco. They therefore drove out his agent. The prince came with his army, not a very great one, it is true, but still formidable to the Mentonese. I know not what the high and mighty princeling was not going to do; but the news came that the King of Sardinia was coming up in the rear to help the Mentonese, and therefore his lordship of Monaco very prudently retired to his own rock. When a believer stands out against evil he may be sure that the Lord of hosts will not be far away. The enemy shall hear the dash of his horse-hoof and the blast of his trumpet, and shall flee before him. Wherefore be of good courage, and compel the world to say of you, "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him."

II. Secondly, I want you to follow me briefly in considering THE

TEST WHICH IS THE ESSENCE OF THE TAUNT which was hurled by the mockers against our Lord—“Let him deliver him now, if he will have him.”

Such a test will come to all believers. It may come as a taunt from enemies; it will certainly come as a trial of your faith. The arch-enemy will assuredly hiss out, “Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

This taunt has about it *the appearance of being very logical*, and indeed in a measure so it is. If God has promised to deliver us, and we have openly professed to believe the promise, it is only natural that others should say, “Let us see whether he does deliver him. This man believes that the Lord will help him; and he must help him, or else the man’s faith is a delusion.” This is the sort of test to which we ourselves would have put others before our conversion, and we cannot object to be proved in the same manner ourselves. Perhaps we incline to run away from the ordeal, but this very shrinking should be a solemn call to us to question the genuineness of that faith which we are afraid to test. “He trusted on the Lord,” says the enemy, “that he would deliver him: let him deliver him”; and surely, however malicious the design, there is no escaping from the logic of the challenge.

It is *peculiarly painful* to have this stern inference driven home to you in the hour of sorrow. Because one cannot deny the fairness of the appeal, it is all the more trying. In the time of depression of spirit it is hard to have one’s faith questioned, or the ground on which it stands made a matter of dispute. Either to be mistaken in one’s belief, or to have no real faith, or to find the ground of one’s faith fail is an exceedingly grievous thing. Yet as our Lord was not spared this painful ordeal, we must not expect to be kept clear of it, and Satan knows well how to work these questions, till the poison of them sets the blood on fire. “He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him;” he hurls this fiery dart into the soul, till the man is sorely wounded, and can scarcely hold his ground.

The taunt is especially *pointed and personal*. It is put thus: “*He* trusted on the Lord that he would deliver *him*: let him deliver *him*”; “Do not come to us with your fiddle-faddle about God’s helping all his chosen. Here is a man who is one of his people, will he help *him*? Do not talk to us big things about Jehovah at the Red Sea, or in the Desert of Sinai, or God helping his people in ages past. Here is a living man before us who trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver *him* now.” You know how Satan will pick out one of the most afflicted, and pointing his fingers at him will cry, “Let him deliver *him*.” Brethren, the test is fair. God will be true to every believer. If any one child of God could be lost, it would be quite enough to enable the devil to spoil all the glory of God for ever. If one promise of God to one of his people should fail, that one failure would suffice to mar the veracity of the Lord to all eternity; they would publish it in the “Diabolical Gazette,” and in every street of Tophet they would howl it out, “God has failed. God has broken his promise. God has ceased to be faithful to his people.” It would then be a horrible reproach—“He trusted in God to deliver him, but he did not deliver him.”

Much emphasis lies in its being *in the present tense*: "He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him *now*." I see Thee, O Lord Jesus, thou art not now in the wilderness, where the fiend is saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." No. Thou art nailed to the tree; thine enemies have hemmed thee in. The legionaries of Rome are at the foot of the cross, the scribes and Pharisees and raging Jews compass thee about. There is no escape from death for thee! Hence their cry—"Let him deliver him *now*." Ah, brothers and sisters! this is how Satan assails us, using our present and pressing tribulations as the barbs of his arrows. Yet here also there is reason and logic in the challenge.

If God does not deliver his servants at one time as well as another, he has not kept his promise. For a man of truth is always true, and a promise once given always stands. A promise cannot be broken now and then, and yet the honour of the person giving it be maintained by his keeping it at other times. The word of a true man stands always good: it is good *now*. This is logic, bitter logic, cold steel logic, logic which seems to cut right down your backbone and cleave your chine. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him *now*." Yet this hard logic can be turned to comfort. I told you a story the other day of the brother in Guy's Hospital to whom the doctors said that he must undergo an operation which was extremely dangerous. They gave him a week to consider whether he would submit to it. He was troubled for his young wife and children, and for his work for the Lord. A friend left a bunch of flowers for him, with this verse as its motto, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him *now*." "Yes," he thought, "*now*." In prayer he cast himself upon the Lord, and felt in his heart, "Come on, doctors, I am ready for you." When the next morning came, he refused to take chloroform, for he desired to go to heaven in his senses. He bore the operation manfully, and he is yet alive. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him" then and there, and the Lord did so. In this lies the brunt of the battle.

A Christian man may be beaten in business, he may fail to meet all demands, and then Satan yells, "Let him deliver him *now*." The poor man has been out of work for two or three months, tramping the streets of London until he has worn out his boots; he has been brought to his last penny. I think I hear the laugh of the Prince of Darkness as he cries, "Let him deliver him *now*." Or else the believer is very ill in body, and low in spirit, and then Satan howls, "Let him deliver him *now*." Some of us have been in very trying positions. We were moved with indignation because of deadly error, and we spoke plainly, but men refused to hear. Those we relied upon deserted us; good men sought their own ease and would not march with us, and we had to bear testimony for despised truth alone, until we were ourselves despised. Then the adversary shouted, "Let him deliver him *now*." Be it so! We do not refuse the test. Our God whom we serve will deliver us. We will not bow down to modern thought nor worship the image which human wisdom has set up. Our God is God both of hills and of valleys. He will not fail his servants, albeit that for

a while he forbears that he may try their faith. We dare accept the test, and say, “Let him deliver us *now*.”

Beloved friends, we need not be afraid of this taunt if it is brought by adversaries; for, after all, the test will come to us apart from any malice, for *it is inevitable*. All the faith you have will be tried. I can see you heaping it up. How rich you are! What a pile of faith! Friend, you are almost perfect! Open the furnace door and put the heap in. Do you shrink? See how it shrivels! Is there anything left? Bring hither a magnifying glass. Is this all that is left? Yes, this is all that remains of the heap. You say, “I trusted in God.” Yes, but you had reason to cry, “Lord, help my unbelief.” Brethren, we have not a tithe of the faith we think we have. But whether or not, all our faith must be tested. God builds no ships but what he sends to sea. In living, in losing, in working, in weeping, in suffering, or in striving, God will find a fitting crucible for every single grain of the precious faith which he has given us. Then he will come to us and say—You trusted in God that he would deliver you, and you shall be delivered now. How you will open your eyes as you see the Lord’s hand of deliverance! What a man of wonders you will be when you tell in your riper years to the younger people how the Lord delivered you! Why, there are some Christians I know of who, like the ancient mariner, could detain even a wedding guest with their stories of God’s wonders on the deep.

Yes, the test will come again and again. May the gibes of adversaries only make us ready for the sterner ordeals of the judgment to come. O my dear friends, examine your religion. You have a great deal of it, some of you; but what of its quality? Can your religion stand the test of poverty, and scandal, and scorn? Can it stand the test of scientific sarcasm and learned contempt? Will your religion stand the test of long sickness of body and depression of spirit caused by weakness? What are you doing amid the common trials of life? What will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Examine well your faith, since all hangs there. Some of us who have lain for weeks together, peering through the thin veil which parts us from the unseen, have been made to feel that nothing will suffice us but a promise which will answer the taunt, “Let him deliver us *now*.”

III. I shall finish, in the third place, dear friends, by noticing THE ANSWER to the test. God does deliver those who trust in him. God’s interposition for the faithful is not a dream, but a substantial reality. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.” All history proves the faithfulness of God. Those who trust God have been in all sorts of troubles; but they have always been delivered. They have been bereaved. What a horrible bereavement was that which fell to the lot of Aaron, when his two sons were struck dead for their profanity in the presence of God! “And Aaron held his peace”! What grace was there! Thus will the Lord sustain you also should he take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Grave after grave has the good man visited till it seemed that his whole race was buried, and yet his heart has not been broken; but he has bowed his soul before the will of the ever-blessed One. Thus has the Lord delivered his afflicted one by sustaining him.

In other ways the bush has burned, and yet has not been consumed. Remember the multiplied and multiform trials of Job. Yet God sustained him to the end so that he did not charge God foolishly, but held fast his faith in the Most High. If ever you are called to the afflictions of Job you will also be called to the sustaining grace of Job. Some of God's servants have been defeated in their testimony. They have borne faithful witness for God, but they have been rejected of men. It has been their lot, like Cassandra, to prophesy the truth, but not to be believed. Such was Jeremiah, who was born to a heritage of scorn from those whose benefit he sought. Yet he was delivered. He shrank not from being faithful. His courage could not be silenced. By integrity he was delivered.

Godly men have been despised and misrepresented, and yet have been delivered. Remember David and his envious brethren, David and the malignant Saul, David when his men spake of stoning him. Yet he took off the giant's head; yet he came to the throne; yet the Lord built him a house.

Some of God's servants have been bitterly persecuted, but God has delivered them. Daniel came forth from the lions' den, and the three holy children from the midst of the burning fiery furnace. These are only one or two out of millions who trusted God and he delivered them. Out of all manner of ill the Lord delivered them. God brought this crowd of witnesses through all their trials unto his throne, where they rest with Jesus, and share the triumph of their Master at this very day. O my timid brother, nothing has happened to you but what is common to men. Your battle is not different from the warfare of the rest of the saints; and as God has delivered them he will deliver you also, seeing you put your trust in him.

But *God's ways of deliverance are his own*. He does not deliver according to the translation put upon "deliverance" by the ribald throng. He does not deliver according to the interpretation put upon "deliverance" by our shrinking flesh and blood. He delivers, but it is in his own way. Let me remark that, *if God delivers you and me in the same way as he delivered his own Son, we can have no cause of complaint*. If the deliverance which he vouchsafed to us is of the same kind as that which he vouchsafed to the Only Begotten, we may well be content. Well, what kind of a deliverance was that? Did the Father tear up the cross from the earth? Did he proceed to draw out the nails from the sacred hands and feet of his dear Son? Did he set him down upon that "green hill far away, beyond the city wall," and place in his hand a sword of fire with which to smite his adversaries? Did he bid the earth open and swallow up all his foes? No; nothing of the kind. Jehovah did not interpose to spare his Son a single pang; but he let him die. He let him be taken as a dead man down from the cross and laid in a tomb. Jesus went through with his suffering to the bitter end. O brothers and sisters, this may be God's way of delivering us. We have trusted in God that he would deliver us; and his rendering of his promise is, that he will enable us to go through with it; we shall suffer to the last, and triumph in so doing. Yet God's way of delivering those who trust in him is *always the best way*. If the Father had taken his Son down from the cross, what

would have been the result? Redemption unaccomplished, salvation work undone, and Jesus returning with his life-work unfinished. This would not have been deliverance, but defeat. It was much better for our Lord Jesus to die. Now he has paid the ransom for his elect, and having accomplished the great purpose of atonement, he has slept a while in the heart of the earth, and now has ascended to his throne in the endless glories of heaven. It was deliverance of the fullest kind; for from the pangs of his death has come the joy of life to his redeemed. It is not God's will that every mountain should be levelled, but that we should be the stronger for climbing the Hill Difficulty. God will deliver; he must deliver, but he will do it in our cases, as in the case of our Lord, in the best possible manner.

Anyhow, he will deliver his chosen: the taunt of the adversary shall not cause our God to forget or forego his people. I know that the Lord will no more fail me than any other of his servants. He will not leave a faithful witness to his adversaries. “I know that my Avenger liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” Is this also your confidence? Then do not sit down in sorrow, and act as though you despaired. Quit yourselves like men. Be strong, fear not. Cast yourselves on the love that never changeth and never fainteth, and the Lord will answer all the revilings of Rabshakeh, and the blusterings of Sennacherib.

There are times when we may use this text to our comfort. “Let him deliver him now,” saith the text, “if he will have him.” You, dear friends, who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ before, how I wish you could try him now! You feel this morning full of sin, and full of need. Come, then, and trust the Saviour *now*. See whether he will not save you *now*. Is there one day in the year in which Jesus cannot save a sinner? Come and see whether the 17th of June is that day. Try whether he will not deliver you *now* from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin. Why not come? You have never, perhaps, been in the Tabernacle before, and when coming here this morning you did not think of finding the Saviour. Oh, that the Saviour may find you! Jesus Christ is a Saviour every day, all the year round. Whoever cometh to him shall find eternal life *now*. “Oh,” you say, “I am in such an unfit state; I am in all the deshabelle of my carelessness and godlessness.” Come along, man, come along, just as you are. Tarry not for improvement or arrangement, for both of these Jesus will give you; come and put your trust in the great Sacrifice for sin, and he will deliver you—deliver you *now*. Lord, save the sinner, *now*!

Others of you are the children of God, but you are in peculiar trouble. Well, what are you going to do? You have always trusted in God before; are you going to doubt him now? “O my dear sir, you do not know my distress; I am the most afflicted person in the Tabernacle.” Be it so; but you trusted in the Lord the past twenty years, and I do not believe that you have seen any just cause for denying him

your confidence now. Did you say that you have known him from your youth up? What! you seventy years of age? Then you are too near home to begin distrusting your heavenly Father. That will never do. You have been to sea, and have weathered many a storm in mid-ocean, and are you now going to be drowned in a ditch? Think not so. The Lord will deliver you even now. Do not let us suppose that we have come where boundless love and infinite wisdom cannot reach us. Do not fancy that you have leaped upon a ledge of rock so high as to be out of reach of the everlasting arm. If you had done so I would still cry—Throw yourself down into the arms of God, and trust that he will not let you be destroyed.

It may be that some of us are in trouble about the church and the faith. We have defended God's truth as well as we could, and spoken out against deadly error; but craft and numbers have been against us, and at present things seem to have gone wrong. The good are timid, and the evil are false. They say, "He trusted in God: let him deliver him now." Sirs, he will deliver us now. We will throw our soul once more into this battle, and see if the Lord does not vindicate his truth. If we have not spoken in God's name we are content to go back to the dust from whence we sprang; but if we have spoken God's truth we defy the whole confederacy to prevail against it.

Peradventure, I speak to some missionary, who is mourning over a time of great trial in a mission which is dear to his heart. Ah, dear friend! Christ intended that the gospel should repeat his own experience, and then should triumph like himself. The gospel lives by being killed, and conquers by defeat. Cast it where you will, it always falls upon its feet. You need not be afraid of it under any trial. Just now, the wisdom of man is its worst foe, but the Lord will deliver it *now*. The gospel lives and reigns. Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth from the tree, and from that tree of the curse he issues his supreme commands. The self-same day in which Jesus died, he took with him into his kingdom and his inmost paradise a thief who had hung at his side. He liveth and reigneth for ever and ever, and calleth to himself whomsoever he hath chosen. Let us drown the taunts of the adversary with our shouts of Hallelujah! The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah. Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 34, 37 (Part II.).

THE THREE HOURS' DARKNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18TH, 1886, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.”
—Matthew xxvii. 45.

FROM nine till noon the usual degree of light was present; so that there was time enough for our Lord's adversaries to behold and insult his sufferings. There could be no mistake about the fact that he was really nailed to the cross; for he was crucified in broad daylight. We are fully assured that it was Jesus of Nazareth, for both friends and foes were eye-witnesses of his agonies: for three long hours the Jews sat down and watched him on the cross, making jests of his miseries. I feel thankful for those three hours of light; for else the enemies of our faith would have questioned whether in very deed the blessed body of our Master was nailed to the tree, and would have started fancies as many as the bats and owls which haunt the darkness. Where would have been the witnesses of this solemn scene if the sun had been hidden from morn till night? As three hours of light gave opportunity for inspection and witness-bearing, we see the wisdom which did not allow it to close too soon.

Never forget that this miracle of the closing of the eye of day at high noon was performed by our Lord in his weakness. He had walked the sea, and raised the dead, and healed the sick, in the days of his strength; but now he has come to his lowest, the fever is on him, he is faint and thirsty. He hangs on the borders of dissolution; yet has he power to darken the sun at noon. He is still very God of very God:

“Behold, a purple torrent run
Down from his hands and head,
The crimson tide puts out the sun;
His groans awake the dead.”

If he can do this in his weakness, what is he not able to do in his strength? Fail not to remember that this power was displayed in a sphere in which he did not usually put forth his might. The sphere of Christ is that of goodness and benevolence, and consequently of light. When he enters the sphere of darkness-making, and of working judgment, he engages in what he calls his strange work. Wonders of terror are his left-handed deeds. It is but now and then that he causes the sun to go down at noon, and darkens the earth in the clear day (Amos viii. 9). If our Lord can

make darkness at will as he dies, what glory may we not expect now that he lives to be the light of the city of God for ever? The Lamb is the light; and what a light! The heavens bear the impress of his dying power, and lose their brightness; shall not the new heavens and the new earth attest the power of the risen Lord? The thick darkness around the dying Christ is the robe of the Omnipotent: he liveth again, all power is in his hands, and all that power he will put forth to bless his chosen.

What a call must that mid-day midnight have been to the careless sons of men! They knew not that the Son of God was among them; nor that he was working out human redemption. The grandest hour in all history seemed likely to pass by unheeded, when, suddenly, night hastened from her chambers and usurped the day. Every one asked his fellow, "What means this darkness?" Business stood still: the plough stayed in mid-furrow, and the axe paused uplifted. It was the middle of the day, when men are busiest; but they made a general pause. Not only on Calvary, but on every hill, and in every valley, the gloom settled down. There was a halt in the caravan of life. None could move unless they groped their way like the blind. The master of the house called for a light at noon, and his servant tremblingly obeyed the unusual summons. Other lights were twinkling, and Jerusalem was as a city by night, only men were not in their beds. How startled were mankind! Around the great death-bed an appropriate quiet was secured. I doubt not that a shuddering awe came over the masses of the people, and the thoughtful foresaw terrible things. Those who had stood about the cross, and had dared to insult the majesty of Jesus, were paralyzed with fear. They ceased their ribaldry, and with it their cruel exultation. They were cowed though not convinced, even the basest of them; while the better sort "smote their breasts and returned." As many as could do so, no doubt, stumbled to their chambers, and endeavoured to hide themselves, for fear of awful judgments which they feared were near. I do not wonder that there should be traditions of strange things that were said during the hush of that darkness. Those whispers of the past may or may not be true: they have been the subject of learned controversy, but the labour of the dispute was energy ill spent. Yet we could not have wondered if one did say as he is reported to have done, "God is suffering, or the world is perishing." Nor should I drive from my beliefs the poetic legend that an Egyptian pilot passing down the river heard among the reedy banks a voice out of the rustling rushes, whispering, "The great Pan is dead." Truly, the God of nature was expiring, and things less tender than the reeds by the river might well tremble at the sound thereof.

We are told that this darkness was over all the land; and Luke puts it, "over all the earth." That portion of our globe which was then veiled in natural night was not affected thereby; but to all men awake, and at their employment, it was the advertisement of a great and solemn event. It was strange beyond all experience, and all men marvelled; for when the light should have been brightest, all things were obscured for the space of three hours.

There must be great teaching in this darkness; for when we come so near the cross, which is the centre of history, every event is full of meaning.

Light will come out of this darkness. I love to feel the solemnity of the three hours of death-shade, and to sit down therein and meditate, with no companion but the august sufferer, around whom that darkness lowered. I am going to speak of it in four ways, as the Holy Spirit may help me. First, let us bow our spirits in the presence of a *miracle which amazes us*; secondly, let us regard this darkness as a *veil which conceals*; thirdly, as a *symbol which instructs*; and fourthly, as a *display of sympathy*, which forewarns us by the prophecies which it implies.

I. First, let us view this darkness as A MIRACLE WHICH AMAZES US.

It may seem a trite observation that this darkness was altogether out of the natural course of things. Since the world began was it not heard that at high noon there should be darkness over all the land. It was out of the order of nature altogether. Some deny miracles; and if they also deny God, I will not at this time deal with them. But it is very strange that any one who believes in God should doubt the possibility of miracles. It seems to me that, granted the being of a God, miracle is to be expected as an occasional declaration of his independent and active will. He may make certain rules for his actions, and it may be his wisdom to keep to them; but surely he must reserve to himself the liberty to depart from his own laws, or else he has in a measure laid aside his personal Godhead, deified law, and set it up above himself. It would not increase our idea of the glory of his Godhead if we could be assured that he had made himself subject to rule, and tied his own hands from ever acting except in a certain manner. From the self-existence and freedom of will which enter into our very conception of God, we are led to expect that sometimes he should not keep to the methods which he follows as his general rule. This has led to the universal conviction that miracle is a proof of Godhead. The general works of creation and providence are to my mind the best proofs; but the common heart of our race, for some reason or other, looks to miracle as surer evidence; thus proving that miracle is expected of God. Although the Lord makes it his order that there shall be day and night, he in this case with abundant reason interposes three hours of night in the centre of a day. Behold the reason. The unusual in lower nature is made to consort with the unusual in the dealings of nature's Lord. Certainly this miracle was most congruous with that greater miracle which was happening in the death of Christ. Was not the Lord himself departing from all common ways? Was he not doing that which had never been done from the beginning, and would never be done again? That man should die is so common a thing as to be deemed inevitable. We are not startled now at the sound of a funeral knell: we have become familiar with the grave. As the companions of our youth die at our side we are not seized with amazement; for death is everywhere about us and within us. But that the Son of God should die, this is beyond all expectation, and not only above nature, but contrary thereto. He who is equal with God deigns to hang upon the cross, and die. I know of nothing that seems more out of rule and beyond expectation than this. The sun darkened at noon is a fit accompaniment of the death of Jesus. Is it not so?

Further, this miracle was not only out of the order of nature, but it was one which *would have been pronounced impossible*. It is not possible

that there should be an eclipse of the sun at the time of the full moon. The moon at the time when she is in her full is not in a position in which she could possibly cast her shadow upon the earth. The Passover was at the time of the full moon, and therefore it was not possible that the sun should then undergo an eclipse. This darkening of the sun was not strictly an astronomical eclipse; the darkness was doubtless produced in some other way: yet to those who were present it did seem to be a total eclipse of the sun—a thing impossible. Ah, brothers! when we come to deal with man, and the fall, and sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, we are at home with impossibilities. We have now reached a region where prodigies, and marvels, and surprises, are the order of the day: sublimities become commouplaces when we come within the circle of eternal love. Yea, more; we have now quitted the solid land of the possible, and have put out to sea, where we see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. When we think of impossibilities in other spheres we start back; but the way of the cross is ablaze with the divine, and we soon perceive that "with God all things are possible." See, then, in the death of Jesus, the possibility of the impossible! Behold here how the Son of God can die. We sometimes pause when we meet with an expression in a hymn which implies that God can suffer or die; we think that the poet has used too great a license: yet it behoves us to refrain from hypercriticism, since in Holy Writ there are words like it. We even read (Acts xx. 28) of "the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood"—the blood of God! Ah well! I am not careful to defend the language of the Holy Ghost; but in its presence I take liberty to justify the words which we sang just now:

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."

I will not venture to explain the death of the incarnate God. I am content to believe it, and to rest my hope upon it.

How should the Holy One have sin laid upon him? That also I do not know. A wise man has told us, as if it were an axiom, that the imputation or the non-imputation of sin is an impossibility. Be it so: we have become familiar with such things since we have beheld the cross. Things which men call absurdities have become foundation truths to us. The doctrine of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. We do know that in our Lord was no sin, and yet he his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. We do not know how the innocent Son of God could be permitted to suffer for sins that were not his own; it amazes us that justice should permit one so perfectly holy to be forsaken of his God, and to cry out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" But it was so; and it was so by the decree of the highest justice; and we rejoice therein. As it was so, that the sun was eclipsed when it was impossible that he should be eclipsed, so has Jesus performed on our behalf, in the agonies of his death, things which, in the ordinary judgment of men, must be set down as utterly impossible. Our faith is at home in wonder-land, where the Lord's thoughts are seen to be as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

Concerning this miracle, I have also further to remark that *this darkening of the sun surpassed all ordinary and natural eclipses*. It lasted longer than an ordinary eclipse, and it came in a different manner. According to Luke, the darkness all over the land came first, and the sun was darkened afterwards: the darkness did not begin with the sun, but mastered the sun. It was unique and supernatural. Now, among all griefs no grief is comparable to the grief of Jesus: of all woes none can parallel the woes of our great Substitute. As strongest light casts deepest shade, so has the surprising love of Jesus cost him a death such as falls not to the common lot of men. Others die, but this man is "obedient unto death." Others drink the fatal draught, yet reckon not of its wormwood and gall; but he "tasted death." "He poured out his soul unto death." Every part of his being was darkened with that extraordinary death-shade; and the natural darkness outside of him did but shroud a special death which was entirely by itself.

And now, when I come to think of it, *this darkness appears to have been most natural and fitting*. If we had to write out the story of our Lord's death we could not omit the darkness without neglecting a most important item. The darkness seems a part of the natural furniture of that great transaction. Read the story through and you are not at all startled with the darkness; after once familiarizing your mind with the thought that this is the Son of God, and that he stretches his hands to the cruel death of the cross, you do not wonder at the rending of the veil of the temple; you are not astonished at the earthquake or at the rising of certain of the dead. These are proper attendants of our Lord's passion; and so is the darkness. It drops into its place, it seems as if it could not have been otherwise.

"That sacrifice!—the death of him—
The high and ever Holy One!
Well may the conscious heaven grow dim,
And blacken the beholding sun."

For a moment think again. Has not it appeared as if the death which that darkness shrouded was also a natural part of the great whole? We have grown at last to feel as if the death of the Christ of God were an integral part of human history. You cannot take it out of man's chronicle; can you? Introduce the Fall, and see Paradise Lost, and you cannot make the poem complete till you have introduced that greater Man who did redeem us, and by his death gave us our Paradise Regained. It is a singular characteristic of all true miracles, that though your wonder never ceases they never appear to be unnatural: they are marvellous, but never monstrous. The miracles of Christ dovetail into the general run of human history: we cannot see how the Lord could be on earth and Lazarus not be raised from the dead when the grief of Martha and Mary had told its tale. We cannot see how the disciples could have been tempest-tossed on the Lake of Galilee and the Christ not walk on the water to deliver them. Wonders of power are expected parts of the narrative where Jesus is. Everything fits into its place with surrounding facts. A Romish miracle is always monstrous and devoid of harmony with all beside it. What if St. Winifred's head did come up from the well and

speaking from the coping to the astonished peasant who was about to draw water! I do not care whether it did or did not; it does not alter history a bit, nor even colour it; it is tagged on to the record, and is no part of it. But the miracles of Jesus, this of the darkness among them, are essential to human history; and especially is this so in the case of his death and this great darkness which shrouded it. All things in human story converge to the cross, which seems not to be an afterthought nor an expedient, but the fit and foreordained channel through which love should run to guilty men.

I cannot say more from want of voice, though I had many more things to say. Sit down, and let the thick darkness cover you till you cannot even see the cross, and only know that out of reach of mortal eye your Lord wrought out the redemption of his people. He wrought in silence a miracle of patience and of love, by which light has come to those who sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death.

II. Secondly, I desire you to regard this darkness as **A VEIL WHICH CONCEALS**. The Christ is hanging on yonder tree. I see the dreadful cross. I can see the thieves on either side. I look around, and I sorrowfully mark that motley group of citizens from Jerusalem, and scribes, and priests, and strangers from different countries, mingled with Roman soldiers. They turn their eyes on him, and for the most part gaze with cruel scorn upon the Holy One who is in the centre. In truth it is an awful sight. Mark those dogs of the common sort and those bulls of Bashan of more notable rank, who all unite to dishonour the meek and lowly One. I must confess I never read the story of the Master's death, knowing what I do of the pain of crucifixion, without deep anguish: crucifixion was a death worthy to have been invented by devils. The pain which it involved was immeasurable; I will not torture you by describing it. I know dear hearts that cannot read of it without tears, and without lying awake for nights afterwards.

But there was more than anguish upon Calvary: ridicule and contempt embittered all. Those jests, those cruel gibes, those mockeries, those thrustings out of the tongue, what shall we say of these? At times I have felt some little sympathy with the French Prince who cried, "If I had been there with my guards, I would soon have swept those wretches away." It was too terrible a sight: the pain of the victim was grievous enough, but the abominable wickedness of the mockers who could bear? Let us thank God that in the middle of the crime there came down a darkness which rendered it impossible for them to go further with it. Jesus must die; for his pains there must be no alleviation, and from death there must be for him no deliverance; but the scoffers must be silenced. Most effectually their mouths were closed by the dense darkness which shut them in.

What I see in that veil is, first of all, that it was *a concealment for those guilty enemies*. Did you ever think of that? It is as if God himself said, "I cannot bear it. I will not see this infamy! Descend, O veil!" Down fell the heavy shades.

"I asked the heavens, 'What foe to God hath done
This unexampled deed?' The heavens exclaim,
'Twas man; and we in horror snatched the sun
From such a spectacle of guilt and shame.'"

Thank God, the cross is a hiding-place. It furnishes for guilty men a shelter from the all-seeing eye, so that justice need not see and strike. When God lifts up his Son, and makes him visible, he hides the sin of men. He says that "the times of their ignorance he winks at." Even the greatness of their sin he casts behind his back, so that he need not see it, but may indulge his long-suffering, and permit his pity to endure their provocations. It must have grieved the heart of the eternal God to see such wanton cruelty of men towards him who went about doing good, and healing all manner of diseases. It was horrible to see the teachers of the people rejecting him with scorn, the seed of Israel, who ought to have accepted him as their Messiah, casting him out as a thing despised and abhorred. I therefore feel gratitude to God for bidding that darkness cover all the land, and end that shameful scene. I would say to any guilty ones here: Thank God that the Lord Jesus has made it possible for your sins to be hidden more completely than by thick darkness. Thank God that in Christ he does not see you with that stern eye of justice which would involve your destruction. Had not Jesus interposed, whose death you have despised, you had wrought out in your own death the result of your own sin long ago; but for your Lord's sake you are allowed to live as if God did not see you. This long-suffering is meant to bring you to repentance. Will you not come?

But, further, that darkness was a *sacred concealment for the blessed Person of our divine Lord*. So to speak, the angels found for their King a pavilion of thick clouds, in the which his Majesty might be sheltered in its hour of misery. It was too much for wicked eyes to gaze so rudely on that immaculate Person. Had not his enemies stripped him naked, and cast lots upon his vesture? Therefore it was meet that the holy manhood should at length find suitable concealment. It was not fit that brutal eyes should see the lines made upon that blessed form by the graving tool of sorrow. It was not meet that revellers should see the contortions of that sacred frame, indwelt with Deity, while he was being broken beneath the iron rod of divine wrath on our behalf. It was meet that God should cover him, so that none should see all he did and all he bare when he was made sin for us. I bless God devoutly for thus hiding my Lord away: thus was he screened from eyes which were not fit to see the Sun much less to look upon the Sun of Righteousness.

This darkness also warns us, even us who are most reverent. This darkness tells us all that *the Passion is a great mystery, into which we cannot pry*. I try to explain it as substitution, and I feel that where the language of Scripture is explicit, I may and must be explicit too. But yet I feel that the idea of substitution does not cover the whole of the matter, and that no human conception can completely grasp the whole of the dread mystery. It was wrought in darkness, because the full, far-reaching meaning and result cannot be beheld of finite mind. Tell me the death of the Lord Jesus was a grand example of self-sacrifice—I can see *that* and much more. Tell me it was a wondrous obedience to the will of God—I can see *that* and much more. Tell me it was the bearing of what ought to have been borne by myriads of sinners of the human race, as the chastisement of their sin—I can see *that*, and found my best hope upon it. But do not tell me that this is all that is in the cross. No, great as this would be, there is much more

in our Redeemer's death. God only knows the love of God : Christ only knows all that he accomplished when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. There are common mysteries of nature into which it were irreverence to pry ; but this is a divine mystery, before which we put our shoes from off our feet, for the place called Calvary is holy ground. God veiled the cross in darkness, and in darkness much of its deeper meaning lies ; not because God would not reveal it, but because we have not capacity enough to discern it all. God was manifest in the flesh, and in that human flesh he put away sin by his own sacrifice : this we all know ; but "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness."

Once again, this veil of darkness also pictures to me the way in which *the powers of darkness will always endeavour to conceal the cross of Christ*. We fight with darkness when we try to preach the cross. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," said Christ ; and I doubt not that the infernal hosts made in that hour a fierce assault upon the spirit of our Lord. Thus much also we know, that if the prince of darkness be anywhere in force, it is sure to be where Christ is lifted up. To becloud the cross is the grand object of the enemy of souls. Did you ever notice it? These fellows who hate the gospel will let every other doctrine pass muster ; but if the atonement be preached, and the truths which grow out of it, straightway they are aroused. Nothing provokes the devil like the cross. Modern theology has for its main object the obscuration of the doctrine of atonement. These modern cuttle-fishes make the water of life black with their ink. They make out sin to be a trifle, and the punishment of it to be a temporary business ; and thus they degrade the remedy by underrating the disease. We are not ignorant of their devices. Expect, my brethren, that the clouds of darkness will gather as to a centre around the cross, that they may hide it from the sinner's view. But expect this also, that there darkness shall meet its end. Light springeth out of that darkness—the light eternal of the undying Son of God, who having risen from the dead, liveth for ever to scatter the darkness of evil.

III. Now we pass on to speak of this darkness as **A SYMBOL WHICH INSTRUCTS**.

The veil falls down and conceals ; but at the same time, as an emblem, it reveals. It seems to say, "Attempt not to search within, but learn from the veil itself : it hath cherub work upon it." This darkness teaches us what Jesus suffered : it aids us to guess at the griefs which we may not actually see.

The darkness is the symbol of *the wrath of God which fell on those who slew his only begotten Son*. God was angry, and his frown removed the light of day. Well might he be angry, when sin was murdering his only Son ; when the Jewish husbandmen were saying, "This is the heir ; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." This is God's wrath towards all mankind, for practically all men concurred in the death of Jesus. That wrath has brought men into darkness ; they are ignorant, blinded, bewildered. They have come to love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. In that darkness they do not repent, but go on to reject the Christ of God. Into this darkness God cannot look upon them in complacency ; but he views

them as children of darkness, and heirs of wrath, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

The symbol also tells us *what our Lord Jesus Christ endured*. The darkness outside of him was the figure of the darkness that was within him. In Gethsemane a thick darkness fell upon our Lord's spirit. He was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His joy was communion with God—that joy was gone, and he was in the dark. His day was the light of his Father's face: that face was hidden and a terrible night gathered around him. Brothers, I should sin against that veil if I were to pretend that I could tell you what the sorrow was which oppressed the Saviour's soul: only so far can I speak as it has been given me to have fellowship with him in his sufferings. Have you ever felt a deep and overwhelming horror of sin—your own sin and the sins of others? Have you ever seen sin in the light of God's love? Has it ever darkly hovered over your sensitive conscience? Has an unknown sense of wrath crept over you like midnight gloom; and has it been about you, around you, above you, and within you? Have you felt shut up in your feebleness, and yet shut out from God? Have you looked around and found no help, no comfort even in God—no hope, no peace? In all this you have sipped a little of that salt sea into which our Lord was cast. If, like Abraham, you have felt a horror of great darkness creep over you, then have you had a taste of what your divine Lord suffered when it pleased the Father to bruise him and to put him to grief. This it was that made him sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground; and this it was which on the cross made him utter that appalling cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"? It was not the crown of thorns, or the scourge, or the cross which made him cry, but the darkness, the awful darkness of desertion which oppressed his mind and made him feel like one distraught. All that could comfort him was withdrawn, and all that could distress him was piled upon him. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear"? Our Saviour's spirit was wounded, and he cried, "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." Of all natural and spiritual comfort he was bereft, and his distress was utter and entire. The darkness of Calvary did not, like an ordinary night, reveal the stars; but it darkened every lamp of heaven. His strong crying and tears denoted the deep sorrow of his soul. He bore all it was possible for his capacious mind to bear, though enlarged and invigorated by union with the Godhead. He bore the equivalent of hell; nay, not that only, but he bore that which stood instead of ten thousand hells so far as the vindication of the law is concerned. Our Lord rendered in his death agony a homage to justice far greater than if a world had been doomed to destruction. When I have said that, what more can I say? Well may I tell you that this unutterable darkness, this hiding of the Divine face, expresses more of the woes of Jesus than words can ever tell.

Again, I think I see in that darkness, also *what it was that Jesus was battling with*; for we must never forget that the cross was a battle-field to him, wherein he triumphed gloriously. He was fighting then with darkness; with the powers of darkness of which Satan is the head; with the darkness of human ignorance, depravity, and falsehood. The battle

thus apparent at Golgotha has been raging ever since. Then was the conflict at its height ; for the chiefs of the two great armies met in personal conflict. The present battle in which you and I take our little share is as nothing compared with that wherein all the powers of darkness in their dense battalions hurled themselves against the Almighty Son of God. He bore their onset, endured the tremendous shock of their assault, and in the end, with shout of victory, he led captivity captive. He by his power and Godhead turned midnight into day again, and brought back to this world a reign of light which, blessed be God, shall never come to a close. Come to battle again, ye hosts of darkness, if ye dare ! The cross has defeated you : the cross shall defeat you. Hallelujah ! The cross is the ensign of victory ; its light is the death of darkness. The cross is the light-house which guides poor weather-beaten humanity into the harbour of peace : this is the lamp which shines over the door of the great Father's house to lead his prodigals home.

Let us not be afraid of all the darkness which besets us on our way home, since Jesus is the light which conquers it all.

The darkness never came to an end till the Lord Jesus broke the silence. All had been still, and the darkness had grown terrible. At last he spoke, and his voice uttered a psalm. It was the twenty-second Psalm. " My God," saith he, " my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " Each repeated " Eloi " flashed morning upon the scene. By the time he had uttered the cry " Why hast thou forsaken me ? " men had begun to see again, and some even ventured to misinterpret his words, more in terror than in ignorance. They said, " He calleth Elias " : they may have meant a mock, but I think not. At any rate there was no heart in what they said, nor in the reply of their fellows. Yet the light had come by which they could see to dip the sponge in vinegar. Brethren, no light will ever come to dark hearts unless Jesus shall speak ; and the light will not be clear until we hear the voice of his sorrows on our behalf, as he cries, " Why hast thou forsaken me ? " His voice of grief must be the end of our griefs : his cry out of the darkness must cheer away our gloom, and bring the heavenly morning to our minds.

You see how much there is in my text. It is a joy to speak on such a theme when one is in good health, and full of vigour ; then are we as Naphtali, a hind let loose ; then give we goodly words : but this day I am in pain as to my body, and my mind seems frozen. Nevertheless, the Lord can bless my feeble words, and make you see that in this darkness there is meaning deep and wide which none of us should neglect. If God shall help your meditations this darkness will be light about you.

IV. I come to my fourth point, and my closing words will deal with THE SYMPATHY WHICH PROPHECIES. Do you see the sympathy of nature with her Lord—the sympathy of the sun in the heavens with the Sun of Righteousness ? It was not possible for him by whom all things were made to be in darkness, and for nature to remain in the light.

The first sympathetic fact I see is this : *all lights are dim when Christ shines not*. All is dark when he does not shine. In the church, if Jesus be not there, what is there ? The sun itself could not yield us light if Jesus were withdrawn. The seven golden lamps are ready to go out unless he walks among them, and trims them with the holy oil. Brethren,

you soon grow heavy, and your spirits faint, and your hands are weary, if the Christ be not with you. If Jesus Christ be not fully preached, if he be not with us by his Spirit, then everything is in darkness. Obscure the cross, and you have obscured all spiritual teaching. You cannot say, "We will be perspicuous in every other point, and clear upon every other doctrine, but we will shun the atonement, since so many cavil at it. No, sirs, if that candle be put under a bushel the whole house is dark. All theology sympathizes with the cross, and is coloured and tintured by it. Your pious service, your books, your public worship, will all be in sympathy with the cross one way or another. If the cross is in the dark, so will all your work be.

"What think ye of Christ? is the test

To try both your work and your scheme;

You cannot be right in the rest,

Unless you think rightly of him."

Conjure up your doubts; fabricate your philosophies; and compose your theories: there will be no light in them if the cross be left out. Vain are the sparks of your own making, you shall lie down in sorrow. All our work and travail shall end in vanity unless the work and travail of Christ be our first and sole hope. If you are dark upon that point, which alone is light, how great is your darkness!

Next, see the dependence of all creation upon Christ, as evidenced by its darkness when he withdraws. It was not meet that he who made all worlds should die, and yet all worlds should go on just as they had done. If he suffers eclipse, they must suffer eclipse too; if the Sun of Righteousness be made to set in blood, the natural sun must keep touch with him. I believe, my friends, that there is a much more wonderful sympathy between Christ and the world of nature than any of us have ever dreamed. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, because Christ in the Church is in his travail pangs. Christ in his mystical body is in travail, and so the whole creation must wait for the manifestation of the Son of God. We are waiting for the coming of the Lord from heaven, and there is no hill or dale, there is no mountain or sea, but what is in perfect harmony with the waiting church. Wonder not that there should be earthquakes in divers places, blazing volcanoes, terrible tempests, and sore spreadings of deadly disease. Marvel not when you hear of dire portents, and things that make one's heart to quail, for such things must be till the end shall come. Until the great Shepherd shall make his crook into a sceptre, and shall begin his un-suffering reign, this poor earth must bleed at every vein. There must be darkness till these days of delay are ended. You that expect placid history till Christ shall come expect you know not what. You that think that generous politics shall create order and content, and that the extension of free-trade shall breathe universal peace over the nations, look for the living among the dead. Till the Lord shall come, the word has gone out, "Overturn, overturn, overturn," and overturned all things must be, not only in other kingdoms, but in this also, till Jesus comes. All that can be shaken shall be shaken, and only his immovable throne and truth shall abide. Now is the time of the Lord's battle with darkness, and we may not hope as yet for unbroken light.

Dear friends, the sin which darkened Christ and made him die in the

dark darkens the whole world. The sin that darkened Christ and made him hang upon the cross in the dark is darkening you who do not believe in him, and you will live in the dark and die in the dark unless you get to him who only is the light of the world, and can give light to you. There is no light for any man except in Christ; and till you believe in him thick darkness shall blind you, and you shall stumble in it and perish. That is the lesson I would have you learn.

Another practical lesson is this: If we are in the dark at this time, if our spirits are sunk in gloom, let us not despair, for the Lord Christ himself was there. If I have fallen into misery on account of sin, let me not give up all hope, for the Father's Well-beloved passed through denser darkness than mine. O believing soul, if thou art in the dark thou art near the King's cellars, and there are wines on the lees well refined lying there. Thou hast gotten into the pavilion of the Lord, and now mayest thou speak with him. You will not find Christ in the gaudy tents of pride, nor in the foul haunts of wickedness: you will not find him where the viol, and the dance, and the flowing bowl inflame the lusts of men, but in the house of mourning you will meet the Man of Sorrows. He is not where Herodias dances, nor where Bernice displays her charms; but he is where the woman of a sorrowful spirit moves her lips in prayer. He is never absent where penitence sits in darkness and bewails her faults.

“ Yes, Lord, in hours of gloom,
When shadows fill my room,
When pain breathes forth its groans,
And grief its sighs and moans,
Then thou art near.”

If you are under a cloud, feel after your Lord, if haply you may find him. Stand still in your black sorrow, and say, “O Lord, the preacher tells me that thy cross once stood in such darkness as this—O Jesus hear me!” He will respond to you: the Lord will look out of the pillar of cloud, and shed a light upon you. “I know their sorrows,” saith he. He is no stranger to heart-break. Christ also once suffered for sin. Trust him, and he will cause his light to shine upon you. Lean upon him, and he will bring you up out of the gloomy wilderness into the land of rest. God help you to do so!

Last Monday I was cheered beyond all I can tell you by a letter from a brother who had been restored to life, light, and liberty by the discourse of last Sabbath morning. I know no greater joy than to be useful to your souls. For this reason, I have tried to preach this morning, though I am quite unfit for it physically. Oh, I do pray I may hear more news from saved ones! Oh that some spirit that has wandered out into the dark moorland may spy the candle in my window, and find its way home! If you have found my Lord, I charge you never let him go, but cleave to him till the day break, and the shadows flee away. God help you so to do for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvii. 26—54.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—306, 279, 280.

“LAMA SABACHTHANI?”

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 2ND, 1890, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—Matthew xxvii. 46.

“THERE was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour”: this cry came out of that darkness. Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it, bright, flashing light; but there is a centre of impenetrable gloom, where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness.

Our Lord was then in the darkest part of his way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours, and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of his anguish. This is his dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” I do not think that the records of time, or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood and the gall, and all the other bitternesses, are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom; it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Saviour on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of his love, if it be ever measured, by the depth of his grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law! As you see this, say to yourselves: What manner of people ought we to be! What measure of love ought we to return to one who bore the utmost penalty, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive into this deep: I will only venture to the edge of the precipice, and bid you look down, and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of

our dying Lord, as it rises up through the thick darkness—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Our first subject of thought will be *the fact*; or, what he suffered—God had forsaken him. Secondly, we will note, *the enquiry*; or, why he suffered: this word "why" is the edge of the text. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, thirdly, we will consider *the answer*; or, what came of his suffering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for he ceased from his anguish with the triumphant shout of, "It is finished." His work was finished, and his bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work he had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us first dwell upon **THE FACT**; or, what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage and endure the pang of sickness and pain, so long as the spirit is hale and brave; but if the soul itself be touched, and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity, and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries. A man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters, if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David, he dialogues with himself, and he enquires, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." But if the Lord be once withdrawn, if the comfortable light of his presence be shadowed even for an hour, there is a torment within the breast, which I can only liken to the prelude of hell. This is the greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, "Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger." We can bear a bleeding body, and even a wounded spirit; but a soul conscious of desertion by God is beyond conception unendurable. When he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness?

This voice out of "the belly of hell" marks the lowest depth of the Saviour's grief. *The desertion was real*. Though under some aspects our Lord could say, "The Father is with me"; yet was it solemnly true that God did forsake him. It was not a failure of faith on his part which led him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us, and then we think that God has forsaken us; but our Lord's faith did not for a moment falter, for he says twice, "*My God, my God*." Oh, the mighty double grip of his unhesitating faith! He seems to say, "Even if thou hast forsaken me, I have not forsaken thee." Faith triumphs, and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is his faith, he feels that God has withdrawn his comfortable fellowship, and he shivers under the terrible deprivation.

It was no fancy, or delirium of mind, caused by his weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of his spirit, or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst, and desolation; making no complaint of the cross, the nails, and the scoffing. We read not in

the Gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, “I thirst.” All the tortures of his body he endured in silence; but when it came to being forsaken of God, then his great heart burst out into its “Lama sabachthani?” His one moan is concerning his God. It is not, “Why has Peter forsaken me? Why has Judas betrayed me?” These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut him to the quick: “My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?” It was no phantom of the gloom; it was a real absence which he mourned.

This was a *very remarkable desertion*. It is not the way of God to leave either his sons or his servants. His saints, when they come to die, in their great weakness and pain, find him near. They are made to sing because of the presence of God: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.” Dying saints have clear visions of the living God. Our observation has taught us that if the Lord be away at other times, he is never absent from his people in the article of death, or in the furnace of affliction. Concerning the three holy children, we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace; but there and then the Lord met with them. Yes, beloved, it is God’s use and wont to keep company with his afflicted people; and yet he forsook his Son in the hour of his tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with his faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the Book of Martyrs, and I care not whether you study the former or the later persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident presence of the Lord with his witnesses. Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did he ever forsake one of his testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the church has always been, that while the Lord has permitted his saints to suffer in body he has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than conquerors, and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions. The fire has not been a “bed of roses,” but it has been a chariot of victory. The sword is sharp, and death is bitter; but the love of Christ is sweet, and to die for him has been turned into glory. No, it is not God’s way to forsake his champions, nor to leave even the least of his children in the trial hour.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was *singular*. Did his Father ever leave him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through and find any previous instance in which he complains of his Father for having forsaken him? No. He said, “I know that thou hearest me always.” He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near and dear and clear; but now, for the first time, he cries, “why hast thou forsaken me?” It was very remarkable. It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that he loved us and gave himself for us, and in the execution of his loving purpose came even unto this sorrow, of mourning the absence of his God.

This forsaking was *very terrible*. Who can fully tell what it is to be forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have ourselves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us, altogether; for he has expressly said, “I will never leave thee, nor

forsake thee"; yet we have sometimes felt as if he had cast us off. We have cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" The clear shinings of his love have been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Saviour felt when his God had forsaken him. The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject, and no cheering theme consoled him. It was the hour in which he was made to stand before God as consciously the sin-bearer, according to that ancient prophecy, "He shall bear their iniquities." Then was it true, "He hath made him to be sin for us." Peter puts it, "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Sin, sin, sin was everywhere around and about Christ. He had no sin of his own; but the Lord had "laid on him the iniquity of us all." He had no strength given him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into his wounds; but he was made to appear in the lone character of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; and therefore he must feel the weight of sin, and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; but now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was dumb. He was hung up as an accursed thing upon the cross; for he was "made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"; and the Lord his God did not own him before men. If it had pleased the Father, he might have sent him twelve legions of angels; but not an angel came after the Christ had quitted Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in his face, but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind him, and scourge him, but none of all the heavenly host would interpose to screen his shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails, and lift him up, and scoff at him; but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble, and release the Prince of life. No, he appeared to be forsaken, "smitten of God and afflicted," delivered into the hands of cruel men, whose wicked hands worked him misery without stint. Well might he ask, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed hitherto throughout his whole earthly life. He said himself, as you remember, "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Here was his constant comfort: but all comfort from this source was to be withdrawn. The divine Spirit did not minister to his human spirit. No communications with his Father's love poured into his heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon one who represented the prisoner at the bar. Our Lord's faith did not fail him, as I have already shown you, for he said, "My God, my God": yet no sensible supports were given to his heart, and no comforts were poured into his mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of divine wrath, but only suffered a withdrawal of divine fellowship. What is the difference? Whether God withdraw heat or create cold is all one. He was not

smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that he was near to God; and this, to his tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order. A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God “necessaries, but not suavities”; that which was meet, but not that which was sweet. Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life, and life to be a boon. You that know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious presence and love of God, you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Saviour was, now that he felt he had been forsaken of his God. “If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?” To our Lord, the Father’s love was the foundation of everything; and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when his own God, the God of his entire confidence, turned from him. Yes, God in very deed forsook our Saviour.

To be forsaken of God was *much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us*. “Oh,” say you, “how is that?” I answer, because he was perfectly holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing, and painful. If any man here, who is not at peace with God, could only know his true condition, he would swoon with fright. If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are, and what you are at this moment in the sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to him. Alas! we are insensible, hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and therefore we do not feel our true condition. His perfect holiness made it to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God.

I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God, and to be forsaken was a new grief to him. He had never known what the dark was till then: his life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of heaven upon earth; and how cold it would strike to your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion. If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a perfect man, you can see why to our Well-beloved it was a special trial. Remember, he had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order; and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship; and yet the loss is killing: but to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up—I mean his sea of fellowship with the infinite God.

Do not forget that he was such a One that to him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part he was perfect, and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree. A sinful man has an awful need of God, but he does not know it; and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God, or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel! a seraph who has lost his God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness, and yet to have fallen into a condition in

which he cannot find his God! I cannot picture him; perhaps a Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful, and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him. He has drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub: “My God, my God, my God, where art thou?” What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead. In proportion as he is more fitted to receive the love of the great Father, in that proportion is his pining after it the more intense. As a Son, he is more able to commune with God than ever a servant-angel could be; and now that he is forsaken of God, the void within is the greater, and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord’s heart, and all his nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God, was to him a grief which could not be weighed. I see him in the text bearing desertion, and yet I perceive that he cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but his pure and holy nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity; and breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, he exclaims, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” He quarrels not with the suffering, but he cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if he must end the ordeal, not because of the pain, but because of the moral shock. We have here the repetition after his passion of that loathing which he felt before it, when he cried, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of substitute for guilty men.

There, friends; I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child, talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact, that our Lord Jesus was on the tree forsaken of his God.

II. This brings us to consider THE ENQUIRY, or, why he suffered.

Note carefully this cry—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which crieth like this; but it is the agony of a godly soul; for only a man of that order would have used such an expression. Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from “the Book.” Does it not show our Lord’s love of the sacred volume, that when he felt his sharpest grief, he turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the twenty-second Psalm. Oh, that we may so love the inspired Word that we may not only sing to its score, but even weep to its music!

Note, again, that our Lord’s lament is an address to God. The godly, in their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them. The Saviour’s outcry is not *against* God, but *to* God. “My God, my God”: he makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here. The child in the dark is crying after his Father—“My God, my God.” Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in his agony.

Still, observe, it is a faith-cry; for though it asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet it first says, twice over, "My God, my God." The grip of appropriation is in the word "my"; but the reverence of humility is in the word "God." It is "'My God, my God,' thou art ever God to me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with thee. Thy rights are unquestioned, for thou art my God. Thou canst do as thou wilt, and I yield to thy sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites me, and with all my heart I cry, 'My God, my God.'" When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible still: when your mind wanders, let it roam towards the mercy seat; and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith, and still cry, "My God, my God."

Let us come close to the enquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like a question as of one distraught, driven from the balance of his mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning, and therefore tossed about. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not Jesus know? Did he not know why he was forsaken? He knew it most distinctly, and yet his manhood, while it was being crushed, pounded, dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief. He must be forsaken; but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter; but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it, and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror. At that moment the finite soul of the man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite justice of God. The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man, whose nature he had espoused. God was for him and with him in a certain unquestionable sense; but for the time, so far as his feeling went, God was against him, and necessarily withdrawn from him. It is not surprising that the holy soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite justice of God, even though its design was only to vindicate that justice, and glorify the Law-giver. Our Lord could now say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me"; and therefore he uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism. Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian. Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own, which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you.

I think I see, in the expression, *submission and resolve*. Our Lord does not draw back. There is a forward movement in the question: they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely, he would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but the rather dedicates himself anew to God by the words, "My God, my God," and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which he is resolute to bear even to the bitter end. He would fain feel anew the motive which has sustained him, and must sustain him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission and strong resolve, pleading with God.

Do you not think that *the amazement of our Lord, when he was "made sin for us"* (2 Cor. v. 21), led him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure being to be made a sin-offering was an amazing experience. Sin was laid on him, and he was treated as if he had been guilty, though he had personally never sinned; and now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills his holy soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks his heart, and he starts back from it, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why must I bear the dread result of conduct I so much abhor?

Do you not see, moreover, *there was here a glance at his eternal purpose, and at his secret source of joy?* That "why" is the silver lining of the dark cloud, and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was needful in order that he might save the guilty, and he had an eye to that salvation as his comfort. He is not forsaken needlessly, nor without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to his heart that he yields to the passing evil, even though that evil be like death to him. He looks at that "why," and through that narrow window the light of heaven comes streaming into his darkened life.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely our Lord dwelt on that "why," *that we might also turn our eyes that way.* He would have us see the why and the wherefore of his grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all your Lord suffered, but do not overlook the reason of it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand "why." Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus the Saviour raises an inquiry not so much for himself as for us; and not so much because of any despair within his heart as because of a hope and a joy set before him, which were wells of comfort to him in his wilderness of woe.

Bethink you, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken his most obedient Son. He was ever with him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only Begotten was never more lovely to the Father than when he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth, and we must look upon the Lord Jesus also in his official capacity, as the Surety of the covenant, and the Sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon him who has become the substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God; and if, in order to its removal, his own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome, and he who bears it cannot be in happy communion with God. This was the dread necessity of expiation; but in the essence of things the love of the great Father to his Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountain-head it could not be. Therefore, wonder not at the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

III Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to

THE ANSWER, concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Saviour could answer his own question. If for a moment his manhood was perplexed, yet his mind soon came to clear apprehension; for he said, “It is finished”; and, as I have already said, he then referred to the work which in his lonely agony he had been performing. Why, then, did God forsake his Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this—*he stood in our stead*. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake him: he was perfect, and his life was without spot. God never acts without reason; and since there were no reasons in the character and person of the Lord Jesus why his Father should forsake him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way.

“Yet all the griefs he felt were ours,
Ours were the woes he bore;
Pangs, not his own, his spotless soul
With bitter anguish tore.

“We held him as condemn’d of heaven,
An outcast from his God;
Whil’ for our sins he groaned, he bled,
Beneath his Father’s rod.”

He bore the sinner’s sin, and he had to be treated, therefore, as though he were a sinner, though sinner he could never be. With his own full consent he suffered as though he had committed the transgressions which were laid on him. Our sin, and his taking it upon himself, is the answer to the question, “Why hast thou forsaken me?”

In this case we now see that *His obedience was perfect*. He came into the world to obey the Father, and he rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of God still to cling to him in solemn, avowed allegiance, still declaring before a mocking multitude his confidence in the afflicting God. It is noble to cry, “My God, my God,” when one is asking, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” How much farther can obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes is falling, was not more true to his trust than he who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Our Lord’s suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways: he must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God, because this is the necessary consequence of sin. For a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relation with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day? Assuredly not: he lived many a year afterwards. But in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died, by being separated from God. The separation

of the soul from God is spiritual death ; just as the separation of the soul from the body is natural death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation, and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God could not have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking him, what must the doom of the actual sinner be ! Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ himself, as a sin-bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason : there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man the law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered *from* sin, but *for* sin. If God will cheer and sustain him, he is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if he is manifestly succouring the smitten one. There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt, if he had continued consciously to enjoy the full sunshine of the Father's presence. It was essential to being a victim in our place that he should cry, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? "

Beloved, see how marvellously, in the person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated his law ! If to make his law glorious, he had said, " These multitudes of men have broken my law, and therefore they shall perish," the law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead thereof, he says, " Here is my Only Begotten Son, my other self ; he takes on himself the nature of these rebellious creatures, and he consents that I should lay on him the load of their iniquity, and visit in his person the offences which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men : and I will have it so." When Jesus bows his head to the stroke of the law, when he submissively consents that his Father shall turn away his face from him, then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness and stern justice of the Lawgiver. There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God, and all these will see, in the death of God's dear Son, a declaration of his determination never to allow sin to be trifled with. If his own Son is brought before him, bearing the sin of others upon him, he will hide his face from him, as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite love shines over all, but it does not eclipse his absolute justice any more than his justice is permitted to destroy his love. God hath all perfections in perfection, and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them. Beloved, this is a wonderful theme ! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject ! but who could ever reach the height of this great argument ?

Once more, when enquiring, Why did Jesus suffer to be forsaken of the Father ? we see the fact that *the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering*. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord's own feet. Suppose, beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken, then one of his disciples might have been called

to that sharp endurance, and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it. He would turn to his Leader and Captain, and say to him, "Didst thou, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?" Then the Lord Jesus would answer, "No. This is a descent such as I never made." What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt! For the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew would be sad indeed.

There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment, a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Wherein we greatly rejoice at this time, and so often as we are cast down. Underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are resting in him alone for salvation, *let us lean hard*, let us bear with all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusings no more when I hear Jesus cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I know that I deserve the deepest hell at the hand of God's vengeance; but I am not afraid. He will never forsake *me*, for he forsook his Son on my behalf. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my stead; yea, suffered so far as to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Behind this brazen wall of substitution a sinner is safe. These "munitions of rock" guard all believers, and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me; I hide in its rifts, and no harm can reach me. You have a full atonement, a great sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the law; wherefore rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus.

Next, if ever in our lives henceforth we should think that God hath deserted us, *let us learn from our Lord's example how to behave ourselves*. If God hath left thee, do not shut up thy Bible; nay, open it, as thy Lord did, and find a text that will suit thee. If God hath left thee, or thou thinkest so, do not give up prayer; nay, pray as thy Lord did, and be more earnest than ever. If thou thinkest God has forsaken thee, do not give up thy faith in him; but, like thy Lord, cry thou, "My God, my God," again and again. If thou hast had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now, and double the hold of thy faith. If thou canst not call Jehovah "Father," as was Christ's wont, yet call him thy "God." Let the personal pronouns take their hold—"My God, my God." Let nothing drive thee from thy faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost, it shall be at the foot of the cross. To this pass have I come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that he will be faithful to his Son, and true to the covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life: there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of heaven, and even if I may not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door. What am I saying? I shall enter in; for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus; and Jesus saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The last of the three points is this, *let us abhor the sin which*

brought such agony upon our beloved Lord. What an accursed thing is sin, which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and then come to God's house, on the Lord's-day morning, and think to worship him? Worship him! Worship him, with sin indulged in your breast! Worship him, with sin loved and pampered in your life! O sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood?—if I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin, who drove the dagger into my brother's heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it? Oh, that there was an abyss as deep as Christ's misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths, whence it might never be brought to light again! Begone, O sin! Thou art banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for thou hast crucified my Lord, and made him cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" O my hearers, if you did but know yourselves, and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbour sin no longer. You would be indignant at sin, and cry,

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Lord, I will tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee."

May that be the issue of my morning's discourse, and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you, bless you, and out of his darkness may your light arise! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—313, 299, 22 (Part II).

THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 2ND, 1902,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, January 7th, 1877.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matthew xxvii. 46.

DURING the time that "Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law," he "came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb," and there he saw a strange sight,—a bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed. Then Moses, apparently constrained by curiosity, was drawing near, in order to examine this phenomenon, when he heard God's voice say to him, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We also may well feel, as we think of our Lord Jesus in his agony, that the voice of God speaks to us from the cross, and says, "Curiosity,—bold, daring, prying intellect,—draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is the very Holy of Holies, unto which no man may come except as the Spirit of God shall conduct him thither."

I think I can understand the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" as they are written by David in the 22nd Psalm; but the same words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when uttered by Jesus on the cross, I cannot comprehend, so I shall not pretend to be able to explain them. There is no plummet that can fathom this deep; there is no eagle's eye that can penetrate the mystery that surrounds this strange question. I have read that, once upon a time, Martin Luther sat him down in his study to consider this text. Hour after hour, that mighty man of God sat still; and those who waited on him came into the room, again and again, and he was so absorbed in his meditation that they almost thought he was a corpse. He moved neither hand nor foot, and neither ate nor drank; but sat with his eyes wide open, like one in a trance, thinking over these wondrous words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when, after
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many long hours, in which he seemed to be utterly lost to everything that went on around him, he rose from his chair, someone heard him say, "God forsaking God! No man can understand that;" and so he went his way. Though that is hardly the correct expression to use,—I should hesitate to endorse it,—yet I do not marvel that our text presented itself to the mind of Luther in that light. It is said that he looked like a man who had been down a deep mine, and who had come up again to the light. I feel more like one who has not been down the mine, but who has looked into it,—or like one who has been part of the way down, and shuddered as he passed through the murky darkness, but who would not dare to go much lower, for this cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" is a tremendous deep; no man will ever be able to fathom it.

So I am not going to try to explain it; but, first, to utter *some thoughts about it*; and then, secondly, to draw *some lessons from it*. We may find many practical uses for things which are beyond the grasp of our minds, and this saying of our Lord may be of great service to us even though we cannot comprehend it.

I. First, then, let me utter SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS STRANGE QUESTION: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus was accustomed to address God as his Father. If you turn to his many prayers, you will find him almost invariably—if not invariably—speaking to God as his Father. And, truly, he stands in that relationship both as God and as man. Yet, in this instance, he does not say, "Father;" but "My God, my God." Was it that he had any doubt about his Sonship? Assuredly not; Satan had assailed him in the wilderness with the insinuation, "If thou be the Son of God," but Christ had put him to the rout; and I feel persuaded that Satan had not gained any advantage over him, even on the cross, which could have made him doubt whether he was the Son of God or not.

I think that *our Saviour was speaking then as man*, and that this is the reason why he cried, "My God, my God," rather than "My Father." I think he must have been speaking as man; as I can scarcely bring my mind to the point of conceiving that God the Son could say to God the Father, "My God, my God." There is such a wonderful blending of the human and the Divine in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that, though it may not be absolutely accurate to ascribe to the Deity some things in the life of Christ, yet is he so completely God and man that, often, Scripture does speak of things that must belong to the humanity only as if they belonged to the Godhead. For instance, in his charge to the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul said, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;"—an incorrect expression, if judged according to the rule of the logician; but accurate enough according to the Scriptural method of using words in their proper sense. Yet I do think that we must draw a distinction between the Divinity and the humanity here. As the Lord Jesus said, "My God, my God," it was because it was his humanity that was mainly to be considered just then.

And O my brethren, does it not show us *what a real man the*

Christ of God was, that he could be forsaken of his God? We might have supposed that, Christ being Emmanuel,—God with us,—the Godhead and the manhood being indissolubly united in one person, it would have been impossible for him to be forsaken of God. We might also have inferred, for the same reason, that it would have been impossible for him to have been scourged, and spit upon, and especially that it would not have been possible for him to die. Yet all these things were made, not only possible, but also sacredly certain. In order to complete the redemption of his chosen people, it was necessary for him to be both God's well-beloved Son, and to be forsaken of his Father; he could truly say, as his saints also have sometimes had to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Persecuted and forsaken believer, behold your Brother in adversity! Behold the One who has gone wherever you may have to go, who has suffered more than you can ever suffer, and who has taken his part in the direst calamity that ever happened to human nature, so that he had to cry out, in the agony of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What was this forsaking? We are trying to come a little closer to this burning yet unconsumed bush,—with our shoes off our feet, I hope, all the while;—and in this spirit we ask, "What was this forsaking?" A devout writer says that it was *horror at the sight of human misery*. He affirms, what is quite true, that our Lord Jesus Christ saw all that man had to suffer because of sin; that he perceived the total sum of the miseries brought by sin upon all the past, present, and future generations of the human race;—and that he must have had a holy horror as he thought of all the woes of man, caused by sin, in this life, and in that which is to come;—and being completely one with man, he spoke in the name of man, and said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That is all true, yet that explanation will not suffice, my brethren; because our Saviour did not say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken *man*?" but, "Why hast thou forsaken *me*?" This forsaking was something personal to himself.

Others have said that *it was a dreadful shrinking in his soul on account of human sin*. I have read of a child, who had done wrong, and whose father had faithfully rebuked and punished him; but the boy remained callous and sullen. He sat in the same room with his father, yet he refused to confess that he had done wrong. At last, the father, under a sense of his child's great wickedness, burst into tears, and sobbed and sighed. Then the boy came to his father, and asked him why he sorrowed so, and he answered, "Because of my child's hardness of heart." It is true that our Lord Jesus Christ did feel as that father felt; only far more acutely; but our text cannot be fully explained by any such illustration as that; that would be only explaining it away, for Christ did not say, "My God, my God, why has man forsaken thee, and why hast thou so completely left men in their sin?" No; his cry was, "Why hast thou forsaken *me*?" It was not so much the God of man to whom he appealed, but "*My God, my God.*" It was a personal grief that wrung from him the personal cry, "My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" for this forsaking, by his Father in whom he trusted, related peculiarly to himself.

What was this forsaking? *Was it physical weakness?* Some of you may know that, when the body is in a low condition, the soul also sinks. Quite involuntarily, unhappiness of mind, depression of spirit, and sorrow of heart will come upon you. You may be without any real reason for grief, and yet may be among the most unhappy of men because, for the time, your body has conquered your soul. But, my brethren and sisters, this explanation is not supposable in the case of Christ, for it was not many moments after this that he shouted, "with a loud voice," his conquering cry, "It is finished," and so passed from the conflict to his coronation. His brave spirit overcame his physical weakness; and though he was "brought into the dust of death," and plunged into the deepest depths of depression of spirit, yet, still, the cry, "My God, my God," which also was uttered "with a loud voice," proves that there was still a considerable amount of mental strength, notwithstanding his physical weakness, so that mere depression of spirit, caused by physical reasons, would not account for this agonizing cry.

And, certainly, my brethren, *this cry was not occasioned by unbelief.* You know that, sometimes, a child of God, in sore trial, and with many inward struggles, cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when, all the while, the Lord has been remembering the tried soul, and dealing graciously with it. As long ago as Isaiah's day, "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But the Lord's reply was, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Unbelief often makes us talk about God forgetting us when he does nothing of the kind, but our Lord Jesus Christ was a stranger to unbelief. It was impossible for him to cherish any doubt about the faithfulness and lovingkindness of his Father; so his cry did not arise from that cause.

And, another thing, *it did not arise from a mistake.* I have known believers, in sore trouble, make great blunders concerning what God was doing with them. They have thought that he had forsaken them, for they misinterpreted certain signs, and dealings of God, and they said, "All these things are against us; the hand of God has gone out against us to destroy us." But Christ made no mistake about this matter, for God had forsaken him. It was really so. When he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" he spoke infallible truth, and his mind was under no cloud whatsoever. He knew what he was saying, and he was right in what he said, for his Father had forsaken him for the time.

What, then, can this expression mean? *Does it mean that God did not love his Son?* O beloved, let us, with the utmost detestation, fling away any suspicion of the kind that we may have harboured! God did forsake his Son, but he loved him as much when he forsook him as at any other period. I even venture to say that, if it had been possible for God's love towards his Son to

be increased, he would have delighted in him more when he was standing as the suffering Representative of his chosen people than ever he had delighted in him before. We do not indulge, for a single moment, the thought that God was angry with him personally, or looked upon him as unworthy of his love, or regarded him as one upon whom he could not smile, because of anything displeasing in himself; yet the fact remains that God had forsaken him, for Christ was under no mistake about that matter. He rightly felt that his Father had withdrawn the comfortable light of his countenance, that he had, for the time being, lost the sense of his Father's favour,—not the favour itself, but the consciousness of that divine aid and succour which he had formerly enjoyed;—so he felt himself like a man left all alone; and he was not only left all alone by his friends, but also by his God.

Can we at all imagine the state of mind in which our Lord was when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No; that is not possible, yet I will try to help you to understand it. Can you imagine the misery of a lost soul in hell,—one who is forsaken of God, and who cries, in bitterest agony, "God will never look upon me in mercy, or delight, or favour,"—can you picture that sad state? Well, if you can, you will not, even then, have got anywhere near the position of Christ, because that soul in hell does not want God's favour, and does not seek it, or ask for it. That lost soul is so hardened in sin that it never troubles about whether God would receive it if it repented; the truth is, that it does not want to repent. The misery, that men will suffer in the world to come, will be self-created misery arising out of the fact that they loved sin so much that they brought eternal sorrow upon themselves. It must be an awful thing for a soul, in the next world, to be without God; but, as far as its own consciousness is concerned, it will be so hardened that it will abide without God, yet not realizing all that it has lost because it is itself incapable of knowing the beauty of holiness, and the perfection of the God from whom it is separated for ever. Yet how different was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ when upon the cross! He knew, as no mere man could ever know, what separation from God meant.

Think of a case of another kind. King Saul, when the witch of Endor brought up the spirit of Samuel, said to him, "God is departed from me, and answereth me no more." You recollect the state of mind that he was in when the evil spirit was upon him, and he needed David's harp to charm it away; but at last, even that failed, and I know of no more unhappy character than Saul when God had departed from him. But, somehow, there was not the anguish in the soul of Saul that there would have been if he had ever really known the Lord. I do not think that he ever did really, in his inmost soul, know the Lord. After Samuel anointed him, he was "turned into another man," but he never became a new man; and the sense of God's presence that he had was not, for a moment, comparable to that presence of God which a true saint enjoys, and which Christ ever enjoyed, except when he was on the cross. So, when Saul lost the consciousness of that

presence, he did not suffer so great a loss, and, consequently, so great an anguish, as afterwards happened to our Lord.

Coming nearer to our own circumstances, I remind you that there are some of God's people, who do really love him, and who have walked in the light of his countenance, yet, for some reason or other, they have lost the comfortable enjoyment of God's love. If any of you, dear friends, know what that sad experience is, you are getting a faint impression of the meaning of this cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Oh, what an anguish it is,—what heart-break,—even to think that one is forsaken of God! I have heard of people dying of broken hearts; but I do believe that the man, who has been made to utter this cry, has gone as near to dying of a broken heart as anyone might well do without actually dying. To be without God, is to be without life; and we, who love him, can say, with Dr. Watts,—

"My God, my life, my love,
To thee, to thee I call:
I cannot live, if thou remove,
For thou art All-in-all."

But, my dear brethren, you have not got the whole truth yet, for *no saint knows the presence of God as Christ knew it*. No saint has, to the full, enjoyed the love of God as Christ enjoyed it; and, consequently, if he does lose it, he only seems to lose the moonlight whereas Christ lost the sunlight when, for a time, the face of his Father was withdrawn from him. Only think what must have been the anguish of the Saviour, especially as contrasted with his former enjoyment. Never did any mere human being know so much and enjoy so much of the love of God as Christ had done. He had lived in it, basked in it; there had never been any interruption to it. "I do always those things that please him," said he, concerning his Father; and his Father twice said, concerning him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Now, as our Lord Jesus Christ had enjoyed the love of God to the very full, think what it must have been for him to lose the conscious enjoyment of it. You know that you may go into a room, and blow out the candle, but the blind people will not miss it. They miss the light most who have enjoyed it most; and Christ missed the light of God's countenance most because he had enjoyed it most. Then, reflect upon his intense love to God. Jesus Christ—the man Christ Jesus—loved God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, as you and I have never yet been able to do. The love of Christ towards his Father was boundless. Well, then, for a frown to be upon his Father's face, or for the light of that Father's face to be taken away from him, must have made it correspondingly dark and terrible to him.

Remember, too, the absolute purity of Christ's nature. In him there was no taint of sin, nor anything approaching to it. Now, holiness delights in God. God is the very sea in which holiness swims,—the air which holiness breathes. Only think, then, of the perfectly Holy One, fully agreed with his Father in everything,

finding out that the Father had, for good and sufficient reasons, turned away his face from him. O brother, in proportion as you are holy, the absence of the light of God's countenance will be grief to you; and as Jesus was perfectly holy, it was the utmost anguish to him to have to cry to his Father, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

After all, beloved, the only solution of the mystery is this, *Jesus Christ was forsaken of God because we deserved to be forsaken of God.* He was there, on the cross, in our room, and place, and stead; and as the sinner, by reason of his sin, deserves not to enjoy the favour of God, so Jesus Christ, standing in the place of the sinner, and enduring that which would vindicate the justice of God, had to come under the cloud, as the sinner must have come, if Christ had not taken his place. But, then, since he has come under it, let us recollect that he was thus left of God that you and I, who believe in him, might never be left of God. Since he, for a little while, was separated from his Father, we may boldly cry, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and, with the apostle Paul, we may confidently affirm that nothing in the whole universe "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Before I leave this point, let me say that *the doctrine of substitution is the key to all the sufferings of Christ.* I do not know how many theories have been invented to explain away the death of Christ. The modern doctrine of the apostles of "culture" is, that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was, in some degree or other, connected with our salvation; but it is my firm belief that every theory, concerning the death of Christ, which can only be understood by the highly-cultured, must be false. "That is strong language," says someone. Perhaps it is, but it is true. I am quite sure that the religion of Jesus Christ was never intended for the highly-cultured only, or even for them in particular. Christ's testimony concerning his own ministry was, "The poor have the gospel preached to them;" so, if you bring me a gospel which can only be understood by gentlemen who have passed through Oxford or Cambridge University, I know that it cannot be the gospel of Christ. He meant the good news of salvation to be proclaimed to the poorest of the poor; in fact, the gospel is intended for humanity in general; so, if you cannot make me understand it, or if, when I do understand it, it does not tell me how to deliver its message in such plain language that the poorest man can comprehend it, I tell you, sirs, that your new-fangled gospel is a lie, and I will stick to the old one, which a man, only a little above an idiot in intellect, can understand. I cling to the old gospel for this, among many other reasons, that all the modern gospels, that leave out the great central truth of substitution, prevent the message from being of any use to the great mass of mankind. If those other gospels, which are not really gospels, please your taste and fancy, and suit the readers of Quarterly Reviews, and eloquent orators and lecturers, there are the poor people in our streets, and the millions of working-men, the vast

multitudes who cannot comprehend anything that is highly metaphysical; and you cannot convince me that our Lord Jesus Christ sent, as his message to the whole world, a metaphysical mystery that would need volume upon volume before it could even be stated. I am persuaded that he gave us a rough and ready gospel like this, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" or this, "With his stripes we are healed;" or this, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him;" or this, "He died the Just for the unjust to bring us to God." Do not try to go beyond this gospel, brethren; you will get into the mud if you do. But it is safe standing here; and standing here, I can comprehend how our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place, and passing under the sentence which the sinner deserved, or under a sentence which was tantamount thereto, could cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

II. Now, in closing, I am going to draw **A FEW LESSONS FROM THIS UTTERANCE OF CHRIST.**

The first lesson is, *Behold how he loved us!* When Christ stood and wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!" But on the cross he did not weep, he bled; and he not merely bled, he died; and, before he died, his spirit sank within him, for he was forsaken of his God. Was there ever any other love like this,—that the Prince of life and glory should condescend to this shame and death?

Then, next, brothers and sisters, as he suffered so much for us, *let us be ready to suffer anything for his sake.* Let us be willing even to lose all the joy of religion, if that would glorify God. I do not know that it would; but I think the spirit of Christ ought to carry us even as far as Moses went, when he pleaded for the guilty nation of Israel, and was willing to have his own name blotted out of the book of life rather than that God's name should be dishonoured. We have never had to go so far as that, and we never shall; yet let us be willing to part with our last penny, for Christ's name's sake, if he requires it. Let us be willing to lose our reputation. Ah, it is a difficult thing to give that up! Some of us, when we first came into public notice, and found our words picked to pieces, and our character slandered, felt it rather hard. We have got used to it now; but it was very trying at first. But, oh! if one had to be called a devil,—if one had to go through this world, and to be spat upon by every passer-by,—still, if it were endured for Christ's sake, remembering how he was forsaken of God for us, we ought to take up even that cross with thankfulness that we were permitted to bear it.

Another lesson is that, if ever you and I should feel that we are forsaken of God,—*if we should get into this state in any way, remember that we are only where Christ has been before us.* If ever, in our direst extremity, we should be compelled to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we shall have gone down no deeper than Christ himself went. He knows that feeling, and that state of heart, for he has felt the same. This fact should tend greatly to cheer you. Your deep depression is not a proof of

reprobation ; that is evident, for Christ himself endured even more. A man may say, " I cannot be a child of God, or else I should not feel as I do." Ah! you do not know what true children of God may feel ; strange thoughts pass through their minds in times of storm and doubt. A Puritan preacher was standing by the death-bed of one of his members who had been for thirty years in gloom of soul. The good old minister expected that the man would get peace at last, for he had been an eminent Christian, and had greatly rejoiced in his Saviour ; but, for thirty years or more, he had fallen into deep gloom. The minister was trying to speak a word of comfort to him, but the man said, " Ah, sir! but what can you say to a man who is dying, and yet who feels that God has forsaken him?" The pastor replied, " But what became of that Man who died, whom God did really forsake? Where is HE now?" The dying man caught at that, and said, " He is in glory, and I shall be with him ; I shall be with him where he is." And so the light came to the dying man who had been so long in the dark ; he saw that Christ had been just where he was, and that he should be where Christ was, even at the right hand of the Father. I hope, brothers and sisters, that you will never get down so low as that ; but I beseech you, if you ever meet with any others who are there, do not be rough with them. Some strong-minded people are very apt to be hard upon nervous folk, and to say, " They should not get into that state." And we are liable to speak harshly to people who are very depressed in spirit, and to say to them, " Really, you ought to rouse yourself out of such a state." I hope none of you will ever have such an experience of this depression of spirit as I have had ; yet I have learnt from it to be very tender with all fellow-sufferers. The Lord have mercy on them, and help them out of the Slough of Despond ; for, if he does not, they will sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.

I pray God specially to bless this inference from our text. *There is hope for you, brother, or sister, if you are in this condition.* Christ came through it, and he will be with you in it ; and, after all, you are not forsaken as he was, be you sure of that. With you, the forsaking is only in the apprehension ; that is bad enough, but it is not a matter of fact, for " the Lord will not forsake his people," nor cast away even one of those whom he has chosen.

I will tell you what is a much more awful thing even than crying out, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If you are afraid that God has left you, and the sweat stands on your brow in very terror, and if your soul seems to long for death rather than life, in such a state as that, you are not in the worst possible condition. " Why!" you ask, " is there anything worse than that?" Yes, I will tell you what is much worse than that ; that is, to be without God, and not to care about it ;—to be living, like some whom I am now addressing, without God, and without hope, yet that never concerns them at all. I can pity the agony of the man who cannot bear to be without his God ; but, at the same time, I can bless the Lord that he feels such agony as that, for that proves to me that his soul will never perish. But those, whom

I look upon with fear and trembling, are the men who make a profession of religion, yet who never have any communion with God, and, all the while, are quite happy about it;—or backsliders, who have gone away from God, and yet seem perfectly at ease. You, worldlings, who are quite satisfied with the things of this world, and have no longings for the world that is to come, I wish you had got as far as to be unhappy; I wish you had got as far as to be in an agony, for that is the road to heavenly joy. It was thus that Christ won it for us, and it is by such a path as this, that many a soul is first led into the experience of his saving power. Brethren, weep not for those of us who sometimes have to cry out in anguish of soul; mourn not for us who are cast down because we cannot live without Christ. You see that our Lord has made us covet the highest blessings; our heads have been so often on his bosom that, if they are not always there, we keep on crying till we get back to that blessed position again. This is a sweet sorrow; may we have more and more of it! But, oh! I pray you, pity those who never ate the bread of heaven,—never drank of the water of life,—never knew the sweetness of the kisses of Christ's mouth,—and never knew what it was to have a heaven begun below in the enjoyment of fellowship with him. In such cases, your pity is indeed required.

I have finished when I have just said this,—as you come to the table of your Lord, come, brothers and sisters, with this cry of Christ ringing in your ears, to make you love him more than ever; and, as you eat the bread, and drink the wine, do it all out of fervent love to him; and the Lord bless you, for his name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVII. 27—54.

Verses 27—30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

These soldiers were men to whom the taking of human life was mere amusement, or, at best, a duty to be performed. If the ordinary Roman citizen found his greatest delight in the amphitheatre, where men fiercely fought with each other, and shed each other's blood, or were devoured by wild beasts, you may imagine what Roman soldiery—the roughest part of the whole population,—would be like; and now that One was given up into their hands, charged with making himself a king, you can conceive what a subject for jest it was to them, and how they determined to make all the mockery they could of this pretended king. They were not touched by the gentleness of his demeanour, nor by his sorrowful countenance; but they proceeded to pour all possible scorn and insult upon his devoted head. Surely, the world never saw a more marvellous scene than this,—the King of kings derided, and made nothing of,—treated as a mimic monarch by the very vilest and most brutal of men.

31. *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

Their action, in restoring to him his own seamless robe, was overruled by God,—whatever their motive may have been,—so that nobody might say that some other person had been substituted for the Saviour. He went forth wearing that well-known garment, which was woven from the top throughout, which he had always worn; and all who looked upon him said, “It is he,—the Nazarene. We know his face, his dress, his person.” There was no possibility of mistaking him for anybody else.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

It was too heavy for him to carry alone, so they bade Simon help him; and, truly, I think that Simon was thereby highly honoured. If this was Simon, who is called Niger, then there may be some truth in the common belief that he was a black man; and, assuredly, the coloured race has long had to carry a very heavy cross, yet there may be a great destiny before it.

All Christ's followers are called to be cross-bearers.

“Shall Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No; there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me.”

If we belong to Christ, we must be as willing to take up his cross as he was to carry ours, and die upon it.

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

It was not because of its bitterness that our Lord refused it, for he did not decline to endure anything that would add to his grief; but this was a stupefying draught, a death potion, which was given to those who were executed, in order somewhat to mitigate their pains; but the Saviour did not intend that his senses should be beclouded by any such draught as that, so, “when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.”

35. *And they crucified him,—*

A short sentence, but what an awful depth of meaning there is in it! “They crucified him,”—driving their iron bolts through his hands and feet, and lifting him up to hang there upon the gibbet which was reserved for felons and for slaves: “They crucified him,”—

35. *And parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*

It was the executioners' perquisite to have the garments of the man they put to death; so, in order that no single portion of the shame of the cross might be spared to the Saviour, these soldiers divided his garments amongst them, and raffled for his seamless robe. It must have taken a hard heart to gamble at the foot of the cross; but I suppose that, of all sins under heaven, there is none that does so harden the heart as gambling. Beware of it!

36. *And sitting down they watched him there;*

Some to gloat, in their fiendish malice, over his sufferings; others, to make sure that he did really die; and, possibly, some few to pity him in his agony: “Sitting down they watched him there.”

37—44. *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by*

reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, *Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

So that, as he looked all around, he met with nothing but ribaldry, and jest, and scorn. His disciples had all forsaken him. One or two of them afterwards rallied a little, and came and stood by the cross; but, just then, he looked, and there was none to pity, and none to help him, even as it had been foretold.

45. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*

From twelve o'clock at noon, according to the Roman and Jewish time, till three in the afternoon, there was a thick darkness,—whether over all the world, or only over the land of Palestine, we cannot very well say. It was not an eclipse of the sun, it was a miracle specially wrought by God. Some have supposed that dense clouds came rolling up obscuring everything; but, whatever it was, deep darkness came over all the land. Doré has, in his wonderful imagination, given us a sketch of Jerusalem during that darkness. The inhabitants are all trembling at what they had done; and as Judas goes down the street, they point at him as the man who sold his Master, and brought all this evil upon the city. I should think that such darkness at mid-day must have made them fear that the last day had come, or that some great judgment would overtake them for their wicked slaughter of the innocent Jesus of Nazareth. Even the sun could no longer look upon its Maker surrounded by those who mocked him, so it travelled on in tenfold night, as if in very shame that the great Sun of righteousness should himself be in such awful darkness.

46—48. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.*

For he had also said, "I thirst," which John records, specially mentioning that he said this, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

49—51. *The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;*

That rending of the great veil of the temple was intended to symbolize the end of Judaism; the horror of the sanctuary that its Lord was put to death; the opening of the mysteries of heaven; the clearing of the way of access between man and God.

51. *And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

Well says our poet,—

"Of feeling, all things show some sign
But this unfeeling heart of mine."

52—54. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

THE SHORTEST OF THE SEVEN CRIES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 14TH, 1878, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”—John xix. 28.

It was most fitting that every word of our Lord upon the cross should be gathered up and preserved. As not a bone of him shall be broken, so not a word shall be lost. The Holy Spirit took special care that each of the sacred utterances should be fittingly recorded. There were, as you know, seven of those last words, and seven is the number of perfection and fulness; the number which blends the three of the infinite God with the four of complete creation. Our Lord in his death-cries, as in all else, was perfection itself. There is a fulness of meaning in each utterance which no man shall be able fully to bring forth, and when combined they make up a vast deep of thought, which no human line can fathom. Here, as everywhere else, we are constrained to say of our Lord, “Never man spake like this man.” Amid all the anguish of his spirit his last words prove him to have remained fully self-possessed, true to his forgiving nature, true to his kingly office, true to his filial relationship, true to his God, true to his love of the written word, true to his glorious work, and true to his faith in his Father.

As these seven sayings were so faithfully recorded, we do not wonder that they have frequently been the subject of devout meditation. Fathers and confessors, preachers and divines have delighted to dwell upon every syllable of these matchless cries. These solemn sentences have shone like the seven golden candlesticks or the seven stars of the Apocalypse, and have lighted multitudes of men to him who spake them. Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them, and in so doing have arranged them into different groups, and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last words. First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*” is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin—free forgiveness in answer to the

Saviour's plea. "*To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" Here is the safety of the believer in the hour of his departure, and his instant admission into the presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of purgatory which strikes it to the heart. "*Woman, behold thy son!*" This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who to the end recognised his human relationship to Mary, of whom he was born. Yet his language teaches us not to worship *her*, for he calls her "woman," but to honour him who in his direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as he also thinks of all his people, for these are his mother and sister and brother. "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when he bore our sins, and so was forsaken of his God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us: it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced his heart. "*I thirst*" is the fifth cry, and its utterance teaches us the truth of Scripture, for all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and therefore our Lord said, "*I thirst.*" Holy Scripture remains the basis of our faith, established by every word and act of our Redeemer. The last word but one is, "*It is finished.*" There is the complete justification of the believer, since the work by which he is accepted is fully accomplished. The last of his last words is also taken from the Scriptures, and shows where his mind was feeding. He cried, ere he bowed the head which he had held erect amid all his conflict, as one who never yielded, "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*" In that cry there is reconciliation to God. He who stood in our stead has finished all his work, and now his spirit comes back to the Father, and he brings us with him. Every word, therefore, you see teaches us some grand fundamental doctrine of our blessed faith. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*"—here we see the Mediator interceding: Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. "*Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*"—this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening with the key of David a door which none can shut, admitting into the gates of heaven the poor soul who had confessed him on the tree. Hail, everlasting King in heaven, thou dost admit to thy paradise whomsoever thou wilt! Nor dost thou set a time for waiting, but instantly thou dost set wide the gate of pearl; thou hast all power in heaven as well as upon earth. Then came, "*Woman, behold thy son!*" wherein we see the Son of man in the gentleness of a son caring for his bereaved mother. In the former cry, as he opened Paradise, you saw the Son of God; now you see him who was verily and truly born of a woman, made under the law; and under the law you see him still, for he honours his mother and cares for her in the last article of death. Then comes the "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Here we behold his human *soul* in anguish, his inmost heart overwhelmed by the withdrawing of Jehovah's face, and made to cry out as if in perplexity and amazement. "*I thirst,*" is his human *body* tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. "*It is finished*" is the last word but one, and there you see the perfected Saviour, the Captain

of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which he had entered, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The last expiring word in which he *commended his spirit to his Father*, is the note of acceptance for himself and for us all. As he commends his spirit into the Father's hand, so does he bring all believers nigh to God, and henceforth we are in the hand of the Father, who is greater than all, and none shall pluck us thence. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean therein.

There are many other ways in which these words might be read, and they would be found to be all full of instruction. Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separately or in connection our Master's words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds: but of all save one I must say, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly."

Our text is the shortest of all the words of Calvary; it stands as two words in our language—"I thirst," but in the Greek it is only one. I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness itself to our Lord Jesus; and yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great sweetness to us. Though bitter to him in the speaking it will be sweet to us in the hearing,—so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as we remember the vinegar and gall of which he drank.

We shall by the assistance of the Holy Spirit try to regard these words of our Saviour in a five-fold light. First, we shall look upon them as **THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY**. Jesus said, "I thirst," and this is the complaint of a man. Our Lord is the Maker of the ocean and the waters that are above the firmament: it is his hand that stays or opens the bottles of heaven, and sendeth rain upon the evil and upon the good. "The sea is his, and he made it," and all fountains and springs are of his digging. He poureth out the streams that run among the hills, the torrents which rush adown the mountains, and the flowing rivers which enrich the plains. One would have said, If he were thirsty he would not tell us, for all the clouds and rains would be glad to refresh his brow, and the brooks and streams would joyously flow at his feet. And yet, though he was Lord of all he had so fully taken upon himself the form of a servant and was so perfectly made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he cried with fainting voice, "I thirst." How truly man he is; he is, indeed, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," for he bears our infirmities. I invite you to meditate upon the true humanity of our Lord very reverently, and very lovingly. Jesus was proved to be really man, because he suffered the pains which belong to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst. A phantom, as some have called him, could not suffer in this fashion: but Jesus really suffered, not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and commoner pangs of flesh and blood. Thirst is a common-place misery, such as may happen to peasants or beggars; it is a real pain, and not a thing of a fancy or a nightmare of dreamland. Thirst is no royal grief, but an evil of universal manhood: Jesus is brother to the poorest and most humble of our race. Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree,

for it was the thirst of death which was upon him, and more, it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for "he tasted death for every man." That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood, and by the fever created by the irritation caused by his four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body, and the wounds were widened as the weight of his body dragged the nails through his blessed flesh, and tore his tender nerves. The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried his mouth and made it like an oven, till he declared, in the language of the twenty-second psalm, "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws." It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall perhaps know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as he did. Our Lord felt that grievous drought of dissolution by which all moisture seems dried up, and the flesh returns to the dust of death: this those know who have commenced to tread the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, being a man, escaped none of the ills which are allotted to man in death. He is indeed "Immanuel, God with us" everywhere.

Believing this, let us tenderly feel how very near akin to us our Lord Jesus has become. You have been ill, and you have been parched with fever as he was, and then you too have gasped out "I thirst." Your path runs hard by that of your Master. He said, "I thirst," in order that some one might bring him drink, even as you have wished to have a cooling draught handed to you when you could not help yourself. Can you help feeling how very near Jesus is to us when his lips must be moistened with a sponge, and he must be so dependent upon others as to ask drink from their hand? Next time your fevered lips murmur "I am very thirsty," you may say to yourself, "Those are sacred words, for my Lord spake in that fashion." The words, "I thirst," are a common voice in death chambers. We can never forget the painful scenes of which we have been witness, when we have watched the dissolving of the human frame. Some of those whom we loved very dearly we have seen quite unable to help themselves; the death sweat has been upon them, and this has been one of the marks of their approaching dissolution, that they have been parched with thirst, and could only mutter between their half-closed lips, "Give me to drink." Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly man that all our griefs remind us of him: the next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon him; and whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Saviour is to us; let us love him more and more.

How great the love which led him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of glory on his throne and the Crucified dried up with thirst. A river of the water of life, pure as crystal, proceedeth to-day out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and yet once he condescended to say, "I thirst." He is Lord of fountains and all deeps, but not a cup of cold water was placed to his lips. Oh, if he had at any time said, "I thirst," before his angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate, and drew water in jeopardy of their lives. Who among

us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet he placed himself for our sakes into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon him, but when he cried, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar to drink. Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love thee and we worship thee! We would fain lift thy name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which thou didst descend!

While thus we admire his condescension let our thoughts also turn with delight to his sure sympathy: for if Jesus said, "I thirst," then he knows all our frailties and woes. The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for he has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord; his line is parallel with ours. The arrow which has lately pierced thee, my brother, was first stained with his blood. The cup of which thou art made to drink, though it be very bitter, bears the mark of his lips about its brim. He hath traversed the mournful way before thee, and every footprint thou leavest in the sodden soil is stamped side by side with his footmarks. Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since he said, "I thirst."

Henceforth, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a cross which his shoulders have borne before us. Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect every day to drink of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent, and yet he thirsted; shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened? If he was so poor that his garments were stripped from him, and he was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you henceforth groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and want? There is bread upon your table to-day, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as he. Complain not, then. Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? Let patience have her perfect work. You do suffer. Perhaps, dear sister, you carry about with you a gnawing disease which eats at your heart, but Jesus took our sicknesses, and his cup was more bitter than yours. In your chamber let the gasp of your Lord as he said, "I thirst," go through your ears, and as you hear it let it touch your heart and cause you to gird up yourself and say, "Doth he say, 'I thirst'?" Then I will thirst with him and not complain, I will suffer with him and not murmur." The Redeemer's cry of "I thirst" is a solemn lesson of patience to his afflicted.

Once again, as we think of this "I thirst," which proves our Lord's humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to his image. May we not be half-ashamed of our pleasures when *he* says, "I thirst"? May we not despise our loaded table while *he* is so neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when *he* said, "I thirst." Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried "I thirst"? What if the bread be dry, what if the medicine be nauseous; yet for his thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar, and dare we complain? For his sake we may rejoice in self-denials, and accept Christ and a crust as all we desire between here and heaven. A Christian living to indulge

the base appetites of a brute beast, to eat and to drink almost to gluttony and drunkenness, is utterly unworthy of the name. The conquest of the appetites, the entire subjugation of the flesh, must be achieved, for before our great Exemplar said, "It is finished," wherein methinks he reached the greatest height of all, he stood as only upon the next lower step to that elevation, and said, "I thirst." The power to suffer for another, the capacity to be self-denying even to an extreme to accomplish some great work for God—this is a thing to be sought after, and must be gained before our work is done, and in this Jesus is before us our example and our strength.

Thus have I tried to spy out a measure of teaching, by using that one glass for the soul's eye, through which we look upon "I thirst" as the ensign of his true humanity.

II. Secondly, we shall regard these words, "I thirst," as THE TOKEN OF HIS SUFFERING SUBSTITUTION. The great Surety says, "I thirst," because he is placed in the sinner's stead, and he must therefore undergo the penalty of sin for the ungodly. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" points to the anguish of his soul; "I thirst" expresses in part the torture of his body; and they were both needful, because it is written of the God of justice that he is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell," and the pangs that are due to law are of both kinds, touching both heart and flesh. See, brethren, where sin begins, and mark that there it ends. It began with the mouth of appetite, when it was sinfully gratified, and it ends when a kindred appetite is graciously denied. Our first parents plucked forbidden fruit, and by eating slew the race. Appetite was the door of sin, and therefore in that point our Lord was put to pain. With "I thirst" the evil is destroyed and receives its expiation. I saw the other day the emblem of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, and if I carry it a little beyond the artist's intention the symbol may set forth appetite swallowing up itself. A carnal appetite of the body, the satisfaction of the desire for food, first brought us down under the first Adam, and now the pang of thirst, the denial of what the body craved for, restores us to our place.

Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the daughters of the horseleech, which cry for ever "Give, give." Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction, the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," that thirst being the result of sin in every ungodly man at this moment. Now Christ standing in the stead of the ungodly suffers thirst as a type of his enduring the result of sin. More solemn still is the reflection that according to our Lord's own teaching, thirst will also be the eternal result of sin, for he says concerning the rich glutton, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment," and his prayer, which was denied him, was, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Now recollect, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted for ever afar off from God, with an impassable gulf between us and heaven. Our sinful tongues, blistered by the fever of passion, must have burned for ever had not his tongue been tormented with thirst.

in our stead. I suppose that the "I thirst" was uttered softly, so that perhaps only one and another who stood near the cross heard it at all; in contrast with the louder cry of "*Lama sabachthani*" and the triumphant shout of "It is finished": but that soft, expiring sigh, "I thirst," has ended for us the thirst which else, insatiably fierce, had preyed upon us throughout eternity. Oh, wondrous substitution of the just for the unjust, of God for man, of the perfect Christ for us guilty, hell-deserving rebels. Let us magnify and bless our Redeemer's name.

It seems to me very wonderful that this "I thirst" should be, as it were, the clearance of it all. He had no sooner said "I thirst," and sipped the vinegar, than he shouted, "It is finished"; and all was over: the battle was fought and the victory won for ever, and our great Deliverer's thirst was the sign of his having smitten the last foe. The flood of his grief had passed the high-water mark, and began to be assuaged. The "I thirst" was the bearing of the last pang; what if I say it was the expression of the fact that his pangs had at last begun to cease, and their fury had spent itself, and left him able to note his lesser pains? The excitement of a great struggle makes men forget thirst and faintness; it is only when all is over that they come back to themselves and note the spending of their strength. The great agony of being forsaken by God was over, and he felt faint when the strain was withdrawn. I like to think of our Lord's saying, "It is finished," directly after he had exclaimed, "I thirst"; for these two voices come so naturally together. Our glorious Samson had been fighting our foes; heaps upon heaps he had slain his thousands, and now like Samson he was sore athirst. He sipped of the vinegar, and he was refreshed, and no sooner has he thrown off the thirst than he shouted like a conqueror, "It is finished," and quitted the field, covered with renown. Let us exult as we see our Substitute going through with his work even to the bitter end, and then with a "*Consummatum est*" returning to his Father, God. O souls, burdened with sin, rest ye here, and resting live.

III. We will now take the text in a third way, and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of "I thirst" brought out
 — A TYPE OF MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD. It was a confirmation of the Scripture testimony with regard to man's natural enmity to God. According to modern thought man is a very fine and noble creature, struggling to become better. He is greatly to be commended and admired, for his sin is said to be a seeking after God, and his superstition is a struggling after light. Great and worshipful being that he is, truth is to be altered for him, the gospel is to be modulated to suit the tone of his various generations, and all the arrangements of the universe are to be rendered subservient to his interests. Justice must fly the field lest it be severe to so deserving a being; as for punishment, it must not be whispered to his ears polite. In fact, the tendency is to exalt man above God and give him the highest place. But such is not the truthful estimate of man according to the Scriptures: there man is a fallen creature, with a carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God; a worse than brutish creature, rendering evil for good, and treating his God with vile ingratitude. Alas, man is the slave and the dupe of Satan, and a black-hearted traitor to his God. Did not the prophecies say that man would give to

his incarnate God gall to eat and vinegar to drink? It is done. He came to save, and man denied him hospitality: at the first there was no room for him at the inn, and at the last there was not one cool cup of water for him to drink; but when he thirsted they gave him vinegar to drink. This is man's treatment of his Saviour. Universal manhood, left to itself, rejects, crucifies, and mocks the Christ of God. This was the act too of man at his best, when he is moved to pity; for it seems clear that he who lifted up the wet sponge to the Redeemer's lips, did it in compassion. I think that Roman soldier meant well, at least well for a rough warrior with his little light and knowledge. He ran and filled a sponge with vinegar: it was the best way he knew of putting a few drops of moisture to the lips of one who was suffering so much; but though he felt a degree of pity, it was such as one might show to a dog; he felt no reverence, but mocked as he relieved. We read, "The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the cross said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him," mocking him; and, according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the sufferer, but he thought so little of him that he joined in the voice of scorn. Even when man compassionates the sufferings of Christ, and man would have ceased to be human if he did not, still he scorns him; the very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Saviour's person with scorn of his claims; writing books to hold him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting his deity; admitting that he was a wonderful man, but denying his most sacred mission; extolling his ethical teaching and then trampling on his blood: thus giving him drink, but that drink vinegar. O my hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying his atoning sacrifice. Beware of rendering him homage and dishonouring his name at the same time.

Alas, my brethren, I cannot say much on the score of man's cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have *we* not often given him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew him? We used to melt when we heard about his sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave him our tears and then grieved him with our sins. We thought sometimes that we loved him as we heard the story of his death, but we did not change our lives for his sake, nor put our trust in him, and so we gave him vinegar to drink. Nor does the grief end here, for have not the best works we have ever done, and the best feelings we have ever felt, and the best prayers we have ever offered, been tart and sour with sin? Can they be compared to generous wine? are they not more like sharp vinegar? I wonder he has ever received them, as one marvels why he received this vinegar; and yet he has received them, and smiled upon us for presenting them. He knew once how to turn water into wine, and in matchless love he has often turned our sour drink-offerings into something sweet to himself, though in themselves, methinks, they have been the juice of sour grapes, sharp enough to set his teeth on edge. We may therefore come before him, with all the rest of our race, when God subdues them to repentance

by his love, and look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. We may well remember our faults this day,

“ We, whose proneness to forget
Thy dear love, on Olivet
Bathed thy brow with bloody sweat ;

“ We, whose sins, with awful power,
Like a cloud did o’er thee lower,
In that God-excluding hour ;

“ We, who still, in thought and deed,
Often hold the bitter reed
To thee, in thy time of need.”

I have touched that point very lightly because I want a little more time to dwell upon a fourth view of this scene. May the Holy Ghost help us to hear a fourth tuning of the dolorous music, “I thirst.”

IV. I think, beloved friends, that the cry of “I thirst” was THE MYSTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE DESIRE OF HIS HEART—“I thirst.” I cannot think that natural thirst was all he felt. He thirsted for water doubtless, but his soul was thirsty in a higher sense ; indeed, he seems only to have spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled as to the offering him vinegar. Always was he in harmony with himself, and his body was always expressive of his soul’s cravings as well as of its own longings. “I thirst” meant that his heart was thirsting to save men. This thirst had been on him from the earliest of his earthly days. “Wist ye not,” said he, while yet a boy, “that I must be about my Father’s business?” Did he not tell his disciples, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?” He thirsted to pluck us from between the jaws of hell, to pay our redemption price, and set us free from the eternal condemnation which hung over us ; and when on the cross the work was almost done his thirst was not assuaged, and could not be till he could say, “It is finished.” It is almost done, thou Christ of God ; thou hast almost saved thy people ; there remaineth but one thing more, that thou shouldst actually die, and hence thy strong desire to come to the end and complete thy labour. Thou wast still straitened till the last pang was felt and the last word spoken to complete the full redemption, and hence thy cry, “I thirst.”

Beloved, there is now upon our Master, and there always has been, a thirst after the love of his people. Do you not remember how that thirst of his was strong in the old days of the prophet ? Call to mind his complaint in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill : and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein.” What was he looking for from his vineyard and its winepress ? What but for the juice of the vine that he might be refreshed ? “And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,”—vinegar, and not wine ; sourness, and not sweetness. So he was thirsting then.

According to the sacred canticle of love, in the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs, we learn that when he drank in those olden times it was in the garden of his church that he was refreshed. What doth he say? "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In the same song he speaks of his church, and says, "The roof of thy mouth is as the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." And yet again in the eighth chapter the bride saith, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." Yes, he loves to be with his people; they are the garden where he walks for refreshment, and their love, their graces, are the milk and wine of which he delights to drink. Christ was always thirsty to save men, and to be loved of men; and we see a type of his life-long desire when, being weary, he sat thus on the well and said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink." There was a deeper meaning in his words than she dreamed of, as a verse further down fully proves, when he said to his disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He derived spiritual refreshment from the winning of that woman's heart to himself.

And now, brethren, our blessed Lord has at this time a thirst for communion with each one of you who are his people, not because you can do him good, but because he can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return; he thirsts to see you looking with believing eye to his fulness, and holding out your emptiness that he may supply it. He saith, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What knocks he for? It is that he may eat and drink with you, for he promises that if we open to him he will enter in and sup with us and we with him. He is thirsty still, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to him. Come let us pour out full flagons, until his joy is fulfilled in us. And what makes him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except his own great love. He *must* love; it is his nature. He must love his chosen whom he has once begun to love, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His great love makes him thirst to have us much nearer than we are; he will never be satisfied till all his redeemed are beyond gunshot of the enemy. I will give you one of his thirsty prayers—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He wants you brother, he wants you, dear sister, he longs to have you wholly to himself. Come to him in prayer, come to him in fellowship, come to him by perfect consecration, come to him by surrendering your whole being to the sweet mysterious influences of his Spirit. Sit at his feet with Mary, lean on his breast with John; yea, come with the spouse in the song and say, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." He calls for that: will you not give it to him? Are you so frozen at heart that not a cup of cold water can be melted for Jesus? Are you lukewarm? O brother, if he says, "I thirst" and you bring him a lukewarm heart, that is worse than vinegar, for he has said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He can receive vinegar, but not lukewarm love. Come, bring him your warm heart, and let him drink from that purified chalice as

much as he wills. Let all your love be his. I know he loves to receive from you, because he delights even in a cup of cold water that you give to one of his disciples ; how much more will he delight in the giving of your whole self to him ? Therefore while he thirsts give him to drink this day.

V. Lastly, the cry of " I thirst " is to us THE PATTERN OF OUR DEATH WITH HIM. Know ye not, beloved,—for I speak to those who know the Lord,—that ye are crucified together with Christ ? Well, then, what means this cry, " I thirst," but this, that we should thirst too ? We do not thirst after the old manner wherein we were bitterly afflicted, for he hath said, " He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst : " but now we covet a new thirst, a refined and heavenly appetite, a craving for our Lord. O thou blessed Master, if we are indeed nailed up to the tree with thee, give us to thirst after thee with a thirst which only the cup of " the new covenant in thy blood " can ever satisfy. Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord's presence I love to hunger and to thirst after him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, " I thirst for my Lord and this is joy ; a joy which no man taketh from me. Even if I may not come at him, yet shall I be full of consolation, for it is heaven to thirst after him, and surely he will never deny a poor soul liberty to admire him, and adore him, and thirst after him." As for myself, I would grow more and more insatiable after my divine Lord, and when I have much of him I would still cry for more ; and then for more, and still for more. My heart shall not be content till he is all in all to me, and I am altogether lost in him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of his sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough. One would wish to be as the spouse, who, when she had already been feasting in the banqueting-house, and had found his fruit sweet to her taste, so that she was overjoyed, yet cried out, " Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." She craved full flagons of love though she was already overpowered by it. This is a kind of sweet whereof if a man hath much he must have more, and when he hath more he is under a still greater necessity to receive more, and so on, his appetite for ever growing by that which it feeds upon, till he is filled with all the fulness of God. " I thirst,"—ay, this is my soul's word with her Lord. Borrowed from his lips it well suiteth my mouth.

" I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share ;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

" Dear fountain of delight unknown !
No longer sink below the brim ;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream."

Jesus thirsted, then let us thirst in this dry and thirsty land where no water is. Even as the hart panteth after the water brooks, our souls would thirst after thee, O God.

Beloved, let us thirst for the souls of our fellow-men. I have already told you that such was our Lord's mystical desire; let it be ours also. Brother, thirst to have your children saved. Brother, thirst I pray you to have your workpeople saved. Sister, thirst for the salvation of your class, thirst for the redemption of your family thirst for the conversion of your husband. We ought all to have a longing for conversions. Is it so with each one of you? If not, bestir yourselves at once. Fix your hearts upon some unsaved one, and thirst until he is saved. It is the way whereby many shall be brought to Christ, when this blessed soul-thirst of true Christian charity shall be upon those who are themselves saved. Remember how Paul said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He would have sacrificed himself to save his countrymen, so heartily did he desire their eternal welfare. Let this mind be in you also.

As for yourselves, thirst after perfection. Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. Hate sin, and heartily loathe it; but thirst to be holy as God is holy, thirst to be like Christ, thirst to bring glory to his sacred name by complete conformity to his will.

May the Holy Ghost work in you the complete pattern of Christ crucified, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xv. 15—37;
Psalm lxix. 1—21.

CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 21ST, 1894,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, November 3rd, 1889.

“It is finished.”—John xix. 30.

IN the original Greek of John's Gospel, there is only one word for this utterance of our Lord. To translate it into English, we have to use three words; but when it was spoken, it was only one,—an ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop, for that is all that we can call one word. “It is finished.” Yet it would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it. “Finished.” I can half imagine the tone in which our Lord uttered this word, with a holy glorying, a sense of relief, the bursting out of a heart that had long been shut up within walls of anguish. “Finished.” It was a Conqueror's cry; it was uttered with a loud voice. There is nothing of anguish about it, there is no wailing in it. It is the cry of One who has completed a tremendous labour, and is about to die; and ere he utters his death-prayer, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” he shouts his life's last hymn in that one word, “Finished.”

May God the Holy Spirit help me to handle aright this text that is at once so small and yet so great! There are four ways in which I wish to look at it with you. First, I will speak of this dying saying of our Lord *to his glory*; secondly, I will use the text *to the Church's comfort*; thirdly, I will try to handle the subject *to every believer's joy*; and fourthly, I will seek to show how our Lord's words ought to lead *to our own arousalment*.

I. First, then, I will endeavour to speak of this dying saying of Christ to HIS GLORY. Let us begin with that.

Jesus said, “It is finished.” Let us glory in him that it is finished. You and I may well do this when we recollect how very few things we have finished. We begin many things; and, sometimes, we begin well. We commence running like champions who must win the race;

but soon we slacken our pace, and we fall exhausted on the course. The race commenced is never completed. In fact, I am afraid that we have never finished anything perfectly. You know what we say of some pieces of work, "Well, the man has done it; but there is no 'finish' about it." No, and you must begin with "finish", and go on with "finish", if you are at last able to say broadly as the Saviour said without any qualification, "It is finished."

What was it that was finished? His life-work and his atoning sacrifice on our behalf. He had interposed between our souls and divine justice, and he had stood in our stead, to obey and suffer on our behalf. He began this work early in life, even while he was a child. He persevered in holy obedience three and thirty years. That obedience cost him many a pang and groan. Now it is about to cost him his life; and as he gives away his life to finish the work of obedience to the Father, and of redemption for us, he says, "It is finished." It was a wonderful work even to contemplate; only infinite love would have thought of devising such a plan. It was a wonderful work to carry on for so long; only boundless patience would have continued at it; and now that it requires the offering of himself, and the yielding up of his earthly life, only a Divine Saviour, very God of very God, would or could have consummated it by the surrender of his breath. What a work it was! Yet it was finished; while you and I have lots of little things lying about that we have never finished. We have begun to do something for Jesus that would bring him a little honour and glory; but we have never finished it. We did mean to glorify Christ; have not some of you intended, oh! so much? Yet it has never come to anything; but Christ's work, which cost him heart and soul, body and spirit, cost him everything, even to his death on the cross, he pushed through all that till it was accomplished, and he could say, "It is finished."

To whom did our Saviour say, "It is finished"? He said it to all whom it might concern; but it seems to me that he chiefly said it to his Father, for, immediately after, apparently in a lower tone of voice, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Beloved, it is one thing for me to say to you, "I have finished my work,"—possibly, if I were dying, you might say that I had finished my work; but for the Saviour to say that to God, to hang in the presence of him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, the great Reader and Searcher of all hearts, for Jesus to look the dread Father in the face, and say, as he bowed his head, "Father, it is finished; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,"—oh, who but he could venture to make such a declaration as that? We can find a thousand flaws in our best works; and when we lie dying, we shall still have to lament our shortcomings and excesses; but there is nothing of imperfection about him who stood as Substitute for us; and unto the Father himself he can say, concerning all his work, "It is finished." Wherefore, glorify him to-night. Oh, glorify him in your hearts to-night that, even in the presence of the Great Judge of all, your Surety and your Substitute is able to claim perfection for all his service!

Just think also, for a minute or two, now that you have remembered what Jesus finished, and to whom he said that he had finished

it, *how truly he had finished it.* From the beginning to the end of Christ's life there is nothing omitted, no single act of service ever left undone; neither is there any action of his slurred over, or performed in a careless manner. "It is finished," refers as much to his childhood as to his death. The whole of the service that he was to render to God, when he came here in human form, was finished in every single part and portion of it. I take up a piece of a cabinet-maker's work; and it bears a good appearance. I open the lid, and am satisfied with the workmanship; but there is something about the hinge that is not properly finished. Or, perhaps, if I turn it over, and look at the bottom of the box, I shall see that there is a piece that has been scamped, or that one part has not been well planed or properly polished. But if you examine the Master's work right through, if you begin at Bethlehem and go on to Golgotha, and look minutely at every portion of it, the private as well as the public, the silent as well as the spoken part, you will find that it is finished, completed, perfected. We may say of it that, among all works, there is none like it; a multitude of perfections joined together to make up one absolute perfection. Wherefore, let us glorify the name of our blessed Lord. Crown him; crown him; for he hath done his work well. Come, ye saints, speak much to his honour, and in your hearts keep on singing to the praise of him who did so thoroughly, so perfectly, all the work which his Father gave him to do.

In the first place, then, we use our Lord's words to his glory. Much might be said upon such a theme; but time will not permit it now.

II. Secondly, we will use the text to THE CHURCH'S COMFORT.

I am persuaded that it was so intended to be used, for none of the words of our Lord on the cross are addressed to his Church but this one. I cannot believe that, when he was dying, he left his people, for whom he died, without a word. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is for sinners, not for saints. "I thirst," is for himself; and so is that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "Woman, behold thy son!" is for Mary. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise," is for the penitent thief. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," is for the Father. Jesus must have had something to say, in the hour of death, for his Church; and, surely, this is his dying word for her. He tells her, shouting it in her ear that has become dull and heavy with despair, "It is finished." "It is finished, O my redeemed one, my bride, my well-beloved, for whom I came to lay down my life; it is finished, the work is done!"

"Love's redeeming work is done;
Fought the fight, the battle won."

"Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." John, in the Revelation, speaks of the Redeemer's work as already accomplished, and therefore he sings, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This truth is full of comfort to the people of God.

And, first, as it concerns Christ, do you not feel greatly comforted

to think that he is to be humiliated no longer? *His suffering and shame are finished.* I often sing, with sacred exultation and pleasure, those lines of Dr. Watts,—

“ No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more,
For hell itself shakes at his name,
And all the heavens adore.

“ There his full glories shine
With uncreated rays,
And bless his saints' and angels' eyes
To everlasting days.”

I like also that expression in another of our hymns,—

“ Now both the Surety and sinner are free.”

Not only are they free for whom Christ became a Surety, but he himself is for ever free from all the obligations and consequences of his suretyship. Men will never spit in his face again; the Roman soldiers will never scourge him again. Judas, where art thou? Behold the Christ sitting upon his great white throne, the glorious King who was once the Man of sorrows! Now Judas, come, and betray him with a kiss! What, man, dare you not do it? Come Pilate, and wash your hands in pretended innocency, and say now that you are guiltless of his blood! Come, ye Scribes and Pharisees, and accuse him; and oh, ye Jewish mob and Gentile rabble, newly-risen from the grave, shout now, “ Away with him! Crucify him!” But see! they flee from him; they cry to the mountains and rocks, “ Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne!” Yet that is the face that was more marred than any man's, the face of him whom they once despised and rejected. Are you not glad to think that they cannot despise him now, that they cannot ill-treat him now?

“ 'Tis past,—that agonizing hour
Of torture and of shame;”

and Jesus says of it, “ It is finished.”

We derive further comfort and joy as we think that, not only are Christ's pangs and sufferings finished, but *his Father's will and word have had a perfect completion.* Certain things were written that were to be done; and these are done. Whatsoever the Father required has been rendered. “ It is finished.” My Father will never say to me, “ I cannot save thee by the death of my Son, for I am dissatisfied with his work.” Oh, no, beloved; God is well pleased with Christ, and with us in him! There is nothing which was arranged in the eternal mind to be done, yea, not a jot or tittle, but what Christ has done it all. As his eye, that eye that often wept for us, reads down the ancient writing, Christ is able to say, “ I have finished the work which my Father gave me to do. Wherefore, be comforted, O my people, for my Father is well pleased with me, and well pleased with you in me!” “ I like, when I am in prayer, sometimes to say to the great Father, “ Father, look on thy Son. Is he not all loveliness? Are there not in him unutterable beauties? Dost thou not delight in

him? If thou hast looked on me, and grown sick of me, as well thou mayest, now refresh thyself by looking on thy Well-beloved, delight thyself in him;—

“ ‘ Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me.’ ”

The perfect satisfaction of the Father with Christ's work for his people, so that Christ could say, “ It is finished,” is a ground of solid comfort to his Church evermore.

Dear friends, once more, take comfort from this “ It is finished,” for *the redemption of Christ's Church is perfected*. There is not another penny to be paid for her full release. There is no mortgage upon Christ's inheritance. Those whom he bought with blood are for ever clear of all charges, paid for to the utmost. There was a handwriting of ordinances against us; but Christ hath taken it away, he hath nailed it to his cross. “ It is finished,” finished for ever. All those overwhelming debts, which would have sunk us to the lowest hell, have been discharged; and they who believe in Christ may appear with boldness even before the throne of God itself. “ It is finished.” What comfort there is in this glorious truth!

“ Lamb of God! thy death hath given
Pardon, peace, and hope of heaven:
' It is finished; ' let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise! ”

And I think that we may say to the Church of God that, when Jesus said, “ It is finished,” *her ultimate triumph was secured*. “ Finished!” By that one word he declared that he had broken the head of the old dragon. By his death, Jesus has routed the hosts of darkness, and crushed the rising hopes of hell. We have a stern battle yet to fight; nobody can tell what may await the Church of God in years to come, it would be idle for us to attempt to prophesy; but it looks as if there were to be sterner times and darker days than we have ever yet known; but what of that? Our Lord has defeated the foe; and we have to fight with one who is already vanquished. The old serpent has been crushed, his head is bruised, and we have now to trample on him. We have this sure word of promise to encourage us, “ The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Surely, “ It is finished,” sounds like the trumpet of victory; let us have faith to claim that victory through the blood of the Lamb, and let every Christian here, let the whole Church of God, as one mighty army, take comfort from this dying word of the now risen and ever-living Saviour, “ It is finished.” His Church may rest perfectly satisfied that his work for her is fully accomplished.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to use this expression, “ It is finished,”
TO EVERY BELIEVER'S JOY.

When our Lord said, “ It is finished,” there was something to make every believer in him glad. What did that utterance mean? You and I have believed in Jesus of Nazareth; we believe him to be the Messiah, sent of God. Now, if you will turn to the Old Testament, you will find that the marks of the Messiah are very many, and very

complicated; and if you will then turn to the life and death of Christ, you will see in him *every mark of the Messiah plainly exhibited*. Until he had said, "It is finished," and until he had actually died, there was some doubt that there might be some one prophecy unfulfilled; but now that he hangs upon the cross, every mark, and every sign, and every token of his Messiahship have been fulfilled, and he says, "It is finished." The life and death of Christ and the types of the Old Testament fit each other like hand and glove. It would be quite impossible for any person to write the life of a man, by way of fiction, and then in another book to write out a series of types, personal and sacrificial, and to make the character of the man fit all the types; even if he had permission to make both books, he could not do it. If he were allowed to make both the lock and the key, he could not do it; but here we have the lock made beforehand. In all the Books of the Old Testament, from the prophecy in the Garden of Eden right away down to Malachi, the last of the prophets, there were certain marks and tokens of the Christ. All these were so very singular that it did not appear as if they could all meet in one person; but they did all meet in One, every one of them, whether it concerned some minute point or some prominent characteristic. When the Lord Jesus Christ had ended his life, he could say, "It is finished; my life has tallied with all that was said of it from the first word of prophecy even to the last." Now, that ought greatly to encourage your faith. You are not following cunningly-devised fables; but you are following One who must be the Messiah of God, since he so exactly fits all the prophecies and all the types that were given before concerning him.

"It is finished." Let every believer be comforted in another respect, that *every honour which the law of God could require has been rendered to it*. You and I have broken that law, and all the race of mankind has broken it, too. We have tried to thrust God from his throne; we have dishonoured his law; we have broken his commandments wilfully and wickedly; but there has come One who is himself God, the Law-giver, and he has taken human nature, and in that nature he has kept the law perfectly; and inasmuch as the law had been broken by man, he has in the nature of man borne the sentence due for all man's transgressions. The Godhead, being linked with the manhood, gave supreme virtue to all that the manhood suffered; and Christ, in life and in death, has magnified the law, and made it honourable; and God's law at this day is raised to even greater honour than it had before man broke it. The death of the Son of God, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, has vindicated the great moral principle of God's government, and made his throne to stand out gloriously before the eyes of men and angels for ever and ever. If hell were filled with men, it would not be such a vindication of divine justice as when God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and made him to die, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Now let every believer rejoice in the great fact that, by the death of Christ, the law of God is abundantly honoured. You can be saved without impugning the holiness of God; you are saved without putting any stain upon the divine statute-book. The law is kept, and mercy triumphs, too.

And, beloved, here is included, of necessity, another comforting truth. Christ might well say, "It is finished," for *every solace conscience can need is now given*. When your conscience is disturbed and troubled, if it knows that God is perfectly honoured, and his law vindicated, then it becomes easy. Men are always starting some new theory of the atonement; and one has said lately that the atonement was simply meant as an easement to the conscience of men. It is not so, my brethren; there would be no easing of the conscience by anything that was meant for that alone. Conscience can only be satisfied if God is satisfied. Until I see how the law is vindicated, my troubled conscience can never find rest. Dear heart, are thine eyes red with weeping? Yet look thou to him who hangs upon the tree. Is thy heart heavy even to despair? Look to him who hangs upon the tree, and believe in him. Take him to be thy soul's atoning Lamb, suffering in thy stead. Accept of him as thy Representative, dying thy death that thou mayest live his life, bearing thy sin that thou mayest be made the righteousness of God in him. This is the best *quietus* in the world for every fear that conscience can raise; let every believer know that it is so.

Once more, there is joy to every believer when he remembers that, as Christ said, "It is finished," *every guarantee was given of the eternal salvation of all the redeemed*. It appears to me that, if Christ finished the work for us, he will finish the work in us. If he has undertaken so supreme a labour as the redemption of our souls by blood, and that is finished, then the great but yet minor labour of renewing our natures, and transforming us even unto perfection, shall be finished, too. If, when we were sinners, Christ loved us so as to die for us, now that he has redeemed us, and has already reconciled us to himself, and made us his friends and his disciples, will he not finish the work that is necessary to make us fit to stand among the golden lamps of heaven, and to sing his praises in the country where nothing that defileth can ever enter?

"The work which his goodness began,
The arm of his strength will complete;
His promise is yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet:
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make him his purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from his love."

I believe it, my brethren. He who has said, "It is finished," will never leave anything undone. It shall never be said of him, "This Man began, but was not able to finish." If he has bought me with his blood, and called me by his grace, and I am resting on his promise and power, I shall be with him where he is, and I shall behold his glory, as surely as he is Christ the Lord, and I am a believer in him. What comfort this truth brings to every child of God!

Are there any of you here who are trying to do something to make a righteousness of your own? How dare you attempt such a work when Jesus says, "It is finished"? Are you trying to put a few of your own merits together, a few odds and ends, fig-leaves and filthy

rags of your own righteousness? Jesus says, "It is finished." Why do you want to add anything of your own to what he has completed? Do you say that you are not fit to be saved? What! have you to bring some of your fitness to eke out Christ's work? "Oh!" say you, "I hope to come to Christ one of these days when I get better." What! What! What! What! Are you to make yourself better, and then is Christ to do the rest of the work? You remind me of the railways to our country towns; you know that, often, the station is half-a-mile or a mile out of the town, so that you cannot get to the station without having an omnibus to take you there. But my Lord Jesus Christ comes right to the town of Mansoul. His railway runs close to your feet, and there is the carriage-door wide open; step in. You have not even to go over a bridge, or under a subway; there stands the carriage just before you. This royal railroad carries souls all the way from hell's dark door, where they lie in sin, up to heaven's great gate of pearl, where they dwell in perfect righteousness for ever. Cast yourself on Christ; take him to be everything you need, for he says of the whole work of salvation, "It is finished."

I recollect the saying of a Scotchwoman, who had applied to be admitted to the communion of the kirk. Being thought to be very ignorant, and little instructed in the things of God, she was put back by the elders. The minister also had seen her, and thought that, at least for a while, she should wait. I wish I could speak Scotch, so as to give you her answer, but I am afraid that I should make a mistake if I tried it. It is a fine language, doubtless, for those who can speak it. She said something like this, "Aweel, sir; aweel, sir, but I ken ae thing. As the lintbell opens to the sun, so my heart opens to the name of Jesus." You have, perhaps, seen the flax-flower shut itself up when the sun has gone; and, if so, you know that, whenever the sun has come back, the flower opens itself at once. "So," said the poor woman, "I ken one thing, that as the flower opens to the sun, so my heart opens to the name of Jesus." Do you know that, friends? Do you ken that one thing? Then I do not care if you do not ken much else; if that one thing is known by you, and if it be really so, you may be far from perfect in your own estimation, but you are a saved soul.

One said to me, when she came to join the church, and I asked her whether she was perfect, "Perfect? Oh, dear no, sir! I wish that I could be." "Ah, yes!" I replied, "that would just please you, would it not?" "Yes; it would indeed," she answered. "Well, then," I said, "that shows that your heart is perfect, and that you love perfect things; you are pining after perfection; there is a something in you, an 'I' in you, that sinneth not, but that seeketh after that which is holy; and yet you do that which you would not, and you groan because you do, and the apostle is like you when he says, 'It is no more I, the real I, that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.'" May the Lord put that "I" into many of you to-night, that "I" which will hate sin, that "I" which will find its heaven in being perfectly free from sin, that "I" which will delight itself in the Almighty, that "I" which will sun itself in the smile of Christ, that "I" which will strike down every evil within as soon as ever it shows

its head! So will you sing that familiar prayer of Toplady's that we have often sung,—

“ Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power ” !

IV. I close by saying, in the fourth place, that we shall use this text, “ It is finished,” to OUR OWN AROUSEMENT.

Somebody once wickedly said, “ Well, if Christ has finished it, there is nothing for me to do now but to fold my hands, and go to sleep.” That is the speech of a devil, not of a Christian! There is no grace in the heart when the mouth can talk like that. On the contrary, the true child of God says, “ Has Christ finished his work for me? Then tell me what work I can do for him.” You remember the two questions of Saul of Tarsus. The first enquiry, after he had been struck down, was, “ Who art thou, Lord?” And the next was, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” If Christ has finished the work for you which you could not do, now go and finish the work for him which you are privileged and permitted to do. Seek to—

“ Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave ;
Weep o'er the erring one,
Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the Mighty to save.”

My inference from this saying of Christ, “ It is finished,” is this,— Has he finished his work for me? Then I must get to work for him, and *I must persevere until I finish my work, too*; not to save myself, for that is all done, but because I am saved. Now I must work for him with all my might; and if there come discouragements, if there come sufferings, if there comes a sense of weakness and exhaustion, yet let me not give way to it; but, inasmuch as he pressed on till he could say, “ It is finished,” let me press on till I, too, shall be able to say, “ I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” You know how men who go fishing look out for the fish. I have heard of a man going to Keston Ponds on Saturday fishing, and stopping all day Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. There was another man fishing there, and the other man had only been there two days. He said, “ I have been here two days, and I have only had one bite.” “ Why!” replied the other, “ I have been here ever since last Saturday, and I have not had a bite yet; but I mean to keep on.” “ Well,” answered the other, “ I cannot keep on without catching anything.” “ Oh!” said number one, “ but I have such a longing to catch some fish that I shall stop here till I do.” I believe that fellow would catch some fish ultimately, if there were any to be caught; he is the kind of fisherman to do it, and we want to have men who feel that they must win souls for Christ, and that they will persevere till they do. It must be so with us, brethren and sisters; we cannot let men go down to hell if there is any way of saving them.

The next inference is, that *we can finish our work, for Christ finished*

his. You can put a lot of "finish" into your work, and you can hold on to the end, and complete the work by divine grace; and that grace is waiting for you, that grace is promised to you. Seek it, find it, get it. Do not act as some do, ah, even some who are before me now! They served God once, and then they ran away from him. They have come back again; God bless them, and help them to be more useful! But future earnest service will never make up for that sad gap in their earlier career. It is best to keep on, and on, and on, from the commencement to the close; the Lord help us to persevere to the end, till we can truly say of our life-work, "It is finished"!

One word of caution I must give you. *Let us not think that our work is finished till we die.* "Well," says one, "I was just going to say of my work, 'It is finished.'" Were you? Were you? I remember that, when John Newton wrote a book about grace in the blade, and grace in the ear, and grace in the full corn in the ear, a very talkative body said to him, "I have been reading your valuable book, Mr. Newton; it is a splendid work; and when I came to that part, 'The full corn in the ear,' I thought how wonderfully you had described me." "Oh!" replied Mr. Newton, "but you could not have read the book rightly, for it is one of the marks of the full corn in the ear that it hangs its head very low." So it is; and when a man, in a careless, boastful spirit, says of his work, "It is finished," I am inclined to ask, "Brother, was it ever begun? If your work for Christ is finished, I should think that you never realized what it ought to be." As long as there is breath in our bodies, let us serve Christ; as long as we can think, as long as we can speak, as long as we can work, let us serve him, let us even serve him with our last gasp; and, if it be possible, let us try to set some work going that will glorify him when we are dead and gone. Let us scatter some seed that may spring up when we are sleeping beneath the hillock in the cemetery. Ah, beloved, we shall never have finished our work for Christ until we bow our heads, and give up the ghost! The oldest friend here has a little something to do for the Master. Someone said to me, the other day, "I cannot think why old Mrs. So-and-so is spared; she is quite a burden to her friends." "Ah!" I replied, "she has something yet to do for her Lord, she has another word to speak for him." Sister, look up your work, and get it done; and you, brother, see what remains of your life-work yet incomplete. Wind off the ends, get all the little corners finished. Who knows how long it may be before you and I may have to give in our account? Some are called away very suddenly; they are apparently in good health one day, and they are gone the next. I should not like to leave a half-finished life behind me. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is finished," and your heart should say, "Lord, and I will finish, too; not to mix my work with thine, but because thou hast finished thine, I will finish mine."

Now may the Lord give us the joy of his presence at his table! May the bread and wine speak to you much better than I can! May every heir of heaven see Christ to-night, and rejoice in his finished work, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS CXXI. AND CXXII.

Psalm cxxi. Verse 1. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*

No help comes from anywhere else but from the eternal hills. Let us lift up our eyes, therefore, hopefully expecting help from the hills; it is on the road, it "cometh." The psalmist with the eye of faith could see it coming, so he watched its approach.

2. *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.*

He would sooner unmake them than desert his people. He that made heaven and earth could certainly find shelter for us either in heaven or in earth. He cannot, he will not leave us; he will make room for us in heaven when there is no room for us here. What a blessed thing it is to look right away from the creature to the Creator! The creature may fail you; but the Creator is an ever-springing well of all-sufficient grace.

3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:*

He will not endure it, he will not suffer it. Many would like to trip thee up; but he will not allow it, he loves thee too well.

3. *He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

Thou mayest slumber, for thou art frail; but he is a Watchman to whose eyes sleep never comes. You are always safe. Alexander went to sleep, he said, because Parmenio watched; and you may take the sleep of the beloved because Jehovah watches over you.

4. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

Behold it, that is, mark it; put a *nota bene* at the side of it; take cognizance of this as a great and sure truth. Jacob went to sleep with a stone for his pillow, but he that kept him did not sleep; he came to him in the night-watches, and revealed to him his covenant.

5. *The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

Oh, what a Keeper we have! Can you not trust him? Will you not be at peace in your mind if it be indeed true that Jehovah keeps you, and is your guard in the hour of danger?

6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

Then, when canst thou get hurt? If thou art protected both day and night, these make up all the time. God does not make a new sun for his people; the sun would smite us as well as others, but he takes the sting out of the sun's excessive brightness; and we have the same sickly moon as others have, with the same influences over us; but God takes care that the moonbeams do not harm his people. Neither the sun of prosperity nor the night of adversity, neither the light of truth nor even the dimness of mystery, shall injure one of the chosen seed.

7. *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*

That is the soul of your preservation; if the life, the soul, be kept, then are we kept altogether.

8. *The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in—*

Thine early days of youth, when thou art going out into life; and thy coming in, when the older days creep over thee, and thou art coming in to God and heaven; thy going out into business, and thy coming in to private devotion.

8. *From this time forth, and even for evermore.*

Let us, therefore, feel restful at this time, and even for evermore, having the Lord for our Keeper and Preserver.

Psalm cxxii. Verse 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*

I was glad for their sake, glad to think they were so willing to go. I was glad also for my own sake, for I was glad to go, too.

2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*

Happy men who were citizens of such a city! Happy worshippers coming together to the place whose very name signifies the vision of peace, the metropolis of God, type of the New Jerusalem which is from above!

3. *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together :*

Not a conglomeration of huts, but builded as a city with substantial structures; and not a straggling city, like some we read of, that have been called "cities of magnificent distances"; but it was "compact together." Happy is the church that is at peace; blessed are the people who are joined together by a gracious brotherly love.

4. *Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.*

The Church is the point of meeting: "Whither the tribes go up." The Church is the place of "testimony"; and saints go to hear testimony, and they go to bear it. I wish there was more of this bearing testimony among Christian people, and that they looked upon it as a sacred duty to tell to others what God has told to them. "To give thanks unto the name of the Lord"—that is another part of true worship,—praise, joyful thanksgiving, should be one of the saints' continual avocations; let us not forget it at this time. Some are here who have been sick; let them give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Some are here who are still weak, yet able to come up with God's people; let us give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We have all some special mercy, some choice favour, for which to praise his name; then let us all give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

5. *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*

If any of the people had been wronged by the petty magistrates, they went up to Jerusalem, and made their appeal to the king. Here may we bring our suit before God, and order our case before him, for he is true and just, and nothing shall go amiss that is left with him.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem :*

Pray for it now, breathe a silent prayer to God.

6. *They shall prosper that love thee.*

God loves those who love his Church, and love his cause, and he rewards them with prosperity, as much of earthly prosperity as they can bear, and prosperity to their souls beyond measure.

7. *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.*

The psalmist bade us pray, and now he himself prays. He who bids others do a thing should be prepared to set the example.

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.*

Let us say it, for the sake of beloved ones in heaven, and dear ones on earth who are on the way thither, "Peace be within thee."

9. *Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.*

Not only pray for it, but work for it, give for it, live for it: "I will seek thy good." God bless to us these two Psalms, and put us all in a right state of heart to-night! Amen.

“IT IS FINISHED!”

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 1ST, 1861, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”—John xix. 30.

My brethren, I would have you attentively observe the singular clearness, power, and quickness of the Saviour's mind in the last agonies of death. When pains and groans attend the last hour, they frequently have the effect of discomposing the mind, so that it is not possible for the dying man to collect his thoughts, or having collected them, to utter them so that they can be understood by others. In no case could we expect a remarkable exercise of memory, or a profound judgment upon deep subjects from an expiring man. But the Redeemer's last acts were full of wisdom and prudence, although his sufferings were beyond all measure excruciating. Remark how clearly he perceived the significance of every type! How plainly he could read with dying eye those divine symbols which the eyes of angels could only desire to look into! He saw the secrets which have bewildered sages and astonished seers, all fulfilled in his own body. Nor must we fail to observe the power and comprehensiveness by which he grasped the chain which binds the shadowy past with the sun-lit present. We must not forget the brilliance of that intelligence which threaded all the ceremonies and sacrifices on one string of thought, beheld all the prophecies as one great revelation, and all the promises as the heralds of one person, and then said of the whole, “‘It is finished,’ finished in me.” What quickness of mind was that which enabled him to traverse all the centuries of prophecy; to penetrate the eternity of the covenant, and then to anticipate the eternal glories! And all this when he is mocked by multitudes of enemies, and when his hands and feet are nailed to the cross! What force of mind must the Saviour have possessed, to soar above those Alps of Agony, which touched the very clouds. In what a singular mental condition must he have been during the period of his crucifixion, to be able to review the whole roll of inspiration! Now, this remark may not seem to be of any great value, but I think its value lies in certain inferences that may be drawn from it. We have sometimes heard it said, “How could Christ, in so short a time, bear suffering which should be equivalent to the torments—the eternal torments of hell?” Our reply is, we are not capable of judging what the Son of God might do even in a moment, much less what he might do and what he might suffer in his life and in his death. It has been frequently affirmed by persons who have been rescued from drowning, that the mind of a drowning man is singularly active. One who, after being some time in the water, was at last painfully restored, said that the whole of his history seemed to come before his mind while he was sinking, and that if any one had asked him how long he had been in the water, he should have said twenty years, whereas he had only been there for a moment or two. The wild romance of Mahomet's journey upon Alborak is not an unfitting illustration. He affirmed that when the angel came in vision to take him on his celebrated journey to Jerusalem, he went through all the seven heavens, and saw all the wonders thereof, and yet he was gone so short a time, that though the angel's wing had touched a basin of water when they started, they returned soon enough to prevent the water from being spilt. The long dream of the epileptic impostor may really have occupied but a second of time. The intellect of mortal man is such that, if God wills it, when it is in certain states, it can think out centuries of thought at once; it can go through in one instant what we should have supposed would have taken years upon years of time for it to know or feel. We think, therefore, that from the Saviour's singular clearness and quickness of intellect upon the cross, it is very possible that he did in the space of two or three hours endure not only the agony

which might have been contained in centuries, but even an equivalent for that which might be comprehended in everlasting punishment. At any rate, it is not for us to say that it could not be so. When the Deity is arrayed in manhood, then manhood becomes omnipotent to suffer; and just as the feet of Christ were once almighty to tread the seas, so now was his whole body become almighty to dive into the great waters, to endure an immersion in "unknown agonies." Do not, I pray you, let us attempt to measure Christ's sufferings by the finite line of your own ignorant reason, but let us know and believe that what he endured there was accepted by God as an equivalent for all our pains, and therefore it could not have been a trifle, but must have been all that Hart conceived it to be, when he says He bore—

"All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

My discourse will, I have no doubt, more fully illustrate the remark with which I have commenced; let us proceed to it at once. First, *let us hear the text and understand it*; then *let us hear it and wonder at it*; and then, thirdly, *let us hear it and proclaim it*.

I. LET US HEAR THE TEXT AND UNDERSTAND IT.

The Son of God has been made man. He has lived a life of perfect virtue and of total self-denial. He has been all that life long despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His enemies have been legion; his friends have been few, and those few faithless. He is at last delivered over into the hands of them that hate him. He is arrested while in the act of prayer; he is arraigned before both the spiritual and temporal courts. He is robed in mockery, and then unrobed in shame. He is set upon his throne in scorn, and then tied to the pillar in cruelty. He is declared innocent, and yet he is delivered up by the judge who ought to have preserved him from his persecutors. He is dragged through the streets of that Jerusalem which had killed the prophets, and would now crimson itself with the blood of the prophets' Master. He is brought to the cross; he is nailed fast to the cruel wood. The sun burns him. His cruel wounds increase the fever. God forsakes him. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" contains the concentrated anguish of the world. While he hangs there in mortal conflict with sin and Satan, his heart is broken, his limbs are dislocated. Heaven fails him, for the sun is veiled in darkness. Earth forsakes him, for "his disciples forsook him and fled." He looks everywhere, and there is none to help; he casts his eye around, and there is no man that can share his toil. He treads the winepress alone; and of the people there is none with him. On, on, he goes, steadily determined to drink the last dreg of that cup which must not pass from him if his Father's will be done. At last he cries—"It is finished," and he gives up the ghost. Hear it, Christians, hear this shout of triumph as it rings to-day with all the freshness and force which it had eighteen hundred years ago! Hear it from the Sacred Word, and from the Saviour's lips, and may the Spirit of God open your ears that you may hear as the learned, and understand what you hear!

1. What meant the Saviour, then, by this—"It is finished?" He meant, first of all, *that all the types, promises, and prophecies were now fully accomplished in him*. Those who are acquainted with the original will find that the words—"It is finished," occur twice within three verses. In the 28th verse, we have the word in the Greek; it is translated in our version "accomplished," but there it stands—"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now *finished*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." And then he afterwards said, "It is finished." This leads us to see his meaning very clearly, that all the Scripture was now fulfilled, that when he said, "It is finished," the whole book, from the first to the last, in both the law and the prophets, was finished in him. There is not a single jewel of promise, from that first emerald which fell on the threshold of Eden, to that last sapphire-stone of Malachi, which was not set in the breast-plate of the true High Priest. Nay, there is not a type, from the red heifer downward to the turtle-dove, from the hyssop upwards to Solomon's temple itself, which was not fulfilled in him; and not a prophecy, whether spoken on Chebar's bank, or on the shores of Jordan; not a dream of wise men, whether they had received it in Babylon, or in Samaria, or in Judea, which was not now fully wrought out in Christ Jesus. And, brethren, what a wonderful thing it is, that a mass of promises, and prophecies, and types, apparently so heterogeneous, should all be accomplished in one person! Take away Christ for one moment, and I will give the Old Testament to any wise man living, and say to him, "Take this; this is a problem; go home and construct in your imagination an ideal character who shall exactly fit all that

which is herein foreshadowed; remember, he must be a prophet like unto Moses, and yet a champion like to Joshua; he must be an Aaron and a Melchisedek; he must be both David and Solomon, Noah and Jonah, Judah and Joseph. Nay, he must not only be the lamb that was slain, and the scape-goat that was not slain, the turtle-dove that was dipped in blood, and the priest who slew the bird, but he must be the altar, the tabernacle, the mercy-seat, and the shewbread." Nay, to puzzle this wise man further, we remind him of prophecies so apparently contradictory, that one would think they never could meet in one man. Such as these, "All kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him;" and yet, "He is despised and rejected of men." He must begin by showing a man born of a virgin mother—"A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." He must be a man without spot or blemish, but yet one upon whom the Lord doth cause to meet the iniquities of us all. He must be a glorious one, a Son of David, but yet a root out of a dry ground. Now, I say it boldly, if all the greatest intellects of all the ages could set themselves to work out this problem, to invent another key to the types and prophecies, they could not do it. I see you, ye wise men, ye are poring over these hieroglyphs; one suggests one key, and it opens two or three of the figures, but you cannot proceed, for the next one puts you at a nonplus. Another learned man suggests another clue, but that fails most where it is most needed, and another, and another, and thus these wondrous hieroglyphs traced of old by Moses in the wilderness, must be left unexplained, till one comes forward and proclaims, "The cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate," then the whole is clear, so that he that runs may read, and a child may understand. Blessed Saviour! In thee we see everything fulfilled, which God spoke of old by the prophets; in thee we discover everything carried out in substance, which God had set forth us in the dim mist of sacrificial smoke. Glory be unto thy name! "It is finished"—everything is summed up in thee.

2. But the words have richer meaning. Not only were all types, and prophecies, and promises thus finished in Christ, but *all the typical sacrifices of the old Jewish law, were now abolished as well as explained.* They were finished—finished in him. Will you imagine for a minute the saints in heaven looking down upon what was done on earth—Abel and his friends who had long ago before the flood been sitting in the glories above. They watch while God lights star after star in heaven. Promise after promise flashes light upon the thick darkness of earth. They see Abraham come, and they look down and wonder while they see God revealing Christ to Abraham in the person of Isaac. They gaze just as the angels do, desiring to look into the mystery. From the times of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they see altars smoking, recognitions of the fact that man is guilty, and the spirits before the throne say, "Lord, when will sacrifices finish?—when will blood no more be shed?" The offering of bloody sacrifices soon increases. It is now carried on by men ordained for the purpose. Aaron and the high priests, and the Levites, every morning and every evening offer a lamb, while great sacrifices are offered on special occasions. Bulls groan, rams bleed, the necks of doves are wrung, and all the while the saints are crying, "O Lord, how long?—when shall the sacrifice cease?" Year after year the high priest goes within the veil and sprinkles the mercy-seat with blood; the next year sees him do the like, and the next, and again, and again, and again. David offers hecatombs, Solomon slaughters tens of thousands, Hezekiah offers rivers of oil, Josiah gives thousands of the fat of fed beasts, and the spirits of the just say, "Will it never be complete?—will the sacrifice never be finished?—must there always be a remembrance of sin?—will not the last High priest soon come?—will not the order and line of Aaron soon lay aside its labour, because the whole is finished?" Not yet, not yet, ye spirits of the just, for after the captivity the slaughter of victims still remains. But lo, he comes! Gaze more intently than before—He comes who is to close the line of priests! Lo! there he stands, clothed—not now with linen ephod, not with ringing bells, nor with sparkling jewels on his breastplate—but arrayed in human flesh he stands, his cross his altar, his body and his soul the victim, himself the priest, and lo! before his God he offers up his own soul within the veil of thick darkness which hath covered him from the sight of men. Presenting his own blood, he enters within the veil, sprinkles it there, and coming forth from the midst of the darkness, he looks down on the astonished earth, and upward to expectant heaven, and cries, "*It is finished! it is finished!*"—that for which ye looked so long, is fully achieved and perfected for ever.

3. The Saviour meant, we doubt not, that in this moment *his perfect obedience was finished.* It was necessary, in order that man might be saved, that the law of God should be kept, for no man can see God's face except he be perfect in righteousness.

Christ undertook to keep God's law for his people, to obey its every mandate, and preserve its every statute intact. Throughout the first years of his life he privately obeyed, honouring his father and his mother; during the next three years he publicly obeyed God, spending and being spent in his service, till if you would know what a man would be whose life was wholly conformed to the law of God, you may see him in Christ.

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in thy word,
But in thy life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

It needed nothing to complete the perfect virtue of life but the entire obedience of death. He who would serve God must be willing not only to give all his soul and his strength while he lives, but he must stand prepared to resign life when it shall be for God's glory. Our perfect substitute put the last stroke upon his work by dying, and therefore he claims to be absolved from further debt, for "it is finished." Yes, glorious Lamb of God, it is finished! Thou hast been tempted in all points like as we are, yet hast thou sinned in none! It was finished, for the last arrow out of Satan's quiver had been shot at thee; the last blasphemous insinuation, the last wicked temptation had spent its fury on thee; the Prince of this world had surveyed thee from head to foot, within and without, but he had found nothing in thee. Now thy trial is over, thou hast finished the work which thy Father gave thee to do, and so finished it that hell itself cannot accuse thee of a flaw. And now, looking upon thine entire obedience, thou sayest, "It is finished," and we thy people believe most joyously that it is even so. Brothers and sisters, this is more than you or I could have said if Adam had never fallen. If we had been in the garden of Eden to-day, we could never have boasted a finished righteousness, since a creature can never finish its obedience. As long as a creature lives it is bound to obey, and as long as a free agent exists on earth it would be in danger of violating the vow of its obedience. If Adam had been in Paradise from the first day until now, he might fall to-morrow. Left to himself there would be no reason why that king of nature should not yet be uncrowned. But Christ the Creator, who finished creation, has perfected redemption. God can ask no more. The law has received all it claims; the largest extent of justice cannot demand another hour's obedience. It is done; it is complete; the last throw of the shuttle is over, and the robe is woven from the top throughout. Let us rejoice, then, in this that the Master meant by his dying cry that his perfect righteousness wherewith he covers us was finished.

4. But next, the Saviour meant that the satisfaction which he rendered to the justice of God was finished. The debt was now, to the last farthing, all discharged. The atonement and propitiation were made once for all, and for ever, by the one offering made in Jesu's body on the tree. There was the cup; hell was in it; the Saviour drank it—not a sip and then a pause; not a draught and then a ceasing; but he drained it till there is not a drop left for any of his people. The great ten-thonged whip of the law was worn out upon his back; there is no lash left with which to smite one for whom Jesus died. The great cannonade of God's justice has exhausted all its ammunition; there is nothing left to be hurled against a child of God. Sheathed is thy sword, O Justice! Silenced is thy thunder, O Law! There remaineth nothing now of all the griefs, and pains, and agonies which chosen sinners ought to have suffered for their sins, for Christ has endured all for his own beloved, and "it is finished." Brethren, *it is more than the damned in hell can ever say.* If you and I had been constrained to make satisfaction to God's justice by being sent to hell we never could have said, "It is finished." Christ has paid the debt which all the torments of eternity could not have paid. Lost souls, ye suffer to-day as ye have suffered for ages past, but God's justice is not satisfied; his law is not fully magnified. And when time shall fail, and eternity shall have been flying on, still for ever, for ever, the uttermost farthing never having been paid, the chastisement for sin must fall upon unpardoned sinners. But Christ has done what all the flames of the pit could not do in all eternity; he has magnified the law and made it honourable, and now from the cross he cries—"It is finished."

5. Once again: when he said, "It is finished," *Jesu had totally destroyed the power of Satan, of sin, and of death.* The champion had entered the lists to do battle for our soul's redemption, against all our foes. He met Sin. Horrible, terrible, all-but omnipotent Sin nailed him to the cross; but in that deed, Christ nailed Sin also to the tree. There they both did hang together—Sin, and Sin's destroyer. Sin destroyed Christ, and

by that destruction Christ destroyed Sin. Next came the second enemy, Satan. He assaulted Christ with all his hosts. Calling up his myrmidons from every corner and quarter of the universe, he said, "Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen! Here is our great enemy who has sworn to bruise my head; now let us bruise his heel!" They shot their hellish darts into his heart; they poured their boiling cauldrons on his brain; they emptied their venom into his veins; they spat their insinuations into his face; they hissed their devilish fears into his ear. He stood alone, the lion of the tribe of Judah, hounded by all the dogs of hell. Our champion quailed not, but used his holy weapons, striking right and left with all the power of God-supported manhood. On came the hosts; volley after volley was discharged against him. No mimic thunders were these, but such as might shake the very gates of hell. The conqueror steadily advanced, overturning their ranks, dashing in pieces his enemies, breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder, and burning the chariots in the fire, while he cried, "In the name of God will I destroy ye!" At last, foot to foot, he met the champion of hell, and now our David fought with Goliath. Not long was the struggle; thick was the darkness which gathered round them both; but he who is the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary, knew how to smite the fiend, and he did smite him with divine fury, till, having despoiled him of his armour, having quenched his fiery darts, and broken his head, he cried, "It is finished," and sent the fiend, bleeding and howling, down to hell. We can imagine him pursued by the eternal Saviour, who exclaims:—

"Traitor!

My bolt shalt find and pierce thee through,
Though under hell's profoundest wave
Thou div'st, to seek a shelt'ring grave."

His thunderbolt o'ertook the fiend, and grasping him with both his hands, the Saviour drew around him the great chain. The angels brought the royal chariot from on high, to whose wheels the captive fiend was bound. Lash the coursers up the everlasting hills! Spirits made perfect come forth to meet him. Hymn the conqueror who drags death and hell behind him, and leads captivity captive! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in!" But stay; ere he enters, let him be rid of this his burden. Lo! he takes the fiend, and hurls him down through illimitable night, broken, bruised, with his power destroyed, bereft of his crown, to lie for ever howling in the pit of hell. Thus, when the Saviour cried, "It is finished," he had defeated Sin and Satan; nor less had he vanquished Death. Death had come against him, as Christmas Evans puts it, with his fiery dart, which he struck right through the Saviour, till the point fixed in the cross, and when he tried to pull it out again, he left the sting behind. What could he do more? He was disarmed. Then Christ set some of his prisoners free; for many of the saints arose and were seen of many; then he said to him, "Death, I take from thee thy keys; thou must live for a little while to be the warder of those beds in which my saints shall sleep, but give me thy keys." And lo! the Saviour stands to-day with the keys of death hanging at his girdle, and he waits until the hour shall come of which no man knoweth; when the trump of the archangel shall ring like the silver trumpets of Jubilee, and then he shall say, "Let my captives go free." Then shall the tombs be opened in virtue of Christ's death, and the very bodies of the saints shall live again in an eternity of glory.

"It is finish'd!"

Hear the dying Saviour cry."

II. Secondly, LET US HEAR AND WONDER.

Let us perceive what mighty things were effected and secured by these words, "It is finished." Thus he *ratified the covenant*. That covenant was signed and sealed before, and in all things it was ordered well, but when Christ said, "It is finished," then the covenant was made doubly sure; when the blood of Christ's heart bespattered the divine roll, then it could never be reversed, nor could one of its ordinances be broken, nor one of its stipulations fail. You know the covenant was on this wise. God covenants on his part that he would give Christ to see of the travail of his soul; that all who were given to him should have new hearts and right spirits; that they should be washed from sin, and should enter into life through him. Christ's side of the covenant was this—"Father, I will do thy will; I will pay the ransom to the last jot and tittle; I will give thee perfect obedience and complete satisfaction." Now if this second part of the covenant had never been fulfilled, the first part would

have been invalid, but when Jesus said, "It is finished," then there was nothing left to be performed on his part, and now the covenant is all on one side. It is God's "I will," and "They shall." "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean." "From all your iniquities will I cleanse you." "I will lead you by a way that ye know not." "I will surely bring them in." The covenant that day was ratified. When Christ said, "It is finished," *his Father was honoured, and divine justice was fully displayed.* The Father always did love his people. Do not think that Christ died to make God the Father loving. He always had loved them from before the foundation of the world, but—"It is finished," took away the barriers which were in the Father's way. He would, as a God of love, and now he could as a God of justice, bless poor sinners. From that day the Father is well pleased to receive sinners to his bosom. When Christ said—"It is finished," *he himself was glorified.* Then on his head descended the all-glorious crown. Then did the Father give to him honours, which he had not before. He had honour as God, but as man he was despised and rejected; now as God and man Christ was made to sit down for ever on his Father's throne, crowned with honour and majesty. Then, too, by "It is finished," *the Spirit was procured for us.*

"Tis by the merit of his death
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we."

Then the Spirit which Christ had aforetime promised, perceived a new and living way by which he could come to dwell in the hearts of men, and men might come up to dwell with him above. That day too, when Christ said—"It is finished," *the words had effect on heaven.* Then the walls of chrysolite stood fast; then the jasper-light of the pearly-gated city shone like the light of seven days. Before, the saints had been saved as it were on credit. They had entered heaven, God having faith in his Son Jesus. Had not Christ finished his work, surely they must have left their shining spheres, and suffered in their own persons for their own sins. I might represent heaven, if my imagination might be allowed a moment, as being ready to totter if Christ had not finished his work; its stones would have been unloosed; massive and stupendous though its bastions are, yet had they fallen as earthly cities reel under the throes of earthquake. But Christ said, "It is finished," and oath, and covenant, and blood set fast the dwelling-place of the redeemed, made their mansions safely and eternally their own, and bade their feet stand immovably upon the rock. Nay, more, that word "It is finished!" took effect in the gloomy caverns and depths of HELL. Then Satan bit his iron bands in rage, howling, "I am defeated by the very man whom I thought to overcome; my hopes are blasted; never shall an elect one come into my prison-house, never a blood-bought one be found in my abode." Lost souls mourned that day, for they said—"It is finished!" and if Christ himself, the substitute, could not be permitted to go free till he had finished all his punishment, then we shall never be free." It was their double death-knell, for they said, "Alas for us! Justice, which would not suffer the Saviour to escape, will never suffer us to be at liberty. It is finished with him, and therefore it shall never be finished for us." That day, too, the earth had a gleam of sunlight cast over her which she had never known before. Then her hill-tops began to glisten with the rising of the sun, and though her valleys still are clothed with darkness, and men wander hither and thither, and grope in the noonday as in the night, yet that sun is rising, climbing still its heavenly steeps, never to set, and soon shall its rays penetrate through the thick mists and clouds, and every eye shall see him, and every heart be made glad with his light. The words "It is finished!" consolidated heaven, shook hell, comforted earth, delighted the Father, glorified the Son, brought down the Spirit, and confirmed the everlasting covenant to all the chosen seed.

III. And now I come to my last point, upon which very briefly. "It is finished!" LET US PUBLISH IT.

Children of God, ye who by faith received Christ as your all in all, tell it every day of your lives that "it is finished." Go and tell it to those who are torturing themselves, thinking through obedience and mortification to offer satisfaction. Yonder Hindoo is about to throw himself down upon the spikes. Stay, poor man! wherefore wouldst thou bleed, for "it is finished"? Yonder Fakir is holding his hand erect till the nails grow through the flesh, torturing himself with fastings and with self-denials. Cease

cease, poor wretch, from all these pains, for "it is finished!" In all parts of the earth there are those who think that the misery of the body and the soul may be an atonement for sin. Rush to them, stay them in their madness and say to them, "Wherefore do ye this? 'It is finished.'" All the pains that God asks, Christ has suffered; all the satisfaction by way of agony in the flesh that the law demandeth, Christ hath already endured. "It is finished!" And when ye have done this, go ye next to the benighted votaries of Rome, when ye see the priests with their backs to the people, offering every day the pretended sacrifice of the mass, and lifting up the host on high—a sacrifice, they say—"an unbloody sacrifice for the quick and the dead,"—cry, "Cease, false priest, cease! for 'it is finished!' Cease, false worshipper, cease to bow, for 'it is finished!'" God neither asks nor accepts any other sacrifice than that which Christ offered once for all upon the cross. Go ye next to the foolish among your own countrymen who call themselves Protestants, but who are Papists after all, who think by their gifts and their gold, by their prayers and their vows, by their church-goings and their chapel-goings, by their baptisms and their confirmations, to make themselves fit for God; and say to them, "Stop, 'it is finished;' God needs not this of you. He has received enough; why will ye pin your rags to the fine linen of Christ's righteousness? Why will you add your counterfeit farthing to the costly ransom which Christ has paid in to the treasure-house of God? Cease from your pains, your doings, your performances, for 'it is finished;' Christ has done it all." This one text is enough to blow the Vatican to the four winds. Lay but this beneath Popery, and like a train of gunpowder beneath a rock, it shall blast it into the air. This is a thunderclap against all human righteousness. Only let this come like a two-edged sword, and your good works and your fine performances are soon cast away. "It is finished." Why improve on what is finished? Why add to that which is complete? The Bible is finished, he that adds to it shall have his name taken out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city: Christ's atonement is finished, and he that adds to that must expect the selfsame doom. And when ye shall have told it thus to the ears of men of every nation and of every tribe, tell it to all poor despairing souls. Ye find them on their knees, crying, "O God, what can I do to make recompense for my offences?" Tell them, "It is finished;" the recompense is made already. "O God!" they say, "how can I ever get a righteousness in which thou canst accept such a worm as I am?" Tell them, "It is finished;" their righteousness is wrought out already; they have no need to trouble themselves about adding to it, if "it is finished." Go to the poor despairing wretch, who has given himself up, not for death merely, but for damnation—he who says, "I cannot escape from sin, and I cannot be saved from its punishment." Say to him, "Sinner, the way of salvation is finished once for all." And if ye meet some professed Christians in doubts and fears, tell them, "It is finished." Why, we have hundreds and thousands that really are converted, who do not know that "it is finished." They never know that they are safe. They do not know that "it is finished." They think they have faith to-day, but perhaps they may become unbelieving to-morrow. They do not know that "it is finished." They hope God will accept them, if they do some things, forgetting that the way of acceptance is finished. God as much accepts a sinner who only believed in Christ five minutes ago, as he will a saint who has known and loved him eighty years, for he does not accept men because of any anything they do or feel, but simply and only for what Christ did, and that is finished. Oh! poor hearts! some of you do love the Saviour in a measure, but blindly. You are thinking that you must be this, and attain to that, and then you may be assured that you are saved. Oh! you may be assured of it to-day—if you believe in Christ you are saved. "But I feel imperfections." Yes, but what of that? God does not regard your imperfections, but he covers them with Christ's righteousness. He sees them to remove them, but not to lay them to thy charge. "Ay, but I cannot be what I would be." But what if thou canst not? Yet God does not look at thee, as what thou art in thyself, but as what thou art in Christ.

Come with me, poor soul, and thou and I will stand together this morning, while the tempest gathers, for we are not afraid. How sharp that lightning flash! but yet we tremble not. How terrible that peal of thunder! and yet we are not alarmed, and why? Is there anything in us why we should escape? No, but we are standing beneath the cross—that precious cross, which like some noble lightning-conductor in the storm, takes itself all the death from the lightning, and all the fury from the tempest. We are safe. Loud mayest thou roar, O thundering law, and terribly mayest thou flash, O avenging justice! We can look up with calm delight to all the tumult of the elements, for we are safe beneath the cross.

Come with me again. There is a royal banquet spread ; the King himself sits at the table, and angels are the servitors. Let us enter. And we do enter, and we sit down and eat and drink ; but how dare we do this ? our righteousness are as filthy rags—how could we venture to come here ? Oh, because the filthy rags are not ours any longer. We have renounced our own righteousness, and therefore we have renounced the filthy rags, and now to-day we wear the royal garments of the Saviour, and are from head to foot arrayed in white, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; standing in the clear sunlight—black, but comely ; loathsome in ourselves, but glorious in him ; condemned in Adam, but accepted in the Beloved. We are neither afraid nor ashamed to be with the angels of God, to talk with the glorified ; nay, nor even alarmed to speak with God himself and call him our friend.

And now last of all, I publish this to sinners. I know not where thou art this morning, but may God find thee out ; thou who hast been a drunkard, swearer, thief ; thou who hast been a blackguard of the blackest kind ; thou who hast dived into the very kennel, and rolled thyself in the mire—if to-day thou feelest that sin is hateful to thee, believe in Him who has said, "It is finished." Let me link thy hand in mine ; let us come together, both of us, and say, "Here are two poor naked souls, good Lord ; we cannot clothe ourselves ;" and he will give us a robe, for "it is finished." "But, Lord, is it long enough for such sinners, and broad enough for such offenders ?" "Yes," saith he, "it is finished." "But we need washing, Lord ! Is there anything that can take away black spots so hideous as ours ?" "Yes," saith he, "here is the bath of blood." "But must we not add our tears to it ?" "No," says he, "no, it is finished, there is enough." "And now, Lord, thou hast washed us, and thou hast clothed us, but we would be still completely clean within, so that we may never sin any more ; Lord, is there a way by which this can be done ?" "Yes," saith he, "there is the bath of water which floweth from the wounded side of Christ." "And, Lord, is there enough there to wash away my guiltiness as well as my guilt ?" "Ay," saith he, "it is finished." "Jesus Christ is made unto you sanctification as well as redemption." Child of God, wilt thou have Christ's finished righteousness this morning, and wilt thou rejoice in it more than ever thou hast done before ? And oh ! poor sinner, wilt thou have Christ or no ? "Ah," saith one, "I am willing enough, but I am not worthy." He does not want any worthiness. All he asks is willingness, for you know how he puts it, "Whoever will let him come." If he has given you willingness, you may believe in Christ's finished work this morning. "Ah !" say you, "but you cannot mean *me*." But I do, for it says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth." Do you thirst for Christ ? Do you wish to be saved by him ? "Every one that thirsteth,"—not only that young woman yonder, not simply that grey-headed old rebel yonder who has long despised the Saviour, but this mass below, and you in these double tiers of gallery—"Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come." O that I could "compel" you to come ! Great God, do thou make the sinner willing to be saved, for he wills to be damned, and will not come unless thou change his will ! Eternal Spirit, source of light, and life, and grace, come down and bring the strangers home ! "It is finished." Sinner, there is nothing for God to do. "It is finished ;" there is nothing for you to do. "It is finished ;" Christ need not bleed. "It is finished ;" you need not weep. "It is finished ;" God the Holy Spirit need not tarry because of your unworthiness, nor need you tarry because of your helplessness. "It is finished ;" every stumbling-block is rolled out of the road ; every gate is opened ; the bars of brass are broken, the gates of iron are burst asunder. "It is finished ;" come and welcome, come and welcome ! The table is laid ; the fatlings are killed ; the oxen are ready. Lo ! here stands the messenger ! Come from the highways and from the hedges ; come from the dens and from the kens of London ; come, ye vilest of the vile ; ye who hate yourselves to-day, come ! Jesus bids you ; oh ! will you tarry ? Oh ! Spirit of God, do thou repeat the invitation, and make it an effectual call to many a heart, for Jesus' sake ! Amen.

THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31ST, 1886,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23RD, 1885.

“But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”—Luke xxiii. 40—42.

A GREAT many persons, whenever they hear of the conversion of the dying thief, remember that he was saved in the very article of death, and they dwell upon that fact, and that alone. He has always been quoted as a case of salvation at the eleventh hour; and so, indeed, he is. In his case it is proven that as long as a man can repent he can obtain forgiveness. The cross of Christ avails even for a man hanging on a gibbet, and drawing near to his last hour. He who is mighty to save was mighty, even during his own death, to pluck others from the grasp of the destroyer, though they were in the act of expiring.

But that is not everything which the story teaches us; and it is always a pity to look exclusively upon one point, and thus to miss everything else—perhaps miss that which is more important. So often has this been the case that it has produced a sort of revulsion of feeling in certain minds, so that they have been driven in a wrong direction by their wish to protest against what they think to be a common error. I read the other day that this story of the dying thief ought not to be taken as an encouragement to death-bed repentance. Brethren, if the author meant—and I do not think he did mean—that this ought never to be so used as to lead people to postpone repentance to a dying bed, he spoke correctly. No Christian man could or would use it so injuriously: he must be hopelessly bad who would draw from God's long-suffering an argument for continuing in sin. I trust, however, that the narrative is not often so used, even by the worst of men, and I feel sure that it will not be so used by any one of you. It cannot be properly turned to such a purpose: it might be used as an encouragement to thieving just as much as to the delay of repentance. I might say, “I may be a thief because this thief was saved,” just as rationally as

I might say, "I may put off repentance because this thief was saved when he was about to die." The fact is, there is nothing so good but men can pervert it into evil, if they have evil hearts: the justice of God is made a motive for despair, and his mercy an argument for sin. Wicked men will drown themselves in the rivers of truth as readily as in the pools of error. He that has a mind to destroy himself can choke his soul with the Bread of life, or dash himself in pieces against the Rock of ages. There is no doctrine of the grace of God so gracious that graceless men may not turn it into licentiousness.

I venture, however, to say that if I stood by the bedside of a dying man to-night, and I found him anxious about his soul, but fearful that Christ could not save him because repentance had been put off so late, I should certainly quote the dying thief to him, and I should do it with good conscience, and without hesitation. I should tell him that, though he was as near to dying as the thief upon the cross was, yet, if he repented of his sin, and turned his face to Christ believingly, he would find eternal life. I should do this with all my heart, rejoicing that I had such a story to tell to one at the gates of eternity. I do not think that I should be censured by the Holy Spirit for thus using a narrative which he has himself recorded,—recorded with the foresight that it would be so used. I should feel, at any rate, in my own heart, a sweet conviction that I had treated the subject as I ought to have treated it, and as it was intended to be used for men *in extremis* whose hearts are turning towards the living God. Oh, yes, poor soul, whatever your age, or whatever the period of life to which you have come, you may now find eternal life by faith in Christ!

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may you, though vile as he,
Wash all your sins away."

Many good people think that they ought to guard the gospel; but it is never so safe as when it stands out in its own naked majesty. It wants no covering from us. When we protect it with provisos, and guard it with exceptions, and qualify it with observations, it is like David in Saul's armour: it is hampered and hindered, and you may even hear it cry, "I cannot go with these." Let the gospel alone, and it will save; qualify it, and the salt has lost its savour. I will venture to put it thus to you. I have heard it said that few are ever converted in old age; and this is thought to be a statement which will prove exceedingly arousing and impressive for the young. It certainly wears that appearance; but, on the other hand, it is a statement very discouraging to the old. I demur to the frequent repetition of such statements, for I do not find their counterpart in the teaching of our Lord and his apostles. Assuredly our Lord spake of some who entered the vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day; and among his miracles he not only saved those who were dying, but even raised the dead. Nothing can be concluded from the words of the Lord Jesus against the salvation of men at any hour or age. I tell you that, in the business of your acceptance with God, through faith in Christ Jesus, it does not matter what age you now are at. The same promise is to every one of you, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"; and whether you are in

the earliest stage of life, or are within a few hours of eternity, if now you fly for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel, you shall be saved. The gospel that I preach excludes none on the ground either of age or character. Whoever you may be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the message we have to deliver to you. If we address to you the longer form of the gospel, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," this is true of every living man, be his age whatever it may. I am not afraid that this story of the dying and repenting thief, who went straight from the cross to the crown, will be used by you amiss; but if you are wicked enough so to use it, I cannot help it. It will only fulfil that solemn Scripture which saith that the gospel is a savour of death unto death to some, even that very gospel which is a savour of life unto life to others.

But I do not think, dear friends, that the only speciality about the thief is the lateness of his repentance. So far from being the only point of interest, it is not even the chief point. To some minds, at any rate, other points will be even more remarkable. I want to show you very briefly that there was a speciality in his case as to *the means of his conversion*; secondly, a speciality in *his faith*; thirdly, a speciality in *the result of his faith while he was here below*; and, fourthly, a speciality in *the promise won by his faith*—the promise fulfilled to him in Paradise.

I. First, then, I think you ought to notice very carefully **THE SINGULARITY AND SPECIALITY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE THIEF WAS CONVERTED.**

How do you think it was? Well, we do not know. We cannot tell. It seems to me that the man was an unconverted, impenitent thief when they nailed him to the cross, because one of the Evangelists says, "The *thieves* also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." I know that this may have been a general statement, and that it is reconcilable with its having been done by one thief only, according to the methods commonly used by critics; but I am not enamoured of critics even when they are friendly. I have such respect for revelation that I never in my own mind permit the idea of discrepancies and mistakes; and when the Evangelist says "they" I believe he meant "*they*," and that both these thieves did at their first crucifixion rail at the Christ with whom they were crucified. It would appear that by some means or other this thief must have been converted while he was on the cross. Assuredly nobody preached a sermon to him, no evangelistic address was delivered at the foot of his cross, and no meeting was held for special prayer on his account. He does not even seem to have had an instruction, or an invitation, or an expostulation addressed to him; and yet this man became a sincere and accepted believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dwell upon this fact, if you please, and note its practical bearing upon the cases of many around us. There are many among my hearers who have been instructed from their childhood, who have been admonished, and warned, and entreated, and invited, and yet they have not come to Christ; while this man, without any of these advantages, nevertheless believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and found eternal life. O you that have lived under the sound of the gospel from your childhood, the thief does not comfort you, but he accuses you! What are you doing

to abide so long in unbelief? Will you never believe the testimony of divine love? What more shall I say to you? What more can any one say to you?

What do you think must have converted this poor thief? It strikes me that it may have been—it must have been, the sight of our great Lord and Saviour. There was, to begin with, our Saviour's wonderful behaviour on the road to the cross. Perhaps the robber had mixed up with all sorts of society, but he had never seen a Man like this. Never had cross been carried by a Cross-Bearer of his look and fashion. The robber wondered who this meek and majestic Personage could be. He heard the women weep, and he wondered in himself whether anybody would ever weep for him. He thought that this must be some very singular Person that the people should stand about him with tears in their eyes. When he heard that mysterious Sufferer say so solemnly, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for your children," he must have been struck with wonder. When he came to think, in his death-pangs, of the singular look of pity which Jesus cast on the women, and of the self-forgetfulness which gleamed from his eyes, he was smitten with a strange relenting: it was as if an angel had crossed his path, and opened his eyes to a new world, and to a new form of manhood, the like of which he had never seen before. He and his companion were coarse, rough fellows: this was a delicately-formed and fashioned Being, of superior order to himself; yes, and of superior order to any other of the sons of men. Who could he be? What must he be? Though he could see that he suffered and fainted as he went along, he marked that there was no word of complaining, no note of execration, in return for the revilings cast upon him. His eyes looked love on those who glared on him with hate. Surely that march along the Via Dolorosa was the first part of the sermon which God preached to that bad man's heart. It was preached to many others who did not regard its teaching; but upon this man, by God's special grace, it had a softening effect when he came to think over it, and consider it. Was it not a likely and convincing means of grace?

When he saw the Saviour surrounded by the Roman soldiery—saw the executioners bring forth the hammers and the nails, and lay him down upon his back, and drive the nails into his hands and feet, this crucified criminal was startled and astonished as he heard him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He himself, probably, had met his executioners with a curse; but he heard this man breathe a prayer to the great Father; and, as a Jew, as he probably was, he understood what was meant by such a prayer. But it did astound him to hear Jesus pray for his murderers. That was a petition the like of which he had never heard, nor even dreamed of. From whose lips could it come but from the lips of a divine Being? Such a loving, forgiving, Godlike prayer, proved him to be the Messiah. Who else had ever prayed so? Certainly not David and the kings of Israel, who, on the contrary, in all honesty and heartiness imprecated the wrath of God upon their enemies. Elias himself would not have prayed in that fashion, rather would he have called fire from heaven on the centurion and his company. It was a new, strange sound to him. I do not suppose that he appreciated it to the full; but I can well believe that it

deeply impressed him, and made him feel that his Fellow-Sufferer was a being about whom there was an exceeding mystery of goodness.

And when the cross was lifted up, that thief hanging up on his own cross looked around, and I suppose he could see that inscription written in three languages,—“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” If so, that writing was his little Bible, his New Testament, and he interpreted it by what he knew of the Old Testament. Putting this and that together—that strange Person, incarnate loveliness, all patience and all majesty, that strange prayer, and now this singular inscription, surely he who knew the Old Testament, as I have no doubt he did, would say to himself, “Is this HE? Is this truly the King of the Jews? This is he who wrought miracles, and raised the dead, and said that he was the Son of God; is it all true, and is he really our Messiah?” Then he would remember the words of the prophet Isaiah, “He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” “Why,” he would say to himself, “I never understood that passage in the prophet Esaias before, but it must point to him. The chastisement of our peace is upon him. Can this be he who cried in the Psalms—‘they pierced my hands and my feet’?” As he looked at him again, he felt in his soul, “It must be he? Could there be another so like to him?” He felt conviction creeping over his spirit. Then he looked again, and he marked how all men down below rejected, and despised, and hissed at him, and hooted him, and all this would make the case the more clear. “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

Peradventure, this dying thief read the gospel out of the lips of Christ’s enemies. They said,—“He saved others.” “Ah!” thought he, “did he save others? Why should he not save me?” What a grand bit of gospel that was for the dying thief,—“He saved others”! I think I could swim to heaven on that plank,—“He saved others”; because, if he saved others, he can of a surety save me.

Thus the very things that the enemies disdainfully threw at Christ would be gospel to this poor dying man. When it has been my misery to read any of the wretched prints that are sent us out of scorn, in which our Lord is held up to ridicule, I have thought, “Why, perhaps those who read these loathsome blasphemies may, nevertheless, learn the gospel from them!” You may pick a jewel from a dunghill, and find its radiance undiminished; and you may gather the gospel from a blasphemous mouth, and it shall be none the less the gospel of salvation. Peradventure this man learned the gospel from those who jested at our dying Lord; and so the servants of the devil were unconsciously made to be the servants of Christ.

But, after all, surely that which won him most must have been to look at Jesus again, as he was hanging upon the cruel tree. Possibly nothing about the physical person of Christ would be attractive to him, for his visage was more marred than that of any man, and his form more than the sons of men; but yet there must have been in that blessed face a singular charm. Was it not the very image of perfection? As I conceive the face of Christ, it was very different from anything that any

painter has yet been able to place upon his canvas. It was all goodness, and kindness, and unselfishness; and yet it was a royal face. It was a face of superlative justice and unrivalled tenderness. Righteousness and uprightness sat upon his brow; but infinite pity and good-will to men had also there taken up their abode. It was a face that would have struck you at once as one by itself, never to be forgotten, never to be fully understood. It was all sorrow, yet all love; all meekness, yet all resolution; all wisdom, yet all simplicity; the face of a child, or an angel, and yet peculiarly the face of a man. Majesty and misery, suffering and sacredness, were therein strangely combined; he was evidently the Lamb of God, and the Son of man. As the robber looked, he believed. Is it not singular, the very sight of the Master won him? The sight of the Lord in agony, and shame, and death! Scarcely a word; certainly no sermon; no attending worship on the Sabbath; no reading of gracious books; no appeal from mother, or teacher, or friend; but the sight of Jesus won him. I put it down as a very singular thing, a thing for you and for me to recollect, and dwell upon, with quite as much vividness as we do upon the lateness of this robber's conversion.

Oh, that God of his mercy might convert everybody in this Tabernacle! Oh, that I could have a share in it by the preaching of the word! but I will be equally happy if you get to heaven anyhow; ay, if the Lord should take you there without outward ministries, leading you to Jesus by some simple method such as he adopted with this thief. If you do but get there, he shall have the glory of it, and his poor servant will be overjoyed! Oh, that you would now look to Jesus, and live! Before your eyes he is set forth, evidently crucified among you. Look to him and be saved, even at this hour.

II. But now I want you to think with me a little upon THE SPECIALITY OF THIS MAN'S FAITH, for I think it was a very singular faith that this man exerted towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

I greatly question whether the equal and the parallel of the dying thief's faith will be readily found outside the Scriptures, or even in the Scriptures.

Observe, that this man believed in Christ *when he literally saw him dying the death of a felon*, under circumstances of the greatest personal shame. You have never realized what it was to be crucified. None of you could do that, for the sight has never been seen in our day in England. There is not a man or woman here who has ever realized in their own mind the actual death of Christ. It stands beyond us. This man saw it with his own eyes, and for him to call *him* "Lord" who was hanging on a gibbet, was no small triumph of faith. For him to ask Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom, though he saw that Jesus bleeding his life away, and hounded to the death, was a splendid act of reliance. For him to commit his everlasting destiny into the hands of One who was, to all appearance, unable even to preserve his own life, was a noble achievement of faith. I say that this dying thief leads the van in the matter of faith, for what he saw of the circumstances of the Saviour was calculated to contradict rather than help his confidence. What he saw was to his hindrance rather than to his help, for he saw our Lord in the very extremity of agony and death, and yet he believed in him as the King shortly to come into his kingdom.

Recollect, too, that at that moment when the thief believed in Christ, *all the disciples had forsaken him and fled*. John might be lingering at a little distance, and holy women may have stood farther off, but no one was present bravely to champion the dying Christ. Judas had sold him, Peter had denied him, and the rest had forsaken him; and it was then that the dying thief called him "Lord," and said, "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." I call that splendid faith. Why, some of you do not believe, though you are surrounded with Christian friends—though you are urged on by the testimony of those whom you regard with love; but this man, all alone, comes out, and calls Jesus his Lord! No one else was confessing Christ at that moment: no revival was around him with enthusiastic crowds: he was all by himself as a confessor of his Lord. After our Lord was nailed to the tree, the first to bear witness for him was this thief. The centurion bore witness afterwards, when our Lord expired; but this thief was a lone confessor, holding on to Christ when nobody would say "Amen" to what he said. Even his fellow-thief was mocking at the crucified Saviour, so that this man shone as a lone star in the midnight darkness. O sirs, dare you be Daniels? Dare you stand alone? Would you dare to stand out amidst a ribald crew, and say, "Jesus is my King. I only ask him to remember me when he comes into his kingdom"? Would you be likely to avow such a faith when priests and scribes, princes and people, were all mocking at the Christ, and deriding him? Brethren, the dying robber exhibited marvellous faith, and I beg you to think of this next time you speak of him.

And it seems to me that another point adds splendour to that faith, namely, that *he himself was in extreme torture*. Remember, he was crucified. It was a crucified man trusting in a crucified Christ. Oh, when our frame is racked with torture, when the tenderest nerves are pained, when our body is hung up to die by we know not what great length of torment, then to forget the present and live in the future is a grand achievement of faith! While dying, to turn one's eye to Another dying at your side, and trust your soul with him, is very marvellous faith. Blessed thief, because they put thee down at the bottom, as one of the least of saints, I think that I must bid thee come up higher and take one of the uppermost seats among those who by faith have glorified the Christ of God!

Why, see, dear friends, once more, the speciality of this man's faith was that *he saw so much*, though his eyes had been opened for so short a time! He saw the future world. He was not a believer in annihilation, or in the possibility of a man's not being immortal. He evidently expected to be in another world, and to be in existence when the dying Lord should come into his kingdom. He believed all that, and it is more than some do nowadays. He also believed that Jesus would have a kingdom, a kingdom after he was dead, a kingdom though he was crucified. He believed that he was winning for himself a kingdom by those nailed hands and pierced feet. This was intelligent faith, was it not? He believed that Jesus would have a kingdom in which others would share, and therefore he aspired to have his portion in it. But yet he had fit views of himself, and therefore he did not say, "Lord, let me sit at thy right hand;" or, "Let me share of the dainties of thy palace;"

but he said only, "Remember me. Think of me. Cast an eye my way. Think of thy poor dying comrade on the cross at thy right hand. Lord, remember me. Remember me." I see deep humility in the prayer, and yet a sweet, joyous, confident exaltation of the Christ at the time when the Christ was in his deepest humiliation.

Oh, dear sirs, if any of you have thought of this dying thief only as one who put off repentance, I want you now to think of him as one that did greatly and grandly believe in Christ; and oh, that you would do the same! Oh, that you would put a great confidence in my great Lord! Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much. There was never a case of a guilty one, who believed that Jesus could forgive him, and afterwards found that he could not—who believed that Jesus could save him on the spot, and then woke up to find that it was a delusion. No; plunge into this river of confidence in Christ. The waters are waters to swim in, not to drown in. Never did a soul perish that glorified Christ by a living, loving faith in him. Come, then, with all your sin, whatever it may be, with all your deep depression of spirit, with all your agony of conscience. Come along with you, and grasp my Lord and Master with both the hands of your faith, and he shall be yours, and you shall be his.

"Turn to Christ your longing eyes,
View His bloody sacrifice;
See in Him your sins forgiven;
Pardon, holiness, and heaven;
Glorify the King of kings,
Take the peace the gospel brings."

I think that I have shown you something special in the means of the thief's conversion, and in his faith in our dying Lord.

III. But now, thirdly, as God shall help me, I wish to show you another speciality, namely, in THE RESULT OF HIS FAITH.

Oh, I have heard people say, "Well, you see, the dying thief was converted; but then he was not baptized. He never went to communion, and never joined the church"! He could not do either; and that which God himself renders impossible to us he does not demand of us. He was nailed to the cross; how could he be baptized? But he did a great deal more than that; for if he could not carry out the outward signs, he most manifestly exhibited the things which they signified, which, in his condition, was better still.

This dying thief first of all confessed the Lord Jesus Christ; and that is the very essence of baptism. He confessed Christ. Did he not acknowledge him to his fellow-thief? It was as open a confession as he could make it. Did he not acknowledge Christ before all that were gathered around the cross who were within hearing? It was as public a confession as he could possibly cause it to be. Yet certain cowardly fellows claim to be Christians, though they have never confessed Christ to a single person, and then they quote this poor thief as an excuse. Are they nailed to a cross? Are they dying in agony? Oh no; and yet they talk as if they could claim the exemption which these circumstances would give them. What a dishonest piece of business!

The fact is, that our Lord requires an open confession as well as a secret faith; and if you will not render it, there is no promise of salvation.

for you, but a threat of being denied at the last. The apostle puts it, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is stated in another place upon this wise,—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”—that is Christ’s way of making the confession of him. If there be a true faith, there must be a declaration of it. If you are candles, and God has lit you, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Soldiers of Christ must, like her Majesty’s soldiers, wear their regimentals; and if they are ashamed of their regimentals, they ought to be drummed out of the regiment. They are not honest soldiers who refuse to march in rank with their comrades. The very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can expect of us is that we do confess him to the best of our power. If you are nailed up to a cross, I will not invite you to be baptized. If you are fastened up to a tree to die, I will not ask you to come into this pulpit and declare your faith, for you cannot. But you are required to do what you can do, namely, to make as distinct and open an avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ as may be suitable in your present condition.

I believe that many Christian people get into a deal of trouble through not being honest in their convictions. For instance, if a man goes into a workshop, or a soldier into a barrack-room, and if he does not fly his flag from the first, it will be very difficult for him to run it up afterwards. But if he immediately and boldly lets them know, “I am a Christian man, and there are certain things that I cannot do to please you, and certain other things that I cannot help doing, though they displease you”—when that is clearly understood, after a while the singularity of the thing will be gone, and the man will be let alone; but if he is a little sneaky, and thinks that he is going to please the world and please Christ too, he is in for a rough time, let him depend upon it. His life will be that of a toad under a harrow, or a fox in a dog-kennel, if he tries the way of compromise. That will never do. Come out. Show your colours. Let it be known who you are, and what you are; and although your course will not be smooth, it will certainly be not half so rough as if you tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds—a very difficult piece of business that.

This man came out, then and there, and made as open an avowal of his faith in Christ as was possible.

The next thing he did was to rebuke his fellow-sinner. He spoke to him in answer to the ribaldry with which he had assailed our Lord. I do not know what the unconverted convict had been blasphemously saying, but his converted comrade spoke very honestly to him. “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” It is more than ever needful in these days that believers in Christ should not allow sin to go unrebuked; and yet a great many of them do so. Do you not know that a person who is silent when a wrong thing is said or done may become a participator in the sin? If you do not rebuke sin—I mean, of course, on all fit occasions, and in a proper spirit—your silence will give consent to the sin, and you will be an aider and abettor in it. A man who saw a rob-

bery, and who did not cry, "Stop thief!" would be thought to be in league with the thief; and the man who can hear swearing, or see impurity, and never utter a word of protest may well question whether he is right himself. Our "other men's sins" make up a great item in our personal guilt unless we in anywise rebuke them. This our Lord expects us to do. The dying thief did it, and did it with all his heart; and therein far exceeded large numbers of those who hold their heads high in the church.

Next, *the dying thief made a full confession of his guilt.* He said to him who was hanged with him, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? *And we indeed justly.*" Not many words, but what a world of meaning was in them—"we indeed justly." "You and I are dying for our crimes," said he, "and we deserve to die." When a man is willing to confess that he deserves the wrath of God—that he deserves the suffering which his sin has brought upon him—there is evidence of sincerity in him. In this man's case, his repentance glittered like a holy tear in the eye of his faith, so that his faith was bejewelled with the drops of his penitence. As I have often told you, I suspect the faith which is not born as a twin with repentance; but there is no room for suspicion in the case of this penitent confessor. I pray God that you and I may have such a thorough work as this in our own hearts as the result of our faith.

Then, see, *this dying thief defends his Lord right manfully.* He says, "We indeed justly, but this Man hath done nothing amiss." Was not that beautifully said? He did not say, "This Man does not deserve to die," but "This Man hath done nothing amiss." He means that he is perfectly innocent. He does not even say "he has done nothing wicked", but he even asserts that he has not acted unwisely or indiscreetly—"This Man hath done nothing amiss." This is a glorious testimony of a dying man to one who was numbered with the transgressors, and was being put to death because his enemies falsely accused him. Beloved, I only pray that you and I may bear as good witness to our Lord as this thief did. He outruns us all. We need not think much of the coming of his conversion late in life; we may far rather consider how blessed was the testimony which he bore for his Lord when it was most needed. When all other voices were silent, one suffering penitent spake out, and said—"This man hath done nothing amiss."

See, again, another mark of this man's faith. He prays: and *his prayer is directed to Jesus.* "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." True faith is always praying faith. "Behold, he prayeth," is one of the surest tests of the new birth. Oh, friends, may we abound in prayer, for thus we shall prove that our faith in Jesus Christ is what it ought to be! This converted robber opened his mouth wide in prayer; he prayed with great confidence as to the coming kingdom, and he sought that kingdom first, even to the exclusion of all else. He might have asked for life, or for ease from pain; but he prefers the kingdom; and this is a high mark of grace.

In addition to thus praying, you will see that *he adores and worships Jesus*, for he says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The petition is worded as if he felt, "Only let Christ think of me, and it is enough. Let him but remember me, and the thought of

his mind will be effectual for everything that I shall need in the world to come." This is to impute Godhead to Christ. If a man can cast his all upon the mere memory of a person, he must have a very high esteem of that person. If to be remembered by the Lord Jesus is all that this man asks, or desires, he pays to the Lord great honour. I think that there was about his prayer a worship equal to the eternal hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. There was in it a glorification of his Lord which is not excelled even by the endless symphonies of angelic spirits who surround the throne. Thief, thou hast well done!

Oh, that some penitent spirit here might be helped thus to believe, thus to confess, thus to defend his Master, thus to adore, thus to worship; and then the age of the convert would be a matter of the smallest imaginable consequence.

IV. Now, the last remark is this: There was something very special about the dying thief as to OUR LORD'S WORD TO HIM ABOUT THE WORLD TO COME. He said to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He only asked the Lord to remember him, but he obtained this surprising answer, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

In some respects I envy this dying thief, for this reason—that when the Lord pardoned me, and pardoned the most of you, who are present, he did not give us a place in Paradise that same day. We are not yet come to the rest which is promised to us. No, you are waiting here. Some of you have been waiting very long. It is thirty years with many of us. It is forty years, it is fifty years, with many others since the Lord blotted out your sins, and yet you are not with him in Paradise. There is a dear member of this church who, I suppose, has known the Lord for seventy-five years, and she is still with us, having long passed the ninetieth year of her age. The Lord did not admit her to Paradise on the day of her conversion. He did not take any one of us from nature to grace, and from grace to glory, in a day. We have had to wait a good while. There is something for us to do in the wilderness, and so we are kept out of the heavenly garden. I remember that Mr. Baxter said that he was not in a hurry to be gone to heaven; and a friend called upon Dr. John Owen, who had been writing about the glory of Christ, and asked him what he thought of going to heaven. That great divine replied, "I am longing to be there." "Why," said the other, "I have just spoken to holy Mr. Baxter, and he says that he would prefer to be here, since he thinks that he can be more useful on earth." "Oh!" said Dr. Owen, "my brother Baxter is always full of practical godliness, but for all that I cannot say that I am at all desirous to linger in this mortal state. I would rather be gone." Each of these men seems to me to have been the half of Paul. Paul was made up of the two, for he was desirous to depart, but he was willing to remain because it was needful for the people. We would put both together, and, like Paul, have a strong desire to depart and to be with Christ, and yet be willing to wait if we can do service to our Lord and to his church. Still, I think he has the best of it who is converted, and enters heaven the same night. This robber breakfasted with the devil, but he dined with Christ on earth, and supped with him in Paradise. This was short work, but blessed work. What a host of troubles he escaped! What a world of temptation he missed! What

an evil world he quitted! He was just born, like a lamb dropped in the field, and then he was lifted into the Shepherd's bosom straight away. I do not remember the Lord ever saying this to anybody else. I dare say it may have happened that souls have been converted and have gone home at once; but I never heard of anybody that had such an assurance from Christ as this man had: "Verily, I say unto thee;" such a personal assurance: "Verily I say unto *thee*, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Dying thief, thou wert favoured above many, "to be with Christ, which is far better," and to be with him so soon!

Why is it that our Lord does not thus emparadise all of us at once? It is because there is something for us to do on earth. My brethren, are you doing it? *Are you doing it?* Some good people are still on earth: but why? But why? What is the use of them? I cannot make it out. If they are indeed the Lord's people, what are they here for? They get up in the morning and eat their breakfast, and in due course eat their dinner, and their supper, and go to bed and sleep; at a proper hour they get up the next morning, and do the same as on the previous day. Is this living for Jesus? Is this life? It does not come to much. Can this be the life of God in man? Oh, Christian people, do justify your Lord in keeping you waiting here! How can you justify him but by serving him to the utmost of your power? The Lord help you to do so! Why, you owe as much to him as the dying thief! I know I owe a great deal more. What a mercy it is to have been converted while you were yet a boy, to be brought to the Saviour while you were yet a girl! What a debt of obligation young Christians owe to the Lord! And if this poor thief crammed a life full of testimony into a few minutes, ought not you and I, who are spared, for years after conversion, to perform good service for our Lord? Come, let us wake up if we have been asleep! Let us begin to live if we have been half dead. May the Spirit of God make something of us yet: so that we may go as industrious servants from the labours of the vineyard to the pleasures of the Paradise! To our once crucified Lord be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiii. 27—49.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—872, 285, 548, 288.

THE BELIEVING THIEF.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 7TH, 1889, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”—Luke xxiii. 42, 43.

SOME time ago I preached upon the whole story of the dying thief.* I do not propose to do the same to-day, but only to look at it from one particular point of view. The story of the salvation of the dying thief is a standing instance of the power of Christ to save, and of his abundant willingness to receive all that come to him, in whatever plight they may be. I cannot regard this act of grace as a solitary instance, any more than the salvation of Zacchæus, the restoration of Peter, or the call of Saul, the persecutor. Every conversion is, in a sense, singular: no two are exactly alike, and yet any one conversion is a type of others. The case of the dying thief is much more similar to our conversion than it is dissimilar; in point of fact, his case may be regarded as typical, rather than as an extraordinary incident. So I shall use it at this time. May the Holy Spirit speak through it to the encouragement of those who are ready to despair!

Remember, beloved friends, that our Lord Jesus, at the time he saved this malefactor, was at his lowest. His glory had been ebbing out in Gethsemane, and before Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate; but it had now reached the utmost low-water mark. Stripped of his garments, and nailed to the cross, our Lord was mocked by a ribald crowd, and was dying in agony: then was he “numbered with the transgressors,” and made as the offscouring of all things. Yet, while in that condition, he achieved this marvellous deed of grace. Behold the wonder wrought by the Saviour when emptied of all his glory, and hanged up a spectacle of shame upon the brink of death! How certain is it that he can do great wonders of mercy now, seeing that he has returned unto his glory, and sitteth upon the throne of light! “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” If a dying Saviour saved the thief, my argument is, that he can do even more now

* No. 1881: “The Dying Thief in a New Light.”

that he liveth and reigneth. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; can anything at this present time surpass the power of his grace?

It is not only the weakness of our Lord which makes the salvation of the penitent thief memorable; it is the fact that the dying malefactor saw it before his very eyes. Can you put yourself into his place, and suppose yourself to be looking upon one who hangs in agony upon a cross? Could you readily believe him to be the Lord of glory, who would soon come to his kingdom? That was no mean faith which, at such a moment, could believe in Jesus as Lord and King. If the apostle Paul were here, and wanted to add a New Testament chapter to the eleventh of Hebrews, he might certainly commence his instances of remarkable faith with this thief, who believed in a crucified, derided, and dying Christ, and cried to him as to one whose kingdom would surely come. The thief's faith was the more remarkable because he was himself in great pain, and bound to die. It is not easy to exercise confidence when you are tortured with deadly anguish. Our own rest of mind has at times been greatly hindered by pain of body. When we are the subjects of acute suffering it is not easy to exhibit that faith which we fancy we possess at other times. This man, suffering as he did, and seeing the Saviour in so sad a state, nevertheless believed unto life eternal. Herein was such faith as is seldom seen.

Recollect, also, that he was surrounded by scoffers. It is easy to swim with the current, and hard to go against the stream. This man heard the priests, in their pride, ridicule the Lord, and the great multitude of the common people, with one consent, joined in the scorning; his comrade caught the spirit of the hour, and mocked also, and perhaps he did the same for a while; but through the grace of God he was changed, and believed in the Lord Jesus in the teeth of all the scorn. His faith was not affected by his surroundings; but he, dying thief as he was, made sure his confidence. Like a jutting rock, standing out in the midst of a torrent, he declared the innocence of the Christ whom others blasphemed. His faith is worthy of our imitation in its fruits. He had no member that was free except his tongue, and he used that member wisely to rebuke his brother malefactor, and defend his Lord. His faith brought forth a brave testimony and a bold confession. I am not going to praise the thief, or his faith, but to extol the glory of that grace divine which gave the thief such faith, and then freely saved him by its means. I am anxious to show how glorious is the Saviour—that Saviour to the uttermost, who, at such a time, could save such a man, and give him so great a faith, and so perfectly and speedily prepare him for eternal bliss. Behold the power of that divine Spirit who could produce such faith on soil so unlikely, and in a climate so unpropitious.

Let us enter at once into the centre of our sermon. First, *note the man who was our Lord's last companion on earth*; secondly, *note that this same man was our Lord's first companion at the gate of paradise*; and then, thirdly, let us *note the sermon which our Lord preaches to us from this act of grace*. Oh, for a blessing from the Holy Spirit all the sermon through!

I. Carefully NOTE THAT THE CRUCIFIED THIEF WAS OUR LORD'S LAST

COMPANION ON EARTH. What sorry company our Lord selected when he was here! He did not consort with the religious Pharisees or the philosophic Sadducees, but he was known as "the friend of publicans and sinners." How I rejoice at this! It gives me assurance that he will not refuse to associate with *me*. When the Lord Jesus made a friend of me, he certainly did not make a choice which brought him credit. Do you think he gained any honour when he made a friend of you? Has he ever gained anything by us? No, my brethren; if Jesus had not stooped very low, he would not have come to me; and if he did not seek the most unworthy, he might not have come to you. You feel it so, and you are thankful that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As the great physician, our Lord was much with the sick: he went where there was room for him to exercise his healing art. The whole have no need of a physician: they cannot appreciate him, nor afford scope for his skill; and therefore he did not frequent their abodes. Yes, after all, our Lord did make a good choice when he saved you and me; for in us he has found abundant room for his mercy and grace. There has been elbow room for his love to work within the awful emptinesses of our necessities and sins; and therein he has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

Lest any here should be despairing, and say, "He will never deign to look on me," I want you to notice that *the last companion of Christ on earth was a sinner, and no ordinary sinner*. He had broken even the laws of man, for he was a robber. One calls him "a brigand"; and I suppose it is likely to have been the case. The brigands of those days mixed murder with their robberies: he was probably a freebooter in arms against the Roman government, making this a pretext for plundering as he had opportunity. At last he was arrested, and was condemned by a Roman tribunal, which, on the whole, was usually just, and in this case was certainly just; for he himself confesses the justice of his condemnation. The malefactor who believed upon the cross was a convict, who had lain in the condemned cell, and was then undergoing execution for his crimes. A convicted felon was the person with whom our Lord last consorted upon earth. What a lover of the souls of guilty men is he! What a stoop he makes to the very lowest of mankind! To this most unworthy of men the Lord of glory, ere he quitted life, spoke with matchless grace. He spoke to him such wondrous words as never can be excelled if you search the Scriptures through: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." I do not suppose that anywhere in this Tabernacle there will be found a man who has been convicted before the law, or who is even chargeable with a crime against common honesty; but if there should be such a person among my hearers, I would invite him to find pardon and change of heart through our Lord Jesus Christ. You may come to him, whoever you may be; for this man did. Here is a specimen of one who had gone to the extreme of guilt, and who acknowledged that he had done so; he made no excuse, and sought no cloak for his sin; he was in the hands of justice, confronted with the death-doom, and yet he believed in Jesus, and breathed a humble prayer to him, and he was saved upon the

spot. As is the sample, such is the bulk. Jesus saves others of like kind. Let me, therefore, put it very plainly here, that none may mistake me. None of you are excluded from the infinite mercy of Christ, however great your iniquity: if you believe in Jesus, he will save you.

This man was not only a sinner; *he was a sinner newly awakened*. I do not suppose that he had seriously thought of the Lord Jesus before. According to the other Evangelists, he appears to have joined with his fellow thief in scoffing at Jesus: if he did not actually himself use opprobrious words, he was so far consenting thereunto, that the Evangelist did him no injustice when he said, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." Yet, now, on a sudden, he wakes up to the conviction that the man who is dying at his side is something more than a man. He reads the title over his head, and believes it to be true—"This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Thus believing, he makes his appeal to the Messiah, whom he had so newly found, and commits himself to his hands. My hearer, do you see this truth, that the moment a man knows Jesus to be the Christ of God he may at once put his trust in him and be saved? A certain preacher, whose gospel was very doubtful, said, "Do you, who have been living in sin for fifty years, believe that you can in a moment be made clean through the blood of Jesus?" I answer, "Yes, we do believe that in one moment, through the precious blood of Jesus, the blackest soul can be made white. We do believe that in a single instant the sins of sixty or seventy years can be absolutely forgiven, and that the old nature, which has gone on growing worse and worse, can receive its death-wound in a moment of time, while the life eternal may be implanted in the soul at once." It was so with this man. He had reached the end of his tether, but all of a sudden he woke up to the assured conviction that the Messiah was at his side, and, believing, he looked to him and lived.

So now, my brothers, if you have never in your life before been the subject of any religious conviction, if you have lived up till now an utterly ungodly life, yet if now you will believe that God's dear Son has come into the world to save men from sin, and will unfeignedly confess your sin and trust in him, you shall be immediately saved. Ay, while I speak the word, the deed of grace may be accomplished by that glorious One who has gone up into the heaven with omnipotent power to save.

I desire to put this case very plainly: *this man, who was the last companion of Christ upon earth, was a sinner in misery*. His sins had found him out: he was now enduring the reward of his deeds. I constantly meet with persons in this condition: they have lived a life of wantonness, excess, and carelessness, and they begin to feel the fire-flakes of the tempest of wrath falling upon their flesh; they dwell in an earthly hell, a prelude of eternal woe. Remorse, like an asp, has stung them, and set their blood on fire: they cannot rest, they are troubled day and night. "Be sure your sin will find you out." It has found them out, and arrested them, and they feel the strong grip of conviction. This man was in that horrible condition: what is more, he was *in extremis*. He could not live long: the crucifixion was

sure to be fatal; in a short time his legs would be broken, to end his wretched existence. He, poor soul, had but a short time to live—only the space between noon and sundown; but it was long enough for the Saviour, who is mighty to save. Some are very much afraid that people will put off coming to Christ, if we state this. I cannot help what wicked men do with truth, but I shall state it all the same. If you are now within an hour of death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. If you never reach your homes again, but drop dead on the road, if you will now believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved: saved now, on the spot. Looking and trusting to Jesus, he will give you a new heart and a right spirit, and blot out your sins. This is the glory of Christ's grace. How I wish I could extol it in proper language! He was last seen on earth before his death in company with a convicted felon, to whom he spoke most lovingly. Come, O ye guilty, and he will receive you graciously!

Once more, *this man whom Christ saved at last was a man who could do no good works.* If salvation had been by good works, he could not have been saved; for he was fastened hand and foot to the tree of doom. It was all over with him as to any act or deed of righteousness. He could say a good word or two, but that was all; he could perform no acts; and if his salvation had depended on an active life of usefulness, certainly he never could have been saved. He was a sinner also, who could not exhibit a long-enduring repentance for sin, for he had so short a time to live. He could not have experienced bitter convictions, lasting over months and years, for his time was measured by moments, and he was on the borders of the grave. His end was very near, and yet the Saviour could save him, and did save him so perfectly, that the sun went not down till he was in paradise with Christ.

This sinner, whom I have painted to you in colours none too black, was *one who believed in Jesus, and confessed his faith.* He did trust the Lord. Jesus was a man, and he called him so; but he knew that he was also Lord, and he called him so, and said, "Lord, remember me." He had such confidence in Jesus, that, if he would but only think of him, if he would only remember him when he came into his kingdom, that would be all that he would ask of him. Alas, my dear hearers! the trouble about some of you is that you know all about my Lord, and yet you do not trust him. Trust is the saving act. Years ago you were on the verge of really trusting Jesus, but you are just as far off from it now as you were then. This man did not hesitate: he grasped the one hope for himself. He did not keep his persuasion of our Lord's Messiahship in his mind as a dry, dead belief, but he turned it into trust and prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Oh, that in his infinite mercy many of you would trust my Lord this morning! You shall be saved, I am sure you shall: if you are not saved when you trust, I must myself also renounce all hope. This is all that we have done: we looked, and we lived, and we continue to live because we look to the living Saviour. Oh, that this morning, feeling your sin, you would look to Jesus, trusting him, and confessing that trust! Owning that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father, you must and shall be saved.

In consequence of having this faith which saved him, *this poor man breathed the humble but fitting prayer*, "Lord, remember me." This does not seem to ask much; but as he understood it, it meant all that an anxious heart could desire. As he thought of the kingdom, he had such clear ideas of the glory of the Saviour, that he felt that if the Lord would think of him his eternal state would be safe. Joseph, in prison, asked the chief butler to remember him when he was restored to power; but he forgot him. Our Joseph never forgets a sinner who cried to him in the low dungeon; in his kingdom he remembers the moanings and groanings of poor sinners who are burdened with a sense of sin. Can you not pray this morning, and thus secure a place in the memory of the Lord Jesus?

Thus I have tried to describe the man; and, after having done my best, I shall fail of my object unless I make you see that whatever this thief was, he is a picture of what you are. Especially if you have been a great offender, and if you have been living long without caring for eternal things, you are like that malefactor; and yet you, even you, may do as that thief did; you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and commit your souls into his hands, and he will save you as surely as he saved the condemned brigand. Jesus graciously says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This means that if *you* come and trust him, whoever you may be, he will for no reason, and on no ground, and under no circumstances, ever cast you out. Do you catch that thought? Do you feel that it belongs to you, and that if *you* come to him, *you* shall find eternal life? I rejoice if you so far perceive the truth.

Few persons have so much intercourse with desponding and despairing souls as I have. Poor cast down ones write to me continually. I scarce know why. I have no special gift of consolation, but I gladly lay myself out to comfort the distressed, and they seem to know it. What joy I have when I see a despairing one find peace! I have had this joy several times during the week just ended. How much I desire that any of you who are breaking your hearts because you cannot find forgiveness would come to my Lord, and trust him, and enter into rest! Has he not said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Come and try him, and that rest shall be yours.

II. In the second place, NOTE, THAT THIS MAN WAS OUR LORD'S COMPANION AT THE GATE OF PARADISE. I am not going into any speculations as to where our Lord went when he quitted the body which hung on the cross. It would seem, from some Scriptures, that he descended into the lower parts of the earth, that he might fill all things. But he very rapidly traversed the regions of the dead. Remember that he died, perhaps an hour or two before the thief, and during that time the eternal glory flamed through the underworld, and was flashing through the gates of paradise just when the pardoned thief was entering the eternal world. Who is this that entereth the pearl-gate at the same moment as the King of glory? Who is this favoured companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honoured martyr? Is it a faithful apostle? Is it a patriarch, like Abraham; or a prince, like David? It is none of these. Behold,

and be amazed at sovereign grace. He that goeth in at the gate of paradise, with the King of glory, is a thief, who was saved in the article of death. He is saved in no inferior way, and received into bliss in no secondary style. Verily, there are last which shall be first!

Here I would have you notice *the condescension of our Lord's choice*. The comrade of the Lord of glory, for whom the cherub turns aside his sword of fire, is no great one, but a newly-converted malefactor. And why? I think the Saviour took him with him as a specimen of what he meant to do. He seemed to say to all the heavenly powers, "I bring a sinner with me; he is a sample of the rest." Have you never heard of him who dreamed that he stood without the gate of heaven, and while there he heard sweet music from a band of venerable persons who were on their way to glory? They entered the celestial portals, and there were great rejoicing and shouts. Enquiring "What are these?" he was told that they were the goodly fellowship of the prophets. He sighed, and said, "Alas! I am not one of those." He waited a while, and another band of shining ones drew nigh, who also entered heaven with hallelujahs, and when he enquired, "Who are these, and whence came they?" the answer was, "These are the glorious company of the apostles." Again he sighed, and said, "I cannot enter with them." Then came another body of men white-robed, and bearing palms in their hands, who marched amid great acclamation into the golden city. These he learned were the noble army of martyrs; and again he wept, and said, "I cannot enter with these." In the end he heard the voices of much people, and saw a greater multitude advancing, among whom he perceived Rahab and Mary Magdalene, David and Peter, Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, and he espied especially the thief, who died at the right hand of Jesus. These all entered in—a strange company. Then he eagerly enquired, "Who are these?" and they answered, "This is the host of sinners saved by grace." Then was he exceeding glad, and said, "I can go with these." Yet, he thought there would be no shouting at the approach of this company, and that they would enter heaven without song; instead of which, there seemed to rise a seven-fold hallelujah of praise unto the Lord of love; for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent.

I invite any poor soul here that can neither aspire to serve Christ, nor to suffer for him as yet, nevertheless to come in with other believing sinners, in the company of Jesus, who now sets before us an open door.

While we are handling this text, note well *the blessedness of the place* to which the Lord called this penitent. Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise means a garden, a garden filled with delights. The garden of Eden is the type of heaven. We know that paradise means heaven, for the apostle speaks of such a man caught up into paradise, and anon he calls it the third heaven. Our Saviour took this dying thief into the paradise of infinite delight, and this is where he will take all of us sinners who believe in him. If we are trusting him, we shall ultimately be with him in paradise.

The next word is better still. Note *the glory of the society to which*

this sinner is introduced: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." If the Lord said, "To day shalt thou be *with me*," we should not need him to add another word; for where he is, is heaven to us. He added the word "paradise," because else none could have guessed where he was going. Think of it, you uncomely soul; you are to dwell with the Altogether-lovely One for ever. You poor and needy ones, you are to be with him in his glory, in his bliss, in his perfection. Where he is, and as he is, you shall be. The Lord looks into those weeping eyes of yours this morning, and he says, "Poor sinner, thou shalt one day be with me." I think I hear you say, "Lord, that is bliss too great for such a sinner as I am"; but he replies—I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness will I draw thee, till thou shalt be with me where I am.

The stress of the text lies in *the speediness of all this*. "Verily I say unto thee, *To day* shalt thou be with me in paradise." "To day." Thou shalt not lie in purgatory for ages, nor sleep in limbo for so many years; but thou shalt be ready for bliss at once, and at once thou shalt enjoy it. The sinner was hard by the gates of hell, but almighty mercy lifted him up, and the Lord said, "*To day* shalt thou be with me in paradise." What a change from the cross to the crown, from the anguish of Calvary to the glory of the New Jerusalem! In those few hours the beggar was lifted from the dunghill and set among princes. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Can you measure the change from that sinner, loathsome in his iniquity, when the sun was high at noon, to that same sinner, clothed in pure white, and accepted in the Beloved, in the paradise of God, when the sun went down? O glorious Saviour, what marvels thou canst work! How rapidly canst thou work them!

Please notice, also, *the majesty of the Lord's grace* in this text. The Saviour said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Our Lord gives his own will as the reason for saving this man. "I say." He says it who claims the right thus to speak. It is he who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. He speaks royally, "Verily I say unto thee." Are they not imperial words? The Lord is a King in whose word there is power. What he says none can gainsay. He that hath the keys of hell and of death saith, "I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who shall prevent the fulfilment of his word?

Notice *the certainty of it*. He says, "Verily." Our blessed Lord on the cross returned to his old majestic manner, as he painfully turned his head, and looked on his convert. He was wont to begin his preaching with, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; and now that he is dying he uses his favourite manner, and says, "Verily." Our Lord took no oath; his strongest asseveration was, "Verily, verily." To give the penitent the plainest assurance, he says, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In this he had an absolutely indisputable assurance that though he must die, yet he would live and find himself in paradise with his Lord.

I have thus shown you that our Lord passed within the pearly gate

in company with one to whom he had pledged himself. Why should not you and I pass through that pearl-gate in due time, clothed in his merit, washed in his blood, resting on his power? One of these days angels will say of you, and of me, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" The shining ones will be amazed to see some of us coming. If you have lived a life of sin until now, and yet shall repent and enter heaven, what an amazement there will be in every golden street to think that you have come there! In the early Christian church Marcus Caius Victorinus was converted; but he had reached so great an age, and had been so gross a sinner, that the pastor and church doubted him. He gave, however, clear proof of having undergone the divine change, and then there were great acclamations, and many shouts of "Victorinus has become a Christian!" Oh, that some of you big sinners might be saved! How gladly would we rejoice over you! Why not? Would it not glorify God? The salvation of this convicted highwayman has made our Lord illustrious for mercy even unto this day; would not your case do the same? Would not saints cry, "Hallelujah! hallelujah!" if they heard that some of you had been turned from darkness to marvellous light? Why should it not be? Believe in Jesus, and it is so.

III. Now I come to my third and most practical point: **NOTE THE LORD'S SERMON TO US FROM ALL THIS.**

The devil wants to preach this morning a bit. Yes, Satan asks to come to the front and preach to you; but he cannot be allowed. Avaunt, thou deceiver! Yet I should not wonder if he gets at certain of you when the sermon is over, and whispers, "You see you can be saved at the very last. Put off repentance and faith; you may be forgiven on your death-bed." Sirs, you know who it is that would ruin you by this suggestion. Abhor his deceitful teaching. Do not be ungrateful because God is kind. Do not provoke the Lord because he is patient. Such conduct would be unworthy and ungrateful. Do not run an awful risk because one escaped the tremendous peril. The Lord will accept all who repent; but how do you know that you will repent? It is true that one thief was saved—but the other thief was lost. One is saved, and we may not despair; the other is lost, and we may not presume. Dear friends, I trust you are not made of such diabolical stuff as to fetch from the mercy of God an argument for continuing in sin. If you do, I can only say of you, your damnation will be just; you will have brought it upon yourselves.

Consider now the teaching of our Lord; see *the glory of Christ in salvation*. He is ready to save at the last moment. He was just passing away; his foot was on the doorstep of the Father's house. Up comes this poor sinner the last thing at night, at the eleventh hour, and the Saviour smiles and declares that he will not enter except with this belated wanderer. At the very gate he declares that this seeking soul shall enter with him. There was plenty of time for him to have come before: you know how apt we are to say, "You have waited to the last moment. I am just going off, and I cannot attend to you now." Our Lord had his dying pangs upon him, and yet he attends to the perishing criminal, and permits him to pass through the heavenly portal in his company. Jesus easily saves the sinners for

whom he painfully died. Jesus loves to rescue sinners from going down into the pit. You will be very happy if you are saved, but you will not be one half so happy as he will be when he saves you. See how gentle he is!

“ His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes his brow;
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”

He comes to us full of tenderness, with tears in his eyes, mercy in his hands, and love in his heart. Believe him to be a great Saviour of great sinners. I have heard of one who had received great mercy who went about saying, “ He is a great forgiver; ” and I would have you say the same. You shall find your transgressions put away, and your sins pardoned once for all, if you now trust him.

The next doctrine Christ preaches from this wonderful story is *faith in its permitted attachment*. This man believed that Jesus was the Christ. The next thing he did was to appropriate that Christ. He said, “ Lord, remember me. ” Jesus might have said, “ What have I to do with you, and what have you to do with me? What has a thief to do with the perfect One? ” Many of you, good people, try to get as far away as you can from the erring and fallen. They might infect your innocence! Society claims that we should not be familiar with people who have offended against its laws. We must not be seen associating with them, for it might discredit us. Infamous bosh! Can anything discredit sinners such as we are by nature and by practice? If we know ourselves before God we are degraded enough in and of ourselves? Is there anybody, after all, in the world, who is worse than we are when we see ourselves in the faithful glass of the Word? As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Saviour, seize upon him as your Saviour. If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, “ *Latro laudabilis et mirabilis*, ” a thief to be praised and wondered at, who dared, as it were, to seize the Saviour for his own. In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours, and you have him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who make bold to take him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with him. He came into the world to save the sinful. Take him by force, as robbers take their prey; for the kingdom of heaven suffereth the violence of daring faith. Get him, and he will never get himself away from you. If you trust him, he must save you.

Next, notice the doctrine of *faith in its immediate power*.

“ The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through his blood.”

“ To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise. ” He has no sooner believed than Christ gives him the seal of his believing in the full assurance that he shall be with him for ever in his glory. O dear hearts, if you believe this morning, you shall be saved this morning!

God grant that you, by his rich grace, may be brought into salvation here, on the spot, and at once!

The next thing is, *the nearness of eternal things*. Think of that a minute. Heaven and hell are not places far away. You may be in heaven before the clock ticks again, it is so near. Could we but rend that veil which parts us from the unseen! It is all there, and all near. "To day," said the Lord; within three or four hours at the longest, "shalt thou be with me in paradise;" so near is it. A statesman has given us the expression of being "within measurable distance." We are all within measurable distance of heaven or hell; if there be any difficulty in measuring the distance, it lies in its brevity rather than in its length.

" One gentle sigh the fetter breaks,
We scarce can say, 'He's gone,'
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne."

Oh, that we, instead of trifling about such things, because they seem so far away, would solemnly realize them, since they are so very near! This very day, before the sun goes down, some hearer, now sitting in this place, may see, in his own spirit, the realities of heaven or hell. It has frequently happened, in this large congregation, that some one of our audience has died ere the next Sabbath has come round: it may happen this week. Think of that, and let eternal things impress you all the more because they lie so near.

Furthermore, know that *if you have believed in Jesus you are prepared for heaven*. It may be that you will have to live on earth twenty, or thirty, or forty years to glorify Christ; and, if so, be thankful for the privilege; but if you do not live another hour, your instantaneous death would not alter the fact that he that believeth in the Son of God is meet for heaven. Surely, if anything beyond faith is needed to make us fit to enter paradise, the thief would have been kept a little longer here; but no, he is, in the morning, in the state of nature, at noon he enters the state of grace, and by sunset he is in the state of glory. The question never is whether a death-bed repentance is accepted if it be sincere: the question is—Is it sincere? If it be so, if the man dies five minutes after his first act of faith, he is as safe as if he had served the Lord for fifty years. If your faith is true, if you die one moment after you have believed in Christ, you will be admitted into paradise, even if you shall have enjoyed no time in which to produce good works and other evidences of grace. He that reads the heart will read your faith written on its fleshy tablets, and he will accept you through Jesus Christ, even though no act of grace has been visible to the eye of man.

I conclude by again saying that *this is not an exceptional case*. I began with that, and I want to finish with it, because so many demi-semi-gospellers are so terribly afraid of preaching free grace too fully. I read somewhere, and I think it is true, that some ministers preach the gospel in the same way as donkeys eat thistles, namely, very, very cautiously. On the contrary, I will preach it boldly. I have not the slightest alarm about the matter. If any of you misuse free-grace teaching, I cannot help it. He that will be damned can as well ruin

himself by perverting the gospel as by anything else. I cannot help what base hearts may invent; but mine it is to set forth the gospel in all its fulness of grace, and I will do it. If the thief was an exceptional case—and our Lord does not usually act in such a way—there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Saviour have whispered quietly to the dying man, “You are the only one I am going to treat in this way”? Whenever I have to do an exceptional favour to a person, I have to say, “Do not mention this, or I shall have so many besieging me.” If the Saviour had meant this to be a solitary case, he would have faintly said to him, “Do not let anybody know; but you shall to day be in the kingdom with me.” No, our Lord spoke openly, and those about him heard what he said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case, it would not have been written in the Word of God. Men will not publish their actions in the newspapers if they feel that the record might lead others to expect from them what they cannot give. The Saviour had this wonder of grace reported in the daily news of the gospel, because he means to repeat the marvel every day. The bulk shall be equal to sample, and therefore he sets the sample before you all. He is able to save to the uttermost, for he saved the dying thief. The case would not have been put there to encourage hopes which he cannot fulfil. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, and not for our disappointing. I pray you, therefore, if any of you have not yet trusted in my Lord Jesus, come and trust in him now. Trust him wholly; trust him only; trust him at once. Then will you sing with me—

“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.”

OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 9th, 1889.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."—Luke xxiii. 46.

THESE were the dying words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It may be instructive if I remind you that the words of Christ upon the cross were seven. Calling each of his cries, or utterances, by the title of a word, we speak of the seven last words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me rehearse them in your hearing. The first, when they nailed him to the cross, was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke has preserved that word. Later, when one of the two thieves said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," Jesus said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This also Luke has carefully preserved. Farther on, our Lord, in his great agony, saw his mother, with breaking heart, standing by the cross, and looking up to him with unutterable love and grief, and he said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother!" and thus he provided a home for her when he himself should be gone away. This utterance has only been preserved by John.

The fourth and central word of the seven was, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was the culmination of his grief, the central point of all his agony. That most awful word that ever fell from the lips of man, expressing the quintessence of exceeding agony, is well put fourth, as though it had need of three words before it, and three words after it, as its body-guard. It tells of a good man, a son of God, *the* Son of God, forsaken of his God. That central word of the seven is found in Matthew and in Mark, but not in Luke or John; but the fifth word has been preserved by John; that is, "I thirst," the shortest, but not quite the sharpest of all the Master's

words, though under a bodily aspect, perhaps the sharpest of them all. John has also treasured up another very precious saying of Jesus Christ on the cross, that is the wondrous word, "It is finished." This was the last word but one, "It is finished," the gathering up of all his lifework, for he had left nothing undone, no thread was left unravelling, the whole fabric of redemption had been woven, like his garment, from the top throughout, and it was finished to perfection. After he had said, "It is finished," he uttered the last word of all, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," which I have taken for a text to-night; but to which I will not come immediately.

There has been a great deal said about these seven cries from the cross by divers writers; and though I have read what many of them have written, I cannot add anything to what they have said, since they have delighted to dwell upon these seven last cries; and here the most ancient writers, of what would be called the Romish school, are not to be excelled, even by Protestants, in their intense devotion to every letter of our Saviour's dying words; and they sometimes strike out new meanings, richer and more rare than any that have occurred to the far cooler minds of modern critics, who are as a rule greatly blessed with moles' eyes, able to see where there is nothing to be seen, but never able to see when there is anything worth seeing. Modern criticism, like modern theology, if it were put in the Garden of Eden, would not see a flower. It is like the sirocco that blasts and burns, it is without either dew or unction; in fact, it is the very opposite of these precious things, and proves itself to be unblest of God, and un blessing to men.

Now concerning these seven cries from the cross, many authors have drawn from them lessons concerning *seven duties*. Listen. When our Lord said, "Father, forgive them," in effect, he said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they despitely use you, and put you to terrible pain, be ready to pardon them. Be like the sandalwood tree, which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, and kindness, and love; and be this your prayer, "Father, forgive them."

The next duty is taken from the second cry, namely, that of penitence and faith in Christ, for he said to the dying thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Have you, like him, confessed your sin? Have you his faith, and his prayerfulness? Then you shall be accepted even as he was. Learn, then, from the second cry, the duty of penitence and faith.

When our Lord, in the third cry, said to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" he taught us the duty of filial love. No Christian must ever be short of love to his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him by relationships which God has appointed for us to observe. Oh, by the dying love of Christ to his mother, let no man here unman himself by forgetting his mother! She bore you; bear her in her old age, and lovingly cherish her even to the last.

Jesus Christ's fourth cry teaches us the duty of clinging to God, and trusting in God: "My God, my God." See how, with both hands, he takes hold of him: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He cannot bear to be left of God; all else causes

him but little pain compared with the anguish of being forsaken of his God. So learn to cling to God, to grip him with a double-handed faith; and if thou dost even think that he has forsaken thee, cry after him, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, for I cannot bear to be without thee."

The fifth cry, "I thirst," teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfilment of God's Word. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." Take thou good heed, in all thy grief and weakness, still to preserve the Word of thy God, and to obey the precept, learn the doctrine, and delight in the promise. As thy Lord, in his great anguish said, "I thirst," because it was written that so he would speak, do thou have regard unto the Word of the Lord even in little things.

That sixth cry, "It is finished," teaches us perfect obedience. Go through with thy keeping of God's commandment; leave out no command, keep on obeying till thou canst say, "It is finished." Work thy likework, obey thy Master, suffer or serve according to his will, but rest not till thou canst say with thy Lord, "It is finished." "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

And that last word, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," teaches us resignation. Yield all things, yield up even thy spirit to God at his bidding. Stand still, and make a full surrender to the Lord, and let this be thy watchword from the first even to the last, "Into thy hands, my Father, I commend my spirit."

I think that this study of Christ's last words should interest you; therefore let me linger a little longer upon it. Those seven cries from the cross also teach us something about *the attributes and offices of our Master*. They are seven windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle, through which you may see him, and approach him.

First, would you see him as Intercessor? Then he cries, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would you look at him as King? Then hear his second word, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Would you mark him as a tender Guardian? Hear him say to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother!" Would you peer into the dark abyss of the agonies of his soul? Hear him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Would you understand the reality and the intensity of his bodily sufferings? Then hear him say, "I thirst," for there is something exquisite in the torture of thirst when brought on by the fever of bleeding wounds. Men on the battle-field, who have lost much blood, are devoured with thirst, and tell you that it is the worst pang of all. "I thirst," says Jesus. See the Sufferer in the body, and understand how he can sympathize with you who suffer, since he suffered so much on the cross. Would you see him as the Finisher of your salvation? Then hear his cry, "*Consummatum est*"—"It is finished." Oh, glorious note! Here you see the blessed Finisher of your faith. And would you then take one more gaze, and understand how voluntary was his suffering? Then hear him say, not as one who is robbed of life, but as one who takes his soul, and hands it over to the keeping of another, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Is there not much to be learnt from these cries from the cross? Surely these seven notes make a wondrous scale of music if we do but know how to listen to them. Let me run up the scale again. Here, first, you have Christ's fellowship with men: "Father, forgive them." He stands side by side with sinners, and tries to make an apology for them: "They know not what they do." Here is, next, his kingly power. He sets open heaven's gate to the dying thief, and bids him enter. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Thirdly, behold his human relationship. How near of kin he is to us! "Woman, behold thy son!" Remember how he says, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He belongs to the human family. He is more of a man than any man. As surely as he is very God of very God, he is also very man of very man, taking into himself the nature, not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile, too. Belonging to his own nationality, but rising above all, he is the Man of men, the Son of man.

See, next, his taking our sin. You say, "Which note is that?" Well, they are all to that effect; but this one chiefly, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was because he bore our sins in his own body on the tree that he was forsaken of God. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin," and hence the bitter cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Behold him, in that fifth cry, "I thirst," taking, not only our sin, but also our infirmity, and all the suffering of our bodily nature. Then, if you would see his fulness as well as his weakness, if you would see his all-sufficiency as well as his sorrow, hear him cry, "It is finished." What a wonderful fulness there is in that note! Redemption is all accomplished; it is all complete; it is all perfect. There is nothing left, not a drop of bitterness in the cup of gall; Jesus has drained it dry. There is not a farthing to be added to the ransom price; Jesus has paid it all. Behold his fulness in the cry, "It is finished." And then, if you would see how he has reconciled us to himself, behold him, the Man who was made a curse for us, returning with a blessing to his Father, and taking us with him, as he draws us all up by that last dear word, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Christ goes back to the Father, for "It is finished," and you and I come to the Father through his perfect work.

I have only practised two or three tunes that can be played upon this harp, but it is a wonderful instrument. If it be not a harp of ten strings, it is, at any rate, an instrument of seven strings, and neither time nor eternity shall ever be able to fetch all the music out of them. Those seven dying words of the ever-living Christ will make melody for us in glory through all the ages of eternity.

I shall now ask your attention for a little time to the text itself: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Do you see our Lord? He is dying; and as yet, his face is toward man. His last word to man is the cry, "It is finished." Hear, all ye sons of men, he speaks to you, "It is finished." Could you

have a choicer word with which he should say "Adieu" to you in the hour of death? He tells you not to fear that his work is imperfect, not to tremble lest it should prove insufficient. He speaks to you, and declares with his dying utterance, "It is finished." Now he has done with you, and he turns his face the other way. His day's work is done, his more than Herculean toil is accomplished, and the great Champion is going back to his Father's throne, and he speaks; but not to you. His last word is addressed to his Father, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These are his first words in going home to his Father, as "It is finished," is his last word as, for a while, he quits our company. Think of these words, and may they be your first words, too, when you return to your Father! May you speak thus to your Divine Father in the hour of death! The words were much hackneyed in Romish times; but they are not spoiled even for that. They used to be said in the Latin by dying men, "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.*" Every dying man used to try to say those words in Latin; and if he did not, somebody tried to say them for him. They were made into a kind of spell of witchcraft; and so they lost that sweetness to our ears in the Latin; but in the English they shall always stand as the very essence of music for a dying saint, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

It is very noteworthy that the last words that our Lord used were quoted from the Scriptures. This sentence is taken, as I daresay most of you know, from the thirty-first Psalm, and the fifth verse. Let me read it to you. What a proof it is of how full Christ was of the Bible! He was not one of those who think little of the Word of God. He was saturated with it. He was as full of Scripture as the fleece of Gideon was full of dew. He could not speak even in his death without uttering Scripture. This is how David put it, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Now, beloved, the Saviour altered this passage, or else it would not quite have suited him. Do you see, first, he was obliged, in order to fit it to his own case, to add something to it? What did he add to it? Why, that word, "Father." David said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit;" but Jesus says, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Blessed advance! He knew more than David did, for he was more the Son of God than David could be. He was *the* Son of God in a very high and special sense by eternal filiation; and so he begins the prayer with, "Father." But then he takes something from it. It was needful that he should do so, for David said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me." Our blessed Master was not redeemed, for he was the Redeemer; and he could have said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit, for I have redeemed my people;" but that he did not choose to say. He simply took that part which suited himself, and used it as his own, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Oh, my brethren, you will not do better, after all, than to quote Scripture, especially in prayer. There are no prayers so good as those that are full of the Word of God. May all our speech be flavoured with texts! I wish that it were more so. They laughed at our Puritan forefathers because the very names of their children were fetched out of passages

of Scripture; but I, for my part, had much rather be laughed at for talking much of Scripture than for talking much of trashy novels—novels with which (I am ashamed to say it) many a sermon nowadays is larded, ay, larded with novels that are not fit for decent men to read, and which are coated over till one hardly knows whether he is hearing about a historical event, or only a piece of fiction—from which abomination, good Lord, deliver us!

So, then, you see how well the Saviour used Scripture, and how, from his first battle with the devil in the wilderness till his last struggle with death on the cross, his weapon was ever, "It is written."

Now, I am coming to the text itself, and I am going to preach from it for only a very short time. In doing so, firstly, *let us learn the doctrine* of this last cry from the cross; secondly, *let us practise the duty*; and thirdly, *let us enjoy the privilege*.

I. First, LET US LEARN THE DOCTRINE of our Lord's last cry from the cross.

What is the doctrine of this last word of our Lord Jesus Christ? *God is his Father, and God is our Father.* He who himself said, "Father," did not say for himself, "Our Father," for the Father is Christ's Father in a higher sense than he is ours; but yet he is not more truly the Father of Christ than he is our Father if we have believed in Jesus. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Believe the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God to his people. As I have warned you before, abhor the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, for it is a lie, and a deep deception. It stabs at the heart, first, of the doctrine of the adoption, which is taught in Scripture, for how can God adopt men if they are all his children already? In the second place, it stabs at the heart of the doctrine of regeneration, which is certainly taught in the Word of God. Now it is by regeneration and faith that we become the children of God, but how can that be if we are the children of God already? "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How can God give to men the power to become his sons if they have it already? Believe not that lie of the devil, but believe this truth of God, that Christ and all who are by living faith in Christ may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God.

Next learn this doctrine, that *in this fact lies our chief comfort.* In our hour of trouble, in our time of warfare, let us say, "Father." You notice that the first cry from the cross is like the last; the highest note is like the lowest. Jesus begins with, "Father, forgive them," and he finishes with, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." To help you in a stern duty like forgiveness, cry, "Father." To help you in sore suffering and death, cry, "Father." Your main strength lies in your being truly a child of God.

Learn the next doctrine, that *dying is going home to our Father.* I said to an old friend, not long ago, "Old Mr. So-and-so has gone home." I meant that he was dead. He said, "Yes, where else

should he go?" I thought that was a wise question. Where else should we go? When we grow grey, and our day's work is done, where should we go but home? So, when Christ has said, "It is finished," his next word, of course, is "Father." He has finished his earthly course, and now he will go home to heaven. Just as a child runs to its mother's bosom when it is tired, and wants to fall asleep, so Christ says, "Father," ere he falls asleep in death.

Learn another doctrine, that if God is our Father, and we regard ourselves as going home when we die, because we go to him, then *he will receive us*. There is no hint that we can commit our spirit to God, and yet that God will not have us. Remember how Stephen, beneath a shower of stones, cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Let us, however we may die, make this our last emotion if not our last expression, "Father, receive my spirit." Shall not our heavenly Father receive his children? If ye, being evil, receive your children at nightfall, when they come home to sleep, shall not your Father, who is in heaven, receive you when your day's work is done? That is the doctrine we are to learn from this last cry from the cross, the Fatherhood of God and all that comes of it to believers.

II. Secondly, LET US PRACTISE THE DUTY.

That duty seems to me to be, first, *resignation*. Whenever anything distresses and alarms you, resign yourself to God. Say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Sing with Faber,—

"I bow me to thy will, O God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live I'll seek
To please thee more and more."

Learn, next, the duty of *prayer*. When thou art in the very anguish of pain, when thou art surrounded by bitter griefs of mind as well as of body, still pray. Drop not the "Our Father." Let not your cries be addressed to the air; let not your moans be to your physician, or your nurse; but cry, "Father." Does not a child so cry when it has lost its way? If it be in the dark at night, and it starts up in a lone room, does it not cry out, "Father"; and is not a father's heart touched by that cry? Is there anybody here who has never cried to God? Is there one here who has never said "Father"? Then, my Father, put thy love into their hearts, and make them to-night say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." You shall truly be known to be the sons of God if that cry is in your heart and on your lips.

The next duty is *the committal of ourselves to God by faith*. Give yourselves up to God, trust yourselves with God. Every morning, when you get up, take yourself, and put yourself into God's custody; lock yourself up, as it were, in the casket of divine protection; and every night, when you have unlocked the box, ere you fall asleep, lock it again, and give the key into the hand of him who is able to keep you when the image of death is on your face. Before you sleep, commit yourself to God; I mean, do that when there is nothing to frighten you, when everything is going smoothly, when the wind blows softly from the south, and the barque is speeding towards its desired haven, still make not thyself quiet with thine own quieting.

He who carves for himself will cut his fingers, and get an empty plate. He who leaves God to carve for him shall often have fat things full of marrow placed before him. If thou canst trust, God will reward thy trusting in a way that thou knowest not as yet.

And then practise one other duty, that of *the personal and continual realization of God's presence*. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." "Thou art here; I know that thou art. I realize that thou art here in the time of sorrow, and of danger; and I put myself into thy hands. Just as I would give myself to the protection of a policeman, or a soldier, if anyone attacked me, so do I commit myself to thee, thou unseen Guardian of the night, thou unwearied Keeper of the day. Thou shalt cover my head in the day of battle. Beneath thy wings will I trust, as a chick hides beneath the hen."

See, then, your duty. It is to resign yourself to God, pray to God, commit yourself to God, and rest in a sense of the presence of God. May the Spirit of God help you in the practice of such priceless duties as these!

III. Now, lastly, LET US ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE.

First, let us enjoy the high privilege of *resting in God in all times of danger and pain*. The doctor has just told you that you will have to undergo an operation. Say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." There is every probability that that weakness of yours, or that disease of yours, will increase upon you, and that by-and-by you will have to take to your bed, and lie there perhaps for many a day. Then say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Do not fret; for that will not help you. Do not fear the future; for that will not aid you. Give yourself up (it is your privilege to do so) to the keeping of those dear hands that were pierced for you, to the love of that dear heart which was set abroad with the spear to purchase your redemption. It is wonderful what rest of spirit God can give to a man or a woman in the very worst condition. Oh, how some of the martyrs have sung at the stake! How they have rejoiced when on the rack! Bonner's coal-hole, across the water there, at Fulham, where he shut up the martyrs, was a wretched place to lie in on a cold winter's night; but they said, "They did rouse them in the straw, as they lay in the coal-hole; with the sweetest singing out of heaven, and when Bonner said, 'Fie on them that they should make such a noise!' they told him that he, too, would make such a noise if he was as happy as they were." When you have commended your spirit to God, then you have sweet rest in time of danger and pain.

The next privilege is that of *a brave confidence, in the time of death, or in the fear of death*. I was led to think over this text by using it a great many times last Thursday night. Perhaps none of you will ever forget last Thursday night. I do not think that I ever shall, if I live to be as old as Methuselah. From this place till I reached my home, it seemed one continued sheet of fire; and the further I went, the more vivid became the lightning flashes; but when I came at last to turn up Leigham Court Road, then the lightning seemed to come in very bars from the sky; and at last, as I reached the top of the hill, and a crash came of the most startling kind, down poured a torrent of hail, hailstones that I will not attempt to describe, for you

might think that I exaggerated, and then I felt, and my friend with me, that we could hardly expect to reach home alive. We were there at the very centre and summit of the storm. All around us, on every side, and all within us, as it were, seemed nothing but the electric fluid; and God's right arm seemed bared for war. I felt then, "Well, now I am very likely going home," and I commended my spirit to God; and from that moment, though I cannot say that I took much pleasure in the peals of thunder, and the flashes of lightning, yet I felt quite as calm as I do here at this present moment; perhaps a little more calm than I do in the presence of so many people; happy at the thought that, within a single moment, I might understand more than all I could ever learn on earth, and see in an instant more than I could hope to see if I lived here for a century. I could only say to my friend, "Let us commit ourselves to God; we know that we are doing our duty in going on as we are going, and all is well with us." So we could only rejoice together in the prospect of being soon with God. We were not taken home in the chariot of fire; we are still spared a little longer to go on with life's work; but I realize the sweetness of being able to have done with it all, to have no wish, no will, no word, scarcely a prayer, but just to take one's heart up, and hand it over to the great Keeper, saying, "Father, take care of me. So let me live, so let me die. I have henceforth no desire about anything; let it be as *thou* pleasest. Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

This privilege is not only that of having rest in danger, and confidence in the prospect of death; it is also full of *consummate joy*. Beloved, if we know how to commit ourselves into the hands of God, what a place it is for us to be in! What a place to be in,—in the hands of God! There are the myriads of stars; there is the universe itself; God's hand upholds its everlasting pillars, and they do not fall. If we get into the hands of God, we get where all things rest, and we get home and happiness. We have got out of the nothingness of the creature into the all-sufficiency of the Creator. Oh, get you there; hasten to get you there, beloved friends, and live henceforth in the hands of God!

"It is finished." You have not finished; but Christ has. It is all done. What you have to do will only be to work out what he has already finished for you, and show it to the sons of men in your lives. And because it is all finished, therefore say, "Now, Father, I return to thee. My life henceforth shall be to be in thee. My joy shall be to shrink to nothing in the presence of the All-in-all, to die into the eternal life, to sink my *ego* into Jehovah, to let my manhood, my creaturehood live only for its Creator, and manifest only the Creator's glory. O beloved, begin to-morrow morning and end to-night with, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Lord be with you all! Oh, if you have never prayed, God help you to begin to pray now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XXIII. 27—49, AND MATTHEW XXVII. 50—54.

Luke xxiii. Verse 27. *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.*

Their best Friend, the Healer of their sick, the Lover of their children, was about to be put to death, so they might well bewail and lament.

28—30. *But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*

Our Saviour looked forward to the terrible siege of Jerusalem, the most tragical of all human transactions. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that history contains nothing equal to it. It stands alone in the unutterable agony of men, women, and children in that dreadful time of suffering.

31. *For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

If the Christ of God is put to death even while the Jewish capital seems vigorous and flourishing, what shall be done when it is all dry and dead, and the Roman legions are round about the doomed city?

32. *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.*

Every item of scorn was added to our Saviour's death; and yet the Scriptures were thus literally fulfilled, for "He was numbered with the transgressors."

33, 34. *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

Do you hear the hammer fall? "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Do you see the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus? This is all that is extracted by that fearful pressure, nothing but words of pardoning love, a prayer for those who are killing him: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

35. *And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*

You know how mockery puts salt and vinegar into a wound. A man does not at any time like to be reviled; but when he is full of physical and mental anguish, and his heart is heavy within him, then ridicule is peculiarly full of acid to him.

36, 37. *And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.*

These rough legionaries knew how to put their jests in the most cruel shape, and to press home their scoffs upon their suffering victim.

38. *And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,*

These were the three languages that could be understood by all the people round about.

38. THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And so he is, and so he shall be. He has never quitted the throne. The Son of David is still King of the Jews, though they continue to reject him;

but the day shall come when they shall recognize and receive the Messiah. "Then shall they look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

39. *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

Matthew and Mark speak of both the thieves as railing at Jesus. We must take their expressions as being literally correct; and if so, both the malefactors at first cast reproaches in Christ's teeth.

40. 41. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

Not only has he done nothing worthy of death, but he has done nothing improper, nothing out of place: "This man hath done nothing amiss." The thief bears testimony to the perfect character of this wondrous Man, whom he nevertheless recognized to be divine, as we shall see in the next verse.

42—47. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.*

He was set there at the head of the guard, to watch the execution; and he could not help saying, as he observed the wonderful signs in heaven and earth, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

48. *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.*

What a change must have come over that ribald crowd! They had shouted, "Crucify him;" they had stood there, and mocked him; and now they are overcome with the sight, and they smite their breasts. Ah, dear friends, their grief did not come to much! Men may smite their breasts; but unless God smites their hearts, all the outward signs of a gracious work will come to nothing at all.

49. *And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.*

Let "these things" be before your mind's eye this evening, and think much of your crucified Lord, all you who are of his acquaintance, and who are numbered amongst his followers.

(As the Exposition is shorter than usual, an appropriate extract is added from Mr. Spurgeon's *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*.)

Matthew xxvii. Verse 50. *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered *with a loud voice*, like the shout of a conquering warrior. And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence; but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, and depth, and length, and height altogether immeasurable. Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, he *yielded up the ghost*, willingly dying, laying down his life as he said he would: "I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

51—53. *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

Christ's death was the end of Judaism: *The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime. The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ: *The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened.* Thus did the material world pay homage to him whom man had rejected; while nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth only, but also heaven.

These first miracles wrought in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till he comes again,—rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchres of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead, and go unto *the holy city, the New Jerusalem.*

54. *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious prisoner whom they had put to death: "*Truly this was the Son of God.*" It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders defied; yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied his divinity.

THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 1899,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 25th, 1882.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit : and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”—Luke xxiii. 46.

“Into thine hand I commit my spirit : thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.”—Psalm xxxi. 5.

“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”—Acts vii. 59.

THIS morning,* dear friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus when he said to his mother and to Joseph, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before he gave up the ghost, and with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” if we judge them to be the last which our Saviour uttered before his death, ought to be coupled with those other words, “It is finished,” which some have thought were actually the last he used. I think it was not so; but, anyhow, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly, and we may blend them together, and then we shall see how very similar they are to his first words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, “It is finished,” which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” That business was all finished; he had been about it all his life, and now that he had come to the end of his days, there was nothing left undone, and he could say to his Father, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the cross, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, “Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?” Jesus is putting himself

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,666, “The First Recorded Words of Jesus.”

into the Father's hands because he had always desired to be there,—in the Father's house with the Father; and now he is committing his spirit, as a sacred trust, into the Father's hands that he may depart to be with the Father, to abide in his house, and go no more out for ever.

Christ's life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later; but he is "Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name "Jesus" under any one of his sayings, as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that he has uttered.

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little if any mischief, because nobody, with any true spiritual discernment, was ever duped into believing them to be genuine. It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one; but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done. Everything about Christ is like himself; there is a Christlikeness about it which cannot be mistaken. This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never such another child as he was; and in his death he was as unique as in his birth, and childhood, and life. There was never another who died as he did, and there was never another who lived altogether as he did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by himself; some of us try to imitate him, but how feebly do we follow in his steps! The Christ of God still standeth by himself, and there is no possible rival to him.

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon; but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

I. I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOUR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Here observe, first, *how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God.* Christ was a grand original thinker, and he might always have given us words of his own. He never lacked suitable language, for "never man spake like this Man." Yet you must have noticed how continually he quoted Scripture; the great majority of his expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, his words drop into Scriptural shape and form. You can see that the Bible has been his one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last, and not with its letter only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense; and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for him to use a passage from a Psalm of David as his expiring words. In his death, he was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought, he was not unconscious, he did not die of weakness, he was strong even while he was dying. It is true that he said "I

thirst;" but, after he had been a little refreshed, he cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, "It is finished." And now, ere he bows his head in the silence of death, he utters his final words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as his dying declaration; his mind was clear, and calm, and undisturbed; in fact, he was perfectly happy, for he had said, "It is finished." So his sufferings were over, and he was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory; yet, with all that clearness of mind, and freshness of intellect, and fluency of words that might have been possible to him, he did not invent a new sentence, but he went to the Book of Psalms, and took from the Holy Spirit this expression, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

How instructive to us is this great truth that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to him, as it is to us; and, brothers and sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon him without measure, yet he loved the Scripture, and he went to it, and studied it, and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God, and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf, and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord;—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts. It is idle merely to let the eye glance over the words, or to recollect the poetical expressions, or the historic facts; but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models, and, what is better still, your spirit is flavoured with the words of the Lord. I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his, and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come; he had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture; and, though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim's Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, "Why, this man is a living Bible!" Prick him anywhere; his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend his example to you, beloved, and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus. If the Spirit of God be in you, he will make you love the Word of God; and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all. I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record, so that you will feed upon it yourselves, and afterwards speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of his spirit, so that his last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, that *our Lord, in the moment of his death, recognized a personal God*: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." God is to some men an unknown God. "There may be a God," so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. "All things are God," says another. "We cannot be sure that there is a God," say others, "and therefore it is no use our pretending to believe in him, and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition." Some people say, "Oh, certainly, there is a God, but he is very far off! He does not come near to us, and we cannot imagine that he will interfere in our affairs." Ah! but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God; but in One to whom he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." His language shows that he realized the personality of God as much as I should recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, "Sir, I commit that money into your hands." I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing; but to a living man I should say it, and I should say it only to a living man. So, beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings; they do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy Father of everything, who may himself be nothing or everything. No, no; we only trust what we know; and so Jesus knew the Father, and knew him to be a real Person having hands, into those hands he commended his departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours; but he is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as he pleases, and who is willing to take possession of their spirits, and to protect them for ever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that; and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may ever deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion, and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts, man. Is God as real to thee as thou art to thyself? Come now; dost thou speak with him "as a man speaketh unto his friend"? Canst thou trust him, and rely upon him as thou dost trust and rely upon the partner of thy bosom? If thy God be unreal, thy religion is unreal. If thy God be a dream, thy hope will be a dream; and woe be unto thee when thou shalt wake up out of it! It was not so that Jesus trusted. "Father," said he, "into thy hands I commend my spirit."

But, thirdly, here is a better point still. Observe how *Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God*. The Psalm from which he quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in spirit he often did; but Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into thine hand I commit my spirit;" but he said, "Father." Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, "Wist ye not that I must be at my Father's,—that I must be in my Father's house?" Oh, yes! the Holy Child knew that he was specially, and in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest; and therefore he said, "My

Father;" and, in dying, his expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was his Father. It was because he said that God was his Father that they put him to death, yet he still stood to it even in his dying hour, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

What a blessed thing it is for us also, my brethren, to die conscious that we are sons of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"! In such a case as that,—

"It is not death to die."

Quoting the Saviour's words, "It is finished," and relying upon his Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the "quivering lips" of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music. O my Father, my Father, if I am in thy hands, I may die without fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the chief one of all. From this passage, we learn that *our Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up his soul to his Father when the time had come for him to die*: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them, and God will accept them; these were the very death-words of Polycarp, and Bernard, and Luther, and Melancthon, and Jerome of Prague, and John Huss, and an almost endless list of saints: "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord's version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer, and commonly used among Romanists almost as a charm; they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula. But, in the sense in which our Saviour uttered these words, we cannot any of us fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God; but yet, brethren, remember that, unless the Lord comes first, we must die; and dying is not an act on our part. We have to be passive in the process, because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that, if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he should surrender it, because suicide is a crime, and no man can be required to kill himself. God does not demand such action as that at any man's hand; and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death. But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which he had taken upon himself in becoming the Substitute for his people. There was not any necessity for his death even at the last moment upon the cross, for, as I have reminded you, he cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled him to whisper or to sigh. But his life was strong within him; if he had willed to do so, he could have unloosed the nails, and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking him. He died of his own free will, "the

Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country, and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this, and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it; but, then, all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature; but, in our Lord's case, he was rendering up to the Father the spirit which he might have kept if he had chosen to do so. "No man taketh it from me," said he concerning his life; "I lay it down of myself;" and there is here a cheerful willingness to yield up his spirit into his Father's hands. It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as dying. He did die, but they all speak of him as giving up the ghost,—surrendering to God his spirit. You and I passively die; but he actively yielded up his spirit to his Father. In his case, death was an act; and he performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and hell; so, in this sense, Christ stands alone in his death. But, oh, dear brothers and sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as he did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up. May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it,—a yielding up of everything to his hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father's hand, and that, until the resurrection day, the life-germ of the body will be securely in his keeping, and certain that, when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul, and body,—that trinity of our manhood,—shall be re-united in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off. When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father, and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, "It is the Lord," "my Father," "let him do as seemeth him good."

II. My second text is in the 31st Psalm, at the 5th verse; and it is evidently the passage which our Saviour had in his mind just then: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." It seems to me that **THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE**, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the believer's death as concerning his life.

Is it not very singular, dear friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo, and not only when you come to die, but to-night, to-morrow morning, and as long as you are here, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit."

That is to say, first, *let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God*, and feel that they are quite safe in his hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God's keeping. Some of you have never

yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, "I trust myself to God as he reveals himself in Christ Jesus; I cannot keep myself, but he can keep me; by the precious blood of Christ he can cleanse me; so I just take my spirit, and give it over into the great Father's hand." You never really live till you do that; all that comes before that act of full surrender is death; but when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process, and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve; that is to say, give yourself up to God,—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off;—your soul and spirit, give them also up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as he pleases. Give your whole self up to him, and say to him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me eye-sight or make me blind, let me have all my senses or take them away, make me famous or leave me to be obscure; I just give myself up to thee; into thine hand I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but thou shalt choose my inheritance for me. My times are in thy hands."

Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you ever done it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will; and even when they say to God, "Thy will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will thy will," instead of saying, "Make thy will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning, and then, at night, just to look between his hands, and see how safe I have been, and then to say to him, "Lord, shut me up again to-night; take care of me all through the night-watches. 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it: "*Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*" Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you, and therefore you belong to him. If I am a redeemed man, and I ask God to take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of his own jewels,—a jewel that cost him the blood of his heart.

And I may still more specially expect that he will do so, because of the title which is here given to him: "*Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*" Would he be the God of truth if he began with redemption, and ended with destruction;—if he began by giving his Son to die for us, and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to heaven? No; the gift of his Son is the pledge that he will save his people from their sins, and bring them home to glory; and he will do it. So, every day, go to him with this declaration, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit." Nay, not only every day, but all through the day. Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into thine hand I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away,

with you, you cannot do better than say the same words. Have you to go into a house where there is fever; I mean, is it your duty to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into thine hand I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house. Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study; and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that, one morning, when the good man left his familiar arm-chair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys, which crashed through the roof, and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the providence of God had not just then drawn him away; and he said, "I see that we need divine providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets." "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." I have often noticed that, if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday; it is a curious thing, but I have often remarked it. They go out for their health, and come home ill; they leave us with all their limbs whole, and return to us crippled; therefore, we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea, and we must commit ourselves to his hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a lazar-house, we should certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy; but we ought equally to seek the Lord's protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes.

David said to the Lord, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit;" but let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted, "*Father.*" David is often a good guide for us, but David's Lord is far better; and if we follow him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, "*Father, Father,* into thine hand I commit my spirit." That is a sweet way of living every day, committing everything to our Heavenly Father's hand, for that hand can do his child no unkindness. "Father, I might not be able to trust thine angels, but I can trust thee." The psalmist does not say, "Into the hand of providence I commit my spirit." Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, "Providence did this," and "Providence did that," and "Providence did the other"? If you ask them, "What is providence?"—they will probably reply, "Well, providence is—providence." That is all they can say. There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature, and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer, and say to him, "Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?" He answers, "Why, nature,—well, it is—nature." Just so, sir; but, then, what *is* nature? And he says, "Well,—well,—it is nature;" and that is all you will get out of him. Now, I believe in nature, and I believe in providence; but, at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands;—not in an idol that has no hands, and can do nothing,—but in the God to whom I can say, "'Father, into thine hand I commit my spirit.' I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to thy keeping."

So live, beloved, and you shall live safely, and happily; and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death.

III. My third text will not detain us many minutes; it is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOUR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, at the 59th verse, and you will see there how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit, but we may speak of Christ receiving it, and say, with Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it, and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, *if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality.* Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He did not say, "I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die." No; the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive, and therefore Stephen asks him to receive it. You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs; we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth, and open our eyes in heaven. Then, at the sound of the archangel's trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell again with our spirit; we have not any question about this matter. I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, "Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated, and therefore all fear of death is gone from me." "Yes," said the Christian man, "and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bullock grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any hope?" "Hope, sir? Hope, sir? No, I have no hope; of course, I have no hope, sir." "Ah, then!" replied the other, "despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up." And that hope is, that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ's hands,—shall be "for ever with the Lord."

The next thought is that, *to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near,*—so near that the man speaks to him, and says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In Stephen's case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see him, for he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony; it is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they died, that they could see within the pearly gates; and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly, in such a businesslike tone of voice, that we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spake what they knew to be true, for Jesus was

there with them. Yes, beloved, before you can call your children about your death-bed, Jesus will be there already, and into his hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, *there is a certainty that we are quite safe in his hands.* Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask him to receive our spirit, and he receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of his hands? Rouse ye, death and hell! Come forth, all ye powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the omnipotent Redeemer? We must be safe there.

Then there is the other certainty, *that he is quite willing to take us into his hands.* Let us put ourselves into his hands now; and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day, and we may be sure that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman, who was dying, and to whom someone said, "Are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no;" she replied, "there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now." You remember that dear saint, who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, ere she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down,—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay;
To die in the Lord, is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory thro' death led the way."

It was well that she could say it, and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear friends, that we should all of us have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us. Blessed be God, it is not left to our choice, it is not left to our will, when we shall die. God has appointed that day, and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time. We shall not die till God decrees it.

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till he please I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice; for, wisely, carefully, coolly, consider that, if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go. Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there;" and every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan, and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowly up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ, is far better than to be here.

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die; well, then, do not let us run back, and become utterly unwilling, and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting-place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink, and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. Ye living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie; and, as it must be so, let us who are believers welcome it.

But what if you are not believers? Ah! that is another matter altogether. If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting. I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let me open my mouth, and swallow him!" All nature must hate the man who hates God. Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord, and trust Christ, and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XV. 1-8.

Verse 1. *I am the true vine,*—

Now we know where to find the true Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to him in mystical but real union: "I am the true vine,"—

1. *And my Father is the husbandman.*

Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called "holy father" at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Husbandman of the one Church, the vine.

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

There are many such branches, in Christ's visible Church, which are not fruit-bearing branches, and consequently are not partakers of the sap of life and grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

There is some work, then, for the knife upon all the branches; cutting off for those that are fruitless, cutting for those that are bearing some fruit, that they may bring forth yet more.

3. *Now ye are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

The Word is often the knife with which the great Husbandman prunes the vine; and, brothers and sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we should not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

4. *Abide in me, and I in you.*

"Do not merely find a temporary shelter in me, as a ship runs into harbour in stormy weather, and then comes out again when the gale is over; but cast anchor in me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on, and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to me. 'Abide in me.'"

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

You must bear fruit, or else be cast away; but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord.

5. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ. You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon Christ both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree, when he says, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me, that I may have something in hand, some spending money of my own." No; you must, from day to day, from hour to hour, and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good, from Christ. What a blessing that it is so!

6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable; but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine,—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to him; those who for a while did run well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the truth? Oh, it is sad indeed that any should have had any sort of connection with that divine stem, and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear, and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of his own children, whom he will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom he never gave *carte blanche* after this fashion: "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Not if you will not hear God's words, he will not hear yours; and if his words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with him. They may be directed to heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard unto them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the throne of grace are men who have done God's will in other places; it must be so. The greatest favourite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be specially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favour him as he was wont to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ's house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

If we are his true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

THE RENT VEIL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."—Matt. xxvii. 50, 51.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."—Hebrews x. 19, 20.

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ was fitly surrounded by miracles; yet it is itself so much greater a wonder than all besides, that it as far exceeds them as the sun outshines the planets which surround it. It seems natural enough that the earth should quake, that tombs should be opened, and that the veil of the temple should be rent, when he who only hath immortality gives up the ghost. The more you think of the death of the Son of God, the more will you be amazed at it. As much as a miracle excels a common fact, so doth this wonder of wonders rise above all miracles of power. That the divine Lord, even though veiled in mortal flesh, should condescend to be subject to the power of death, so as to bow his head on the cross, and submit to be laid in the tomb, is among mysteries the greatest. The death of Jesus is the marvel of time and eternity, which, as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rest, takes up into itself all lesser marvels.

Yet the rending of the veil of the temple is not a miracle to be lightly passed over. It was made of "fine twined linen, with cherubims of cunning work." This gives the idea of a substantial fabric, a piece of lasting tapestry, which would have endured the severest strain. No human hands could have torn that sacred covering; and it could not have been divided in the midst by any accidental cause; yet, strange to say, on the instant when the holy person of Jesus was rent by death, the great veil which concealed the holiest of all was "rent in twain from the top to the bottom." What did it mean? It meant much more than I can tell you now.

It is not fanciful to regard it as a solemn act of mourning on the part of the house of the Lord. In the East men express their sorrow by rending their garments; and the temple, when it beheld its Master die, seemed struck with horror, and rent its veil. Shocked at

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the sin of man, indignant at the murder of its Lord, in its sympathy with him who is the true temple of God, the outward symbol tore its holy vestment from the top to the bottom. Did not the miracle also mean that from that hour the whole system of types, and shadows, and ceremonies had come to an end? The ordinances of an earthly priesthood were rent with that veil. In token of the death of the ceremonial law, the soul of it quitted its sacred shrine, and left its bodily tabernacle as a dead thing. The legal dispensation is over. The rent of the veil seemed to say—"Henceforth God dwells no longer in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies, and shines forth no longer from between the cherubim. The special enclosure is broken up, and there is no inner sanctuary for the earthly high priest to enter: typical atonements and sacrifices are at an end."

According to the explanation given in our second text, the rending of the veil chiefly meant that the way into the holiest, which was not before made manifest, was now laid open to all believers. Once in the year the high priest solemnly lifted a corner of this veil with fear and trembling, and with blood and holy incense he passed into the immediate presence of Jehovah; but the tearing of the veil laid open the secret place. The rent from top to bottom gives ample space for all to enter who are called of God's grace, to approach the throne, and to commune with the Eternal One. Upon that subject I shall try to speak this morning, praying in my inmost soul that you and I, with all other believers, may have boldness actually to enter into that which is within the veil at this time of our assembling for worship. Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead us into the nearest fellowship which mortal men can have with the Infinite Jehovah!

First, this morning, I shall ask you to consider *what has been done*. The veil has been rent. Secondly, we will remember *what we therefore have*: we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Then, thirdly, we will consider *how we exercise this grace*: we "enter by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

I. First, think of **WHAT HAS BEEN DONE**. In actual historical fact the glorious veil of the temple has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom: as a matter of spiritual fact, which is far more important to us, *the separating legal ordinance is abolished*. There was under the law this ordinance—that no man should ever go into the holiest of all, with the one exception of the high priest, and he but once in the year, and not without blood. If any man had attempted to enter there he must have died, as guilty of great presumption and of profane intrusion into the secret place of the Most High. Who could stand in the presence of him who is a consuming fire? This ordinance of distance runs all through the law; for even the holy place, which was the vestibule of the Holy of Holies, was for the priests alone. The place of the people was one of distance. At the very first institution of the law when God descended upon Sinai, the ordinance was, "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about." There was no invitation to draw near. Not that they desired to do so, for the mountain was altogether on a smoke, and "even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." "The Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people,

lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish." If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. The spirit of the old law was reverent distance. Moses, and here and there a man chosen by God, might come near to Jehovah; but as for the bulk of the people, the command was, "Draw not nigh hither." When the Lord revealed his glory at the giving of the law, we read,—“When the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.” All this is ended. The precept to keep back is abrogated, and the invitation is, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” “Let us draw near” is now the filial spirit of the gospel. How thankful I am for this! what a joy it is to my soul! Some of God’s people have not yet realized this gracious fact, for still they worship afar off. Very much of prayer is to be highly commended for its reverence; but it has in it a lack of childlike confidence. I can admire the solemn and stately language of worship which recognizes the greatness of God; but it will not warm my heart nor express my soul until it has also blended therewith the joyful nearness of that perfect love which casteth out fear, and ventures to speak with our Father in heaven as a child speaketh with its father on earth. My brother, no veil remains. Why dost thou stand afar off, and tremble like a slave? Draw near with full assurance of faith. The veil is rent: access is free. Come boldly to the throne of grace. Jesus has made thee nigh, as nigh to God as even he himself is. Though we speak of the holiest of all, even the secret place of the Most High, yet it is of this place of awe, even of this sanctuary of Jehovah, that the veil is rent; therefore, let nothing hinder thine entrance. Assuredly no law forbids thee; but infinite love invites thee to draw nigh to God.

This rending of the veil signified, also, *the removal of the separating sin*. Sin is, after all, the great divider between God and man. That veil of blue and purple and fine twined linen could not really separate man from God: for he is, as to his omnipresence, not far from any one of us. Sin is a far more effectual wall of separation: it opens an abyss between the sinner and his Judge. Sin shuts out prayer, and praise, and every form of religious exercise. Sin makes God walk contrary to us, because we walk contrary to him. Sin, by separating the soul from God, causes spiritual death, which is both the effect and the penalty of transgression. How can two walk together except they be agreed? How can a holy God have fellowship with unholy creatures? Shall justice dwell with injustice? Shall perfect purity abide with the abominations of evil? No, it cannot be. Our Lord Jesus Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He taketh away the sin of the world, and so the veil is rent. By the shedding of his most precious blood we are cleansed from all sin, and that most gracious promise of the new covenant is fulfilled—“Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” When sin is gone, the barrier is broken down, the unfathomable gulf is filled. Pardon, which removes sin, and justification, which brings righteousness, make up a deed of clearance so real and so complete that nothing now divides the sinner from his reconciled God. The Judge is now the Father: he, who once must necessarily have condemned, is found justly absolving

and accepting. In this double sense the veil is rent: the separating ordinance is abrogated, and the separating sin is forgiven.

Next, be it remembered that *the separating sinfulness is also taken away through our Lord Jesus*. It is not only what we have done, but what we *are* that keeps us apart from God. We have sin engrained in us: even those who have grace dwelling in them have to complain, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." How can we commune with God with our eyes blinded, our ears stopped, our hearts hardened, and our senses deadened by sin? Our whole nature is tainted, poisoned, perverted by evil; how can we know the Lord? Beloved, through the death of our Lord Jesus the covenant of grace is established with us, and its gracious provisions are on this wise: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." When this is the case, when the will of God is inscribed on the heart, and the nature is entirely changed, then is the dividing veil which hides us from God taken away: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Blessed are all they that love righteousness and follow after it, for they are in a way in which the Righteous One can walk in fellowship with them. Spirits that are like God are not divided from God. Difference of nature hangs up a veil; but the new birth, and the sanctification which follows upon it, through the precious death of Jesus, remove that veil. He that hates sin, strives after holiness, and labours to perfect it in the fear of God, is in fellowship with God. It is a blessed thing when we love what God loves, when we seek what God seeks, when we are in sympathy with divine aims, and are obedient to divine commands: for with such persons will the Lord dwell. When grace makes us partakers of the divine nature, then are we at one with the Lord, and the veil is taken away.

"Yes," saith one, "I see now how the veil is taken away in three different fashions; but still God is God, and we are but poor puny men: between God and man there must of necessity be a separating veil, caused by the great disparity between the Creator and the creature. How can the finite and the infinite commune? God is all in all, and more than all; we are nothing, and less than nothing; how can we meet?" When the Lord does come near to his favoured ones, they own how incapable they are of enduring the excessive glory. Even the beloved John said, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." When we have been specially conscious of the presence and working of our Lord, we have felt our flesh creep, and our blood chill; and then have we understood what Jacob meant when he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." All this is true; for the Lord saith, "Thou canst not see my face and live." Although this is a much thinner veil than those I have already mentioned, yet it is a veil; and it is hard for man to be at home with God. But *the Lord Jesus bridges the separating distance*. Behold, the blessed Son of God has come into the world, and taken upon himself our nature! "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Though he is God as God

is God, yet is he as surely man as man is man. Mark well how in the person of the Lord Jesus we see God and man in the closest conceivable alliance; for they are united in one person for ever. The gulf is completely filled by the fact that Jesus has gone through with us even to the bitter end, to death, even to the death of the cross. He has followed out the career of manhood even to the tomb; and thus we see that the veil, which hung between the nature of God and the nature of man, is rent in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We enter into the holiest of all through his flesh, which links manhood to Godhead.

Now, you see what it is to have the veil taken away. Solemnly note that this avails only for believers: those who refuse Jesus refuse the only way of access to God. God is not approachable, except through the rending of the veil by the death of Jesus. There was one typical way to the mercy-seat of old, and that was through the turning aside of the veil; there was no other. And there is now no other way for any of you to come into fellowship with God, except through the rent veil, even the death of Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Come this way, and you may come freely. Refuse to come this way, and there hangs between you and God an impassable veil. Without Christ you are without God, and without hope. Jesus himself assures you, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." God grant that this may not happen to any of you!

For believers the veil is not rolled up, but rent. The veil was not unhooked, and carefully folded up, and put away, so that it might be put in its place at some future time. Oh, no! but the divine hand took it and rent it from top to bottom. It can never be hung up again; that is impossible. Between those who are in Christ Jesus and the great God, there will never be another separation. "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" Only one veil was made, and as that is rent, the one and only separator is destroyed. I delight to think of this. The devil himself can never divide me from God now. He may and will attempt to shut me out from God; but the worst he could do would be to hang up a rent veil. What would that avail but to exhibit his impotence? God has rent the veil, and the devil cannot mend it. There is access between a believer and his God; and there must be such free access for ever, since the veil is not rolled up, and put on one side to be hung up again in days to come; but it is rent, and rendered useless.

The rent is not in one corner, but in the midst, as Luke tells us. It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little; but it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through; but what an act of abounding mercy is this, that the veil is rent in the midst, and rent from top to bottom, so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage! This also shows that for believers there is no hindrance to the fullest and freest access to God. Oh, for much boldness, this morning, to come where God has not only set open the door, but has lifted the door from its hinges; yea, removed it, post, and bar, and all!

I want you to notice that this veil, when it was rent, was rent by God, not by man. It was not the act of an irreverent mob; it was not the midnight outrage of a set of profane priests: it was the act of God alone. Nobody stood within the veil; and on the outer side of it stood the priests only fulfilling their ordinary vocation of offering sacrifice. It must have astounded them when they saw that holy place laid bare in a moment. How they fled, as they saw that massive veil divided without human hand in a second of time! Who rent it? Who but God himself? If another had done it, there might have been a mistake about it, and the mistake might need to be remedied by replacing the curtain; but if the Lord has done it, it is done rightly, it is done finally, it is done irreversibly. It is God himself who has laid sin on Christ, and in Christ has put that sin away. God himself has opened the gate of heaven to believers, and cast up a highway along which the souls of men may travel to himself. God himself has set the ladder between earth and heaven. Come to him now, ye humble ones. Behold, he sets before you an open door!

II. And now I ask you to follow me, dear friends, in the second place, to an experimental realization of my subject. We now notice **WHAT WE HAVE**: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest." Observe the threefold "having" in the paragraph now before us, and be not content without the whole three. *We have "boldness to enter in."* There are degrees in boldness; but this is one of the highest. When the veil was rent it required some boldness to look within. I wonder whether the priests at the altar did have the courage to gaze upon the mercy-seat. I suspect that they were so struck with amazement that they fled from the altar, fearing sudden death. It requires a measure of boldness steadily to look upon the mystery of God: "Which things the angels desire to look into." It is well not to look with a merely curious eye into the deep things of God. I question whether any man is able to pry into the mystery of the Trinity without great risk. Some, thinking to look there with the eyes of their natural intellect, have been blinded by the light of that sun, and have henceforth wandered in darkness. It needs boldness to look into the splendours of redeeming and electing love. If any did look into the holiest when the veil was rent, they were among the boldest of men; for others must have feared lest the fate of the men of Bethshemesh would be theirs. Beloved, the Holy Spirit invites you to look into the holy place, and view it all with reverent eye; for it is full of teaching to you. Understand the mystery of the mercy-seat, and of the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, and of the pot of manna, and of the tables of stone, and of Aaron's rod that budded. Look, look boldly through Jesus Christ: but do not content yourself with looking! Hear what the text says: "Having boldness to enter in." Blessed be God if he has taught us this sweet way of no longer looking from afar, but of entering into the inmost shrine with confidence! "Boldness to enter in" is what we ought to have.

Let us follow the example of the high priest, and, having entered, *let us perform the functions of one who enters in.* "Boldness to enter in" suggests that we act as men who are in their proper places. To stand within the veil filled the servant of God with an overpowering

sense of the divine presence. If ever in his life he was near to God, he was certainly near to God then, when quite alone, shut in, and excluded from all the world, he had no one with him, except the glorious Jehovah. O my beloved, may we this morning enter into the holiest in this sense! Shut out from the world, both wicked and Christian, let us know that the Lord is here, most near and manifest. Oh that we may now cry out with Hagar, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Oh, how sweet to realize by personal enjoyment the presence of Jehovah! How cheering to feel that the Lord of hosts is with us! We know our God to be a very present help in trouble. It is one of the greatest joys out of heaven to be able to sing—Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is here. At first we tremble in the divine presence; but as we feel more of the spirit of adoption we draw near with sacred delight, and feel so fully at home with our God that we sing with Moses, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Do not live as if God were as far off from you as the east is from the west. Live not far below on the earth; but live on high, as if you were in heaven. In heaven you will be with God; but on earth he will be with you: is there much difference? He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Jesus hath made us nigh by his precious blood. Try day by day to live in as great nearness to God, as the high priest felt when he stood for a while within the secret of Jehovah's tabernacle.

The high priest had *a sense of communion with God*; he was not only near, but he spake with God. I cannot tell what he said, but I should think that on the special day the high priest unburdened himself of the load of Israel's sin and sorrow, and made known his requests unto the Lord. Aaron, standing there alone, must have been filled with memories of his own faultiness, and of the idolatries and backslidings of the people. God shone upon him, and he bowed before God. He may have heard things which it was not lawful for him to utter, and other things which he could not have uttered if they had been lawful. Beloved, do you know what it is to commune with God? Words are poor vehicles for this fellowship; but what a blessed thing it is! Proofs of the existence of God are altogether superfluous to those of us who are in the habit of conversing with the Eternal One. If anybody were to write an essay to prove the existence of my wife, or my son, I certainly should not read it, except for the amusement of the thing; and proofs of the existence of God to the man who communes with God are much the same. Many of you walk with God: what bliss! Fellowship with the Most High is elevating, purifying, strengthening. Enter into it boldly. Enter into his revealed thoughts, even as he graciously enters into yours: rise to his plans, as he condescends to yours; ask to be uplifted to him, even as he deigns to dwell with you.

This is what the rent of the veil brings us when we have boldness to enter in; but, mark you, the rent veil brings us nothing until we have boldness to enter in. Why stand we without? Jesus brings us near, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Let us not be slow to take up our freedom, and come boldly to the throne. The high priest entered within the veil of blue,

and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with blood, and with incense, that he might *pray for Israel*; and there he stood before the Most. High, pleading with him to bless the people. O beloved, prayer is a divine institution, and it belongs to us. But there are many sorts of prayers. There is the prayer of one who seems shut out from God's holy temple; there is the prayer of another who stands in the court of the Gentiles afar off, looking towards the Temple; there is the prayer of one who gets where Israel stands and pleads with the God of the chosen; there is the prayer in the court of the priests, when the sanctified man of God makes intercession; but the best prayer of all is offered in the holiest of all. There is no fear about prayer being heard when it is offered in the holiest. The very position of the man proves that he is accepted with God. He is standing on the surest ground of acceptance, and he is so near to God that his every desire is heard. There the man is seen through and through; for he is very near to God. His thoughts are read, his tears are seen, his sighs are heard; for he has boldness to enter in. He may ask what he will, and it shall be done unto him. As the altar sanctifieth the gift, so the most holy place, entered by the blood of Jesus, secures a certain answer to the prayer that is offered therein. God give us such power in prayer! It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should hearken to the voice of a man; yet are there such men. Luther came out of his closet, and cried, *Vici*—"I have conquered." He had not yet met his adversaries; but as he had prevailed with God for men, he felt that he should prevail with men for God.

But the high priest, if you recollect, after he had communed and prayed with God, *came out and blessed the people*. He put on his garments of glory and beauty, which he had laid aside when he went into the holy place, for there he stood in simple white, and nothing else; and now he came out wearing the breast-plate and all his precious ornaments, and he blessed the people. That is what you will do if you have the boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: you will bless the people that surround you. The Lord has blessed you, and he will make you a blessing. Your ordinary conduct and conversation will be a blessed example; the words you speak for Jesus will be like a dew from the Lord: the sick will be comforted by your words; the despondent will be encouraged by your faith; the lukewarm will be recovered by your love. You will be, practically, saying to each one who knows you, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and give thee peace." You will become a channel of blessing: "Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water." May we each one have boldness to enter in, that we may come forth laden with benedictions!

If you will kindly look at the text, you will notice, what I shall merely hint at, that *this boldness is well grounded*. I always like to see the apostle using a "therefore": "Having *therefore* boldness." Paul is often a true poet, but he is always a correct logician; he is as logical as if he were dealing with mathematics rather than theology. Here he writes one of his *therefores*.

Why is it that we have boldness? Is it not because of our

relationship to Christ which makes us "brethren"? "Having therefore, *brethren*, boldness." The feeblest believer has as much right to enter into the holy place as Paul had; because he is one of the brotherhood. I remember a rhyme by John Ryland, in which he says of heaven—

"They all shall be there, the great and the small;
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul."

I have no doubt we shall have such a position, and such fellowship. Meanwhile, we do shake hands with him this morning as he calls us brethren. We are brethren to one another, because we are brethren to Jesus. Where we see the apostle go, we will go; yea, rather, where we see the Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession enter, we will follow. "Having, therefore, boldness."

Beloved, we have now no fear of death in the most holy place. The high priest, whoever he might be, must always have dreaded that solemn day of atonement, when he had to pass into the silent and secluded place. I cannot tell whether it is true, but I have read that there is a tradition among the Jews, that a rope was fastened to the high priest's foot that they might draw out his corpse in case he died before the Lord. I should not wonder if their superstition devised such a thing, for it is an awful position for a man to enter into the secret dwelling of Jehovah. But we cannot die in the holy place now, since Jesus has died for us. The death of Jesus is the guarantee of the eternal life of all for whom he died. We have boldness to enter, for we shall not perish.

Our boldness arises from the perfection of his sacrifice. Read the fourteenth verse: "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We rely upon the sacrifice of Christ, believing that he was such a perfect substitute for us, that it is not possible for us to die after our substitute has died; and we must be accepted, because he is accepted. We believe that the precious blood has so effectually and eternally put away sin from us, that we are no longer obnoxious to the wrath of God. We may safely stand where sin must be smitten, if there be any sin upon us; for we are so washed, so cleansed, and so fully justified that we are accepted in the Beloved. Sin is so completely lifted from us by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, that we have boldness to enter where Jehovah himself dwells.

Moreover, we have this for certain, that as a priest had a right to dwell near to God, we have that privilege; for Jesus hath made us kings and priests unto God, and all the privileges of the office come to us with the office itself. We have a mission within the holy place; we are called to enter there upon holy business, and so we have no fear of being intruders. A burglar may enter a house, but he does not enter with boldness; he is always afraid lest he should be surprised. You might enter a stranger's house, without an invitation, but you would feel no boldness there. We do not enter the holiest as house-breakers, nor as strangers; we come in obedience to a call, to fulfil our office. When once we accept the sacrifice of Christ, we are at home with God. Where should a child be bold but in his father's house? Where should a priest stand but in the temple of his God, for whose

service he is set apart? Where should a blood-washed sinner live but with his God, to whom he is reconciled?

It is a heavenly joy to feel this boldness! We have now such a love for God, and such a delight in him, that it never crosses our minds that we are trespassers when we draw near to him. We never say, "God, my dread," but "God, my exceeding joy." His name is the music to which our lives are set: though God be a consuming fire we love him as such, for he will only consume our dross, and that we desire to lose. Under no aspect is God now distasteful to us. We delight in him, be he what he may. So you see, beloved, we have good grounds for boldness when we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

I cannot leave this point until I have reminded you that *we may have this boldness of entering in at all times*, because the veil is always rent, and is never restored to its old place. "The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not;" but the Lord saith not so to us. Dear child of God, you may at all times have "boldness to enter in." The veil is rent both day and night. Yea, let me say it, even when thine eye of faith is dim, still enter in; when evidences are dark, still have "boldness to enter in"; and even if thou hast unhappily sinned, remember that access is open to thy penitent prayer. Come still through the rent veil, sinner as thou art. What though thou hast backslidden, what though thou art grieved with the sense of thy wanderings, come even now! "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," but enter at once; for the veil is not there to exclude thee, though doubt and unbelief may make you think it is so. The veil cannot be there, for it was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

III. My time has fled, and I shall not have space to speak as I meant to do upon the last point—HOW WE EXERCISE THIS GRACE. Let me give you the notes of what I would have said.

Let us at this hour enter into the holiest. Behold the way! We come *by the way of atonement*: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." I have been made to feel really ill through the fierce and blasphemous words that have been used of late by gentlemen of the modern school concerning the precious blood. I will not defile my lips by a repetition of the thrice-cursed things which they have dared to utter while trampling on the blood of Jesus. Everywhere throughout this divine Book you meet with the precious blood. How can he call himself a Christian who speaks in flippant and profane language of the blood of atonement? My brothers, there is no way into the holiest, even though the veil be rent, without blood. You might suppose that the high priest of old brought the blood because the veil was there; but *you* have to bring it with you though the veil is gone. The way is open, and you have boldness to enter; but not without the blood of Jesus. It would be an unholy boldness which would think of drawing near to God without the blood of the great Sacrifice. We have always to plead the atonement. As without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, so without that blood there is no access to God.

Next, the way by which we come is *an unfailling way*. Please notice that word—"by a *new way*"; this means by a way which is always fresh. The original Greek suggests the idea of "newly slain." Jesus died long ago, but his death is the same now as at the moment of its occurrence. We come to God, dear friends, by a way which is always effectual with God. It never, never loses one whit of its power and freshness.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power."

The way is not worn away by long traffic: it is always new. If Jesus Christ had died yesterday, would you not feel that you could plead his merit to-day? Very well, you can plead that merit after these nineteen centuries with as much confidence as at the first hour. The way to God is always newly laid. In effect, the wounds of Jesus incessantly bleed our expiation. The cross is as glorious as though he were still upon it. So far as the freshness, vigour, and force of the atoning death is concerned, we come by a new way. Let it be always new to our hearts. Let the doctrine of atonement never grow stale, but let it have dew upon it for our souls.

Then the apostle adds, it is a "*living way*." A wonderful word! The way by which the high priest went into the holy place was of course a material way, and so a dead way. We come by a spiritual way, suitable to our spirits. The way could not help the high priest, but our way helps us abundantly. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." When we come to God by this way, the way itself leads, guides, bears, brings us near. This way gives us life with which to come.

It is a *dedicated way*: "which he hath consecrated for us." When a new road is opened, it is set apart and dedicated for the public use. Sometimes a public building is opened by a king or a prince, and so is dedicated to its purpose. Beloved, the way to God through Jesus Christ is dedicated by Christ, and ordained by Christ for the use of poor believing sinners, such as we are. He has consecrated the way towards God, and dedicated it for us, that we may freely use it. Surely, if there is a road set apart for me, I may use it without fear; and the way to God and heaven through Jesus Christ is dedicated by the Saviour for sinners; it is the King's highway for wayfaring men, who are bound for the City of God; therefore, let us use it. "Consecrated for us"! Blessed word!

Lastly, it is a *Christly way*; for when we come to God, we still come through his flesh. There is no coming to Jehovah, except by the incarnate God. God in human flesh is our way to God; the substitutionary death of the Word made flesh is also the way to the Father. There is no coming to God, except by representation. Jesus represents us before God, and we come to God through him who is our covenant head, our representative and forerunner before the throne of the Most High. Let us never try to pray without Christ; never try to sing without Christ; never try to preach without Christ. Let us perform no holy function, nor attempt to have fellowship with God in any shape or way, except through that rent which he has made in the veil by his flesh, sanctified for us, and offered upon the cross on our behalf.

Beloved, I have done when I have just remarked upon the next two verses, which are necessary to complete the sense, but which I was obliged to omit this morning, since there would be no time to handle them. We are called to take holy freedoms with God. "Let us draw near," at once, "with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Let us do so boldly, for we have a great high priest. The twenty-first verse reminds us of this. Jesus is the great Priest, and we are the sub-priests under him, and since he bids us come near to God, and himself leads the way, let us follow him into the inner sanctuary. Because he lives, we shall live also. We shall not die in the holy place, unless he dies. God will not smite us unless he smites him. So, "having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

And then the apostle tells us that we may not only come with boldness, because our high priest leads the way, but because we ourselves are prepared for entrance. Two things the high priest had to do before he might enter: one was, to be sprinkled with blood, and this we have; for "our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience."

The other requisite for the priests was to have their "bodies washed with pure water." This we have received in symbol in our baptism, and in reality in the spiritual cleansing of regeneration. To us has been fulfilled the prayer—

"Let the water and the blood
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

We have known the washing of water by the Word, and we have been sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; therefore let us enter into the holiest. Why should we stay away? Hearts sprinkled with blood, bodies washed with pure water—these are the ordained preparations for acceptable entrance. Come near, beloved! May the Holy Spirit be the spirit of access to you now. Come to your God, and then abide with him! He is your Father, your all in all. Sit down and rejoice in him; take your fill of love; and let not your communion be broken between here and heaven. Why should it be? Why not begin to-day that sweet enjoyment of perfect reconciliation and delight in God which shall go on increasing in intensity until you behold the Lord in open vision, and go no more out? Heaven will bring a great change in condition, but not in our standing, if even now we stand within the veil. It will be only such a change as there is between the perfect day and the daybreak; for we have the same sun, and the same light from the sun, and the same privilege of walking in the light. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Division." Amen, and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews x.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—318, 296, 395.

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD'S DEATH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

▲ THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 1st, 1888.

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”—Matthew xxvii. 50—53.

OUR Lord's death is a marvel set in a surrounding of marvels. It reminds one of a Kohinoor surrounded with a circle of gems. As the sun, in the midst of the planets which surround it, far outshines them all, so the death of Christ is more wonderful than the miracles which happened at the time. Yet, after having seen the sun, we take a pleasure in studying the planets, and so, after believing in the unique death of Christ, and putting our trust in him as the Crucified One, we find it a great pleasure to examine in detail those four planetary wonders mentioned in the text, which circle round the great sun of the death of our Lord himself.

Here they are: *the veil of the temple was rent in twain; the earth did quake; the rocks rent; the graves were opened.*

I. To begin with the first of these wonders. I cannot, to-night, enlarge. I have not the strength. I wish merely to suggest thoughts.

Consider THE RENT VEIL, or *mysteries laid open*. By the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the mysteries which had been concealed in the most holy place throughout many generations were laid open to the gaze of all believers. Beginning, as it were, at the top in the Deity of Christ, down to the lowest part of Christ's manhood, the veil was rent, and everything was discovered to every spiritual eye.

1. *This was the first miracle of Christ after death.* The first miracle of Christ in life was significant, and taught us much. He turned the water into wine, as if to show that he raised all common life to a

higher grade, and put into all truth a power and a sweetness, which could not have been there apart from him. But this first miracle of his after death stands above the first miracle of his life, because, if you will remember, that miracle was wrought in his presence. He was there, and turned the water into wine. But Jesus, as man, was not in the temple. That miracle was wrought in his absence, and it enhances its wonder. They are both equally miraculous, but there is a touch more striking about this second miracle—that he was not there to speak and make the veil rend in twain. His soul had gone from his body, and neither his body nor his soul was in that secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High; and yet, at a distance, his will sufficed to rend that thick veil of fine twined linen and cunning work.

The miracle of turning water into wine was wrought in a private house, amidst the family and such disciples as were friends of the family; but this marvel was wrought in the temple of God. There is a singular sacredness about it, because it was a deed of wonder done in that most awful and mysterious place, which was the centre of hallowed worship, and the abode of God. See! he dies, and at the very door of God's high sanctuary he rends the veil in twain. There is a solemnity about this miracle, as wrought before Jehovah, which I can hardly convey in speech, but which you will feel in your own souls.

Do not forget also that this was done by the Saviour after his death, and this sets the miracle in a very remarkable light. He rends the veil at the very instant of death. Jesus yielded up the ghost, and, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain. For thirty years he seems to have prepared himself for the first miracle of his life; he works his first miracle after death in the moment of expiring. As his soul departed from his body our blessed Lord at that same moment laid hold upon the great veil of his Father's symbolical house, and rent it in twain.

2. This first miracle after death stands in such a place that we cannot pass it by without grave thought. *It was very significant, as standing at the head of what I may call a new dispensation.* The miracle of turning water into wine begins his public life, and sets the key of it. This begins his **work** after death, and marks the tone of it. What does it mean?

Does it not mean that *the death of Christ is the revelation and explanation of secrets?* Vanish all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law;—vanish because fulfilled and explained in the death of Christ. The death of the Lord Jesus is the key of all true philosophy: God made flesh, dying for man—if that does not explain a mystery, it cannot be explained. If with this thread in your hand you cannot follow the labyrinth of human affairs, and learn the great purpose of God, then you cannot follow it at all. The death of Christ is the great veil-render, the great revealer of secrets.

It is also the great opener of entrances. There was no way into the holy place till Jesus, dying, rent the veil; the way into the most holy of all was not made manifest till he died. If you desire to approach God, the death of Christ is the way to him. If you want the nearest access and the closest communion that a creature can have with his God, behold, the sacrifice of Christ reveals the way to you. Jesus not only says, "I

am the way," but, rending the veil, he makes the way. The veil of his flesh being rent, the way to God is made most clear to every believing soul.

Moreover, *the cross is the clearing of all obstacles.* Christ by death rent the veil. Then between his people and heaven there remains no obstruction, or if there be any—if your fears invent an obstruction—the Christ who rent the veil continues still to rend it. He breaks the gates of brass, and cuts the bars of iron in sunder. Behold, in his death "the breaker is come up before them, and the Lord on the head of them." He has broken up and cleared the way, and all his chosen people may follow him up to the glorious throne of God.

This is significant of the spirit of the dispensation under which we now live. Obstacles are cleared; difficulties are solved; heaven is opened to all believers.

3. *It was a miracle worthy of Christ.* Stop a minute and adore your dying Lord. Does he with such a miracle signalize his death? Does it not prove his *immortality*? It is true he has bowed his head in death. Obedient to his Father's will, when he knows that the time has come for him to die, he bows his head in willing acquiescence; but at that moment when you call him dead, he rends the veil of the temple. Is there not immortality in him though he died?

And see what *power* he possessed. His hands are nailed; his side is about to be pierced. As he hangs there he cannot protect himself from the insults of the soldiery, but in his utmost weakness he is so strong that he rends the heavy veil of the temple from the top to the bottom.

Behold his *wisdom*, for in this moment, viewing the deed spiritually, he opens up to us all wisdom, and lays bare the secrets of God. The veil which Moses put upon his face Christ takes away in the moment of his death. The true Wisdom in his dying preaches his grandest sermon by tearing away that which hid the supremest truth from the gaze of all believing eyes.

Beloved, if Jesus does this for us in his death, surely, we shall be saved by his life. Jesus who died is yet alive, and we trust in him to lead us into "the holy places made without hands."

Before I pass on to the second wonder, I invite everyone here, who as yet does not know the Saviour, seriously to think upon the miracles which attended his death, and judge what sort of man he was who, for our sins, thus laid down his life. He was not suffered by the Father to die without a miracle to show that he had made a way for sinners to draw near to God.

II. Pass on now to the second wonder—"THE EARTH DID SHAKE."
The immovable was stirred by the death of Christ. Christ did not touch the earth: he was uplifted from it on the tree. He was dying, but in the laying aside of his power, in the act of death, he made the earth beneath him, which we call "the solid globe," itself to quake. What did it teach?

Did it not mean, first, *the physical universe fore-feeling the last terrible shake of its doom*? The day will come when the Christ will appear upon the earth, and in due time all things that are shall be rolled up, like garments worn out, and put away. Once more will he speak,

and then will he shake not only the earth, but also heaven. The things which cannot be shaken will remain, but this earth is not one of them: it will be shaken out of its place. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Nothing shall stand before him. He alone is. These other things do but seem to be; and before the terror of his face all men shall tremble, and heaven and earth shall flee away. So, when he died, earth seemed to anticipate its doom, and quaked in his presence. How will it quake when he that lives again shall come with all the glory of God! How will you quake, my hearer, if you should wake up in the next world without a Saviour! How will you tremble in that day when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness, and you shall have to face the Saviour whom you have despised! Think of it, I pray you.

Did not that miracle also mean this?—that *the spiritual world is to be moved by the cross of Christ*. He dies upon the cross and shakes the material world, as a prediction that that death of his would shake the world that lieth in the wicked one, and cause convulsions in the moral kingdom. Brothers, think of it. We say of ourselves, "How shall we ever move the world?" The apostles did not ask that question. They had confidence in the gospel which they preached. Those who heard them saw that confidence; and when they opened their mouths they said, "The men that have turned the world upside down have come hither unto us." The apostles believed in shaking the world with the simple preaching of the gospel. I entreat you to believe the same. It is a vast city this—this London. How can we ever affect it? China, Hindostan, Africa—these are immense regions. Will the cross of Christ tell upon them? Yes, my brethren, for it shook the earth, and it will yet shake the great masses of mankind. If we have but faith in it, and perseverance to keep on with the preaching of the Word, it is but a matter of time when the name of Jesus shall be known of all men, and when every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is Christ, to the glory of God the Father. The earth did quake beneath the cross; and it shall again. The Lord God be praised for it.

That old world—how many years it had existed I cannot tell. The age of the world, from that beginning which is mentioned in the first verse of the Book of Genesis, we are not able to compute. However old it was, it had to shake when the Redeemer died. This carries us over another of our difficulties. The system of evil we have to deal with is so long-established, hoary, and reverent with antiquity, that we say to ourselves, "We cannot do much against old prejudices." But it was the old, old earth that quivered and quaked beneath the dying Christ, and it shall do so again. Magnificent systems, sustained by philosophy and poetry, will yet yield before what is called the comparatively new doctrine of the cross. Assuredly it is not new, but older than the earth itself. It is God's own gospel, everlasting and eternal. It will shake down the antique and the venerable, as surely as the Lord liveth; and I see the prophecy of this in the quaking of the earth beneath the cross.

It does seem impossible, does it not, that the mere preaching of Christ can do this? And hence certain men must link to the preaching

of Christ all the aids of music and architecture, and I know not what beside, till the cross of Christ is overlaid with human inventions, crushed and buried beneath the wisdom of man. But what was it that made the earth quake? Simply our Lord's death, and no addition of human power or wisdom. It seemed a very inadequate means to produce so great a result; but it was sufficient, for the "weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men"; and Christ, in his very death, suffices to make the earth quake beneath his cross. Come, let us be well content in the battle in which we are engaged, to use no weapon but the gospel, no battle-axe but the cross. Could we but believe it the old, old story is the only story that is needed to be told to reconcile man to God. Jesus died in the sinner's stead, the just for the unjust, a magnificent display of God's grace and justice in one single act. Could we but keep to this only, we should see the victory coming speedily to our conquering Lord.

I leave that second miracle; wherein you see the immovable stirred in the quaking of the earth.

III. Only a hint or two upon the third miracle—THE ROCKS RENT.

I have been informed that, to this very day, there are at Jerusalem certain marks of rock-rending of the most unusual kind. Travellers have said that they are not such as are usually produced by earthquake, or any other cause. Upon that I will say but little; but it is a wonderful thing that, as Jesus died, as his soul was rent from his body, as the veil of the temple was rent in two, so the earth, the rocky part of it, the most solid structure of all, was rent in gulfs and chasms in a single moment. What does this miracle show us but this—*the insensible startled?* What! Could rocks feel? Yet they rent at the sight of Christ's death. Men's hearts did not respond to the agonizing cries of the dying Redeemer, but the rocks responded: the rocks were rent. He did not die for rocks; yet rocks were more tender than the hearts of men, for whom he shed his blood.

"Of reason all things show some sign,
But this unfeeling heart of mine,"

said the poet; and he spoke the truth. Rocks could rend, but yet some men's hearts are not rent by the sight of the cross. However, beloved, here is the point that I seem to see here—that obstinacy and *obduracy will be conquered* by the death of Christ. You may preach to a man about death, and he will not tremble at its certainty or solemnity; yet try him with it. You may preach to a man about hell, but he will harden his heart, like Pharaoh, against the judgment of the Lord; yet try him with it. All things that can move man should be used. But that which does affect the most obdurate and obstinate is the great love of God, so strangely seen in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will not stay to show you how it is, but I will remind you that it is so. It was this which, in the case of many of us, brought tears of repentance to our eyes, and led us to submit to the will of God. I know that it was so with me. I looked at a thousand things, and I did not relent; but when

"I saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood,"

and dying there for me, then did I smite upon my breast, and I was in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. I am sure your own hearts confess that the great rock-render is the dying Saviour.

Well, now, as it is with you, so shall you find it with other men. When you have done your best, and have not succeeded, bring out this last hammer—the cross of Christ. I have often seen on pieces of cannon, in Latin words, this inscription, “The last argument of kings.” That is to say, cannons are the last argument of kings. But the cross is the last argument of God. If a dying Saviour does not convert you, what will? If his bleeding wounds do not attract you to God, what will? If Jesus bears our sin in his own body on the tree, and puts it away, and if this does not bring you to God, with confession of your sin, and hatred of it, then there remains nothing more for you. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” The cross is the rock-render. Brothers and sisters, go on teaching the love of the dying Son of God. Go on preaching Christ. You will tunnel the Alps of pride and the granite hills of prejudice with this. You shall find an entrance for Christ into the inmost hearts of men, though they be hard as adamant; and this will be by the preaching of the cross in the power of the Spirit.

IV. But now I close with the last miracle. These wonders accumulate, and they depend upon each other. The quaking earth produced, no doubt, the rending of the rocks; and the rending of the rocks aided in the fourth wonder. “THE GRAVES WERE OPENED.” The graves opened, and *the dead revived*. That is our fourth head. It is the great consequence of the death of Christ. The graves were opened. Man is the only animal that cares about a sepulchre. Some persons fret about how they shall be buried. That is the last concern that ever would cross my mind. I feel persuaded that people will bury me out of hatred, or out of love, and especially out of love to themselves. We need not trouble about that. But man has often shown his pride by his tomb. That is a strange thing. To garland the gallows is a novelty, I think, not yet perpetrated; but to pile marble and choice statuary upon a tomb—what is it but to adorn a gibbet, or to show man’s great grandeur where his littleness is alone apparent. Dust, ashes, rottenness, putridity, and then a statue, and all manner of fine things, to make you think that the creature that goes back to dust is, after all, a great one. Now, when Jesus died, *sepulchres were laid bare, and the dead were exposed*: what does this mean?

I think we have in this last miracle “the history of a man.” There he lies dead—corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. But what a beautiful sepulchre he lies in! He is a church-goer; he is a dissenter—whichever you please of the two; he is a very moral person; he is a gentleman; he is a citizen; he is Master of his Company; he will be Lord Mayor one day; he is so good—oh, he is so good! yet he has no grace in his heart, no Christ in his faith, no love to God. You see what a sepulchre he lies in—a dead soul in a gilded tomb. By his cross our Lord splits this sepulchre and destroys it. What are our merits worth in the presence of the cross? The death of Christ is the death of self-righteousness. Jesus’ death is a superfluity if we can-

save ourselves. If we are so good that we do not want the Saviour, why, then, did Jesus bleed his life away upon the tree? The cross breaks up the sepulchres of hypocrisy, formalism, and self-righteousness in which the spiritually dead are hidden away.

What next? *It opens the graves.* The earth springs apart. There lies the dead man: he is revealed to the light. The cross of Christ does that! The man is not yet made alive by grace, but he is discovered to himself. He knows that he lies in the grave of his sin. He has sufficient of the power of God upon him to make him lie, not like a corpse covered up with marble, but like a corpse from which the grave-digger has flung away the sods, and left it naked to the light of day. Oh, it is a grand thing when the cross thus opens the graves! You cannot convince men of sin except by the preaching of a crucified Saviour. The lance with which we reach the hearts of men is that same lance which pierced the Saviour's heart. We have to use the crucifixion as the means of crucifying self-righteousness, and making the man confess that he is dead in sin.

After the sepulchres had been broken up, and the graves had been opened, what followed next? *Life was imparted.* "Many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose." They had turned to dust; but when you have a miracle you may as well have a great one. I wonder that people, when they can believe one miracle, make any difficulty of another. Once introduce Omnipotence, and difficulties have ceased. So in this miracle. The bodies came together on a sudden, and there they were, complete and ready for the rising. What a wonderful thing is the implantation of life! I will not speak of it in a dead *man*, but I would speak of it in a dead *heart*. O God, send thy life into some dead heart at this moment while I speak! That which brings life into dead souls is the death of Jesus. While we behold the atonement, and view our Lord bleeding in our stead, the divine Spirit works upon the man, and life is breathed into him. He takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh that palpitates with a new life. This is the wondrous work of the cross: it is by the death of our Lord that regeneration comes to men. There were no new births if it were not for that one death. If Jesus had not died, we had remained dead. If he had not bowed his head, none of us could have lifted up our heads. If he had not there on the cross passed from among the living, we must have remained among the dead for ever and for ever.

Now pass on, and you will see that those persons who received life, in due time *quitted their graves*. It is written that they came out of their graves. Of course they did. What living men would wish to stay in their graves? And you, my dear hearers, if the Lord quickens you, will not stay in your graves. If you have been accustomed to strong drink, or to any other besetting sin, you will quit it; you will not feel any attachment to your sepulchre. If you have lived in ungodly company, and found amusement in questionable places, you will not stop in your graves. We shall not have need to come after you to lead you away from your old associations. You will be eager to get out of them. If any person here should be buried alive, and if he should be discovered in his coffin before he had breathed his last, I am sure that, if the sod were lifted, and the lid were taken off, he would

not need prayerful entreaties to come out of his grave. Far from it. Life loves not the prison of death. So may God grant that the dying Saviour may fetch you out of the graves in which you are still living; and, if he now quickens you, I am sure that the death of our Lord will make you reckon that if one died for all, then all died, and that he died for all, that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again.

Which way did these people go after they had come out of their graves? We are told that "*they went into the holy city.*" Exactly so. And he that has felt the power of the cross may well make the best of his way to holiness. He will long to join himself with God's people; he will wish to go up to God's house, and to have fellowship with the thrice-holy God. I should not expect that quickened ones would go anywhere else. Every creature goes to its own company, the beast to its lair, and the bird to its nest; and the restored and regenerated man makes his way to the holy city. Does not the cross draw us to the church of God? I would not wish one to join the church from any motive that is not fetched from the five wounds and bleeding side of Jesus. We give ourselves first to Christ, and then to his people for his dear sake. It is the cross that does it.

"Jesus dead upon the tree
Achieves this wondrous victory."

We are told—to close this marvellous story—that they went into the Holy City "*and appeared unto many.*" That is, some of them who had been raised from the dead, I do not doubt, appeared unto their wives. What rapture as they saw again the beloved husband! It may be that some of them appeared to father and mother; and I doubt not that many a quickened mother or father would make the first appearance to their children. What does this teach us, but that, if the Lord's grace should raise us from the dead, we must take care to show it? Let us appear unto many. Let the life that God has given us be manifest. Let us not hide it, but let us go to our former friends and make our epiphanies as Christ made his. For his glory's sake let us have our manifestation and appearance unto others. Glory be to the dying Saviour! All praise to the great Sacrifice!

Oh, that these poor, feeble words of mine would excite some interest in you about my dying Master! Be ready to die for him. And you that do not know him—think of this great mystery—that God should take your nature and become a man and die, that you might not die, and bear your sin that you should be free from it. Come and trust my Lord to-night, I pray you. While the people of God gather at the table to the breaking of bread, let your spirits hasten, not to the table and the sacrament, but to Christ himself and his sacrifice. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvii. 35—54.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—300, 280.

MOURNING AT THE SIGHT OF THE CRUCIFIED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 14TH, 1869, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."—Luke xxiii. 48.

MANY in that crowd came together to behold the crucifixion of Jesus, in a condition of the most furious malice. They had hounded the Saviour as dogs pursue a stag, and at last, all mad with rage, they hemmed him in for death. Others, willing enough to spend an idle hour, and to gaze upon a sensational spectacle, swelled the mob until a vast assembly congregated around the little hill upon which the three crosses were raised. There unanimously, whether of malice or of wantonness, they all joined in mockery of the victim who hung upon the centre cross. Some thrust out the tongue, some wagged their heads, others scoffed and jeered, some taunted him in words, and others in signs, but all alike exulted over the defenceless man who was given as a prey to their teeth. Earth never beheld a scene in which so much unrestrained derision and expressive contempt were poured upon one man so unanimously and for so long a time. It must have been hideous to the last degree to have seen so many grinning faces and mocking eyes, and to have heard so many cruel words and scornful shouts. The spectacle was too detestable to be long endured of heaven. Suddenly the sun, shocked at the scene, veiled his face, and for three long hours the ribald crew sat shivering in midday midnight. Meanwhile the earth trembled beneath their feet, the rocks were rent, and the temple, in superstitious defence of whose perpetuity they had committed the murder of the just, had its holy veil rent as though by strong invisible hands. The news of this, and the feeling of horror produced by the darkness, and the earth-tremor, caused a revulsion of feelings; there were no more gibes and jests, no more thrustings out of the tongue and cruel mockeries, but they went their way solitary and alone to their homes, or in little silent groups, while each man after the manner of Orientals when struck with sudden awe, smote upon his breast. Far different was the procession to the gates of Jerusalem from that march of madness which had come out therefrom. Observe the power which God hath over

human minds! See how he can tame the wildest, and make the most malicious and proud to cower down at his feet when he doth but manifest himself in the wonders of nature! How much more cowed and terrified will they be when he makes bare his arm and comes forth in the judgments of his wrath to deal with them according to their deserts!

This sudden and memorable change in so vast a multitude is the apt representative of two other remarkable mental changes. How like it is to the gracious transformation which a sight of the cross has often worked most blessedly in the hearts of men! Many have come under the sound of the gospel resolved to scoff, but they have returned to pray. The idlest and even the basest motives have brought men under the preaching, but when Jesus has been lifted up, they have been savingly drawn to him, and as a consequence have smitten upon their breasts in repentance, and gone their way to serve the Saviour whom they once blasphemed. Oh, the power, the melting, conquering, transforming power of that dear cross of Christ! My brethren, we have but to abide by the preaching of it, we have but constantly to tell abroad the matchless story, and we may expect to see the most remarkable spiritual results. We need despair of no man now that Jesus has died for sinners. With such a hammer as the doctrine of the cross, the most flinty heart will be broken; and with such a fire as the sweet love of Christ, the most mighty iceberg will be melted. We need never despair for the heathenish or superstitious races of men; if we can but find occasion to bring the doctrine of Christ crucified into contact with their natures, it will yet change them, and Christ will be their king.

A second and most awful change is also foretold by the incident in our text, namely, the effect which a sight of Christ enthroned will have upon the proud and obstinate, who in this life rebelled against him. Here they fearlessly jested concerning him, and insultingly demanded, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" Here they boldly united in a conspiracy to break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from them, but when they wake up at the blast of the trump, and see the great white throne, which, like a mirror, shall reflect their conduct upon them, what a change will be in their minds! Where now your quibs and your jests, where now your malicious speeches and your persecuting words? What! Is there not one among you who can play the man, and insult the Man of Nazareth to his face? No, not one! Like cowardly dogs, they slink away! The infidel's bragging tongue is silent! The proud spirit of the atheist is broken; his blusterings and his carpings are hushed for ever! With shrieks of dismay, and clamorous cries of terror, they entreat the hills to cover them, and the mountains to conceal them from the face of that very Man whose cross was once the subject of their scorn. O take heed, ye sinners, take heed, I pray you, and be ye changed this day by grace, lest ye be changed by-and-by by terror, for the heart which will not be bent by the love of Christ, shall be broken by the terror of his name. If Jesus upon the cross do not save you, Christ on the throne shall damn you. If Christ dying be not your life, Christ living shall be your death. If Christ on earth be not your heaven, Christ coming

from heaven shall be your hell. O may God's grace work a blessed turning of grace in each of us, that we may not be turned into hell in the dread day of reckoning.

We shall now draw nearer to the text, and in the first place, *analyse the general mourning around the cross*; secondly, we shall, if God shall help us, *endeavour to join in the sorrowful chorus*; and then, ere we conclude, we shall remind you that at the foot of the cross our sorrow must be mingled with joy.

I. First, then, let us ANALYSE THE GENERAL MOURNING which this text describes.

"All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned." They all smote their breasts, but not all from the same cause. They were all afraid, not all from the same reason. The outward manifestations were alike in the whole mass, but the grades of difference in feeling were as many as the minds in which they ruled. There were many, no doubt, who were merely moved with a transient emotion. They had seen the death agonies of a remarkable man, and the attendant wonders had persuaded them that he was something more than an ordinary being, and therefore, they were afraid. With a kind of indefinite fear, grounded upon no very intelligent reasoning, they were alarmed, because God was angry, and had closed the eye of day upon them, and made the rocks to rend; and, burdened with this indistinct fear, they went their way trembling and humbled to their several homes; but peradventure, ere the next morning light had dawned, they had forgotten it all, and the next day found them greedy for another bloody spectacle, and ready to nail another Christ to the cross, if there had been such another to be found in the land. Their beating of the breast was not a breaking of the heart. It was an April shower, a dewdrop of the morning, a hoar-frost that dissolved when the sun had risen. Like a shadow the emotion crossed their minds, and like a shadow it left no trace behind. How often in the preaching of the cross has this been the only result in tens of thousands! In this house, where so many souls have been converted, many more have shed tears which have been wiped away, and the reason of their tears has been forgotten. A handkerchief has dried up their emotions. Alas! alas! alas! that while it may be difficult to move men with the story of the cross to weeping, it is even more difficult to make those emotions permanent. "I have seen something wonderful, this morning," said one who had listened to a faithful and earnest preacher, "I have seen a whole congregation in tears." "Alas!" said the preacher, "there is something more wonderful still, for the most of them will go their way to forget that they ever shed a tear." Ah, my hearers, shall it be always so—always so? Then, O ye impenitent, there shall come to your eyes a tear which shall drip for ever, a scalding drop which no mercy shall ever wipe away; a thirst that shall never be abated; a worm that shall never die, and a fire that never shall be quenched. By the love you bear your souls, I pray you escape from the wrath to come!

Others amongst that great crowd exhibited emotion based upon more thoughtful reflection. They saw that they had shared in the murder of an innocent person. "Alas!" said they, "we see through it all now.

That man was no offender. In all that we have ever heard or seen of him, he did good, and only good: he always healed the sick, fed the hungry, and raised the dead. There is not a word of all his teaching that is really contrary to the law of God. He was a pure and holy man. We have all been duped. Those priests have egged us on to put to death one whom it were a thousand mercies if we could restore to life again at once. Our race has killed its benefactor." "Yes," saith one, "I thrust out my tongue, I found it almost impossible to restrain myself, when everybody else was laughing and mocking at his tortures; but I am afraid I have mocked at the innocent, and I tremble lest the darkness which God has sent was his reprobation of my wickedness in oppressing the innocent." Such feelings would abide, but I can suppose that they might not bring men to sincere repentance; for while they might feel sorry that they had oppressed the innocent, yet, perceiving nothing more in Jesus than mere maltreated virtue and suffering manhood, the natural emotion might soon pass away, and the moral and spiritual result be of no great value. How frequently have we seen in our hearers that same description of emotion! They have regretted that Christ should be put to death, they have felt like that old king of France, who said, "I wish I had been there with ten thousand of my soldiers, I would have cut their throats sooner than they should have touched him;" but those very feelings have been evidence that they did not feel their share in the guilt as they ought to have done, and that to them the cross of Jesus was no more a saving spectacle than the death of a common martyr. Dear hearers, beware of making the cross to be a common-place thing with you. Look beyond the sufferings of the innocent manhood of Jesus, and see upon the tree the atoning sacrifice of Christ, or else you look to the cross in vain.

No doubt there were a few in the crowd who smote upon their breasts because they felt, "We have put to death a prophet of God. As of old our nation slew Isaiah, and put to death others of the Master's servants, so to-day they have nailed to the cross one of the last of the prophets, and his blood will be upon us and upon our children." Peradventure some of them said, "This man claimed to be Messiah, and the miracles which attended his death prove that he was so. His life betokens it and his death declares it. What will become of our nation if we have slain the Prince of Peace! How will God visit us if we have put his prophet to death!" Such mourning was in advance of other forms; it showed a deeper thought and a clearer knowledge, and it may have been an admirable preparation for the after hearing of the gospel; but it would not of itself suffice as evidence of grace. I shall be glad if my hearers in this house to-day are persuaded by the character of Christ that he must have been a prophet sent of God, and that he was the Messiah promised of old; and I shall be gratified if they, therefore, lament the shameful cruelties which he received from our apostate race. Such emotions of compunction and pity are most commendable, and under God's blessing they may prove to be the furrows of your heart in which the gospel may take root. He who thus was cruelly put to death was God over all blessed for ever, the world's Redeemer, and the Saviour of such as put their trust in him. May

you accept him to-day as your deliverer, and so be saved; for if not, the most virtuous regrets concerning his death, however much they may indicate your enlightenment, will not manifest your true conversion.

In the motley company who all went home smiting on their breasts, let us hope that there were some who said, "Certainly this was the Son of God," and mourned to think he should have suffered for their transgressions, and been put to grief for their iniquities. Those who came to that point were saved. Blessed were the eyes that looked upon the slaughtered Lamb in such a way as that, and happy were the hearts that there and then were broken because he was bruised and put to grief for their sakes. Beloved, aspire to this. May God's grace bring you to see in Jesus Christ no other than God made flesh, hanging upon the tree in agony, to die, the just for the unjust, that we may be saved. O come and repose your trust in him, and then smite upon your breasts at the thought that such a victim should have been necessary for your redemption; then may you cease to smite your breasts, and begin to clap your hands for very joy; for they who thus bewail a Saviour may rejoice in him, for he is theirs and they are his.

II. We shall now ask you TO JOIN IN THE LAMENTATION, each man according to his sincerity of heart, beholding the cross, and smiting upon his breast.

We will by faith put ourselves at the foot of the little knoll of Calvary: there we see in the centre, between two thieves, the Son of God made flesh, nailed by his hands and feet, and dying in an anguish which words cannot portray. Look ye well, I pray you; look steadfastly and devoutly, gazing through your tears. 'Tis he who was worshipped of angels, who is now dying for the sons of men; sit down and watch the death of death's destroyer. I shall ask you first to smite your breasts, as you remember that *you see in him your own sins*. How great he is! That thorn-crowned head was once crowned with all the royalties of heaven and earth. He who dies there is no common man. King of kings and Lord of lords is he who hangs on yonder cross. Then see the greatness of your sins, which required so vast a sacrifice. They must be infinite sins to require an infinite person to lay down his life in order to their removal. Thou canst never compass or comprehend the greatness of thy Lord in his essential character and dignity, neither shalt thou ever be able to understand the blackness and heinousness of the sin which demanded his life as an atonement. Brother, smite thy breast, and say, "God be merciful to me, the greatest of sinners, for I am such." Look well into the face of Jesus, and see how vile they have made him! They have stained those cheeks with spittle, they have lashed those shoulders with a felon's scourge; they have put him to the death which was only awarded to the meanest Roman slave; they have hung him up between heaven and earth, as though he were fit for neither; they have stripped him naked and left him not a rag to cover him! See here then, O believer, the shame of thy sins. What a shameful thing thy sin must have been; what a disgraceful and abominable thing, if Christ must be made such a shame for thee! O be ashamed of thyself, to think thy Lord should thus be scorned and made nothing of for thee! See how they aggravate his sorrows! It was not enough to crucify him, they must insult him; nor that enough, they must mock

his prayers and turn his dying cries into themes for jest, while they offer him vinegar to drink. See, beloved, how aggravated were your sins and mine! Come, my brother, let us both smite upon our breasts and say, "Oh, how our sins have piled up their guiltiness! It was not merely that we broke the law, but we sinned against light and knowledge; against rebukes and warnings. As his griefs are aggravated, even so are our sins!" Look still into his dear face, and see the lines of anguish which indicate the deeper inward sorrow which far transcends mere bodily pain and smart. God, his Father, has forsaken him. God has made him a curse for us. Then what must the curse of God have been against us? What must our sins have deserved? If when sin was only imputed to Christ, and laid upon him for awhile, his father turned his head away and made his Son cry out, "Lama Sabachthani!" Oh, what an accursed thing our sin must be, and what a curse would have come upon us; what thunderbolts, what coals of fire, what indignation, and wrath from the Most High must have been our portion had not Jesus interposed! If Jehovah did not spare his Son, how little would he have spared guilty, worthless men if he had dealt with us after our sins, and rewarded us according to our iniquities!

As we still sit down and look at Jesus, we remember that his death was voluntary—he need not have died unless he had so willed: here then is another striking feature of our sin, for our sin was voluntary too. We did not sin as of compulsion, but we deliberately chose the evil way. O sinner, let both of us sit down together, and tell the Lord that we have no justification, or extenuation, or excuse to offer, we have sinned wilfully against light and knowledge, against love and mercy. Let us smite upon our breasts, as we see Jesus willingly suffer, and confess that we have willingly offended against the just and righteous laws of a most good and gracious God. I could fain keep you looking into those five wounds, and studying that marred face, and counting every purple drop that flowed from hands and feet, and side, but time would fail us. Only that one wound—let it abide with you—smite your breast because you see in Christ your sin.

Looking again—changing, as it were, our stand-point, but still keeping our eye upon that same, dear crucified One, let us see there *the neglected and despised remedy for our sin*. If sin itself, in its first condition, as rebellion, bring no tears to our eyes, it certainly ought in its second manifestation, as ingratitude. The sin of rebellion is vile; but the sin of slighting the Saviour is viler still. He that hangs on the tree, in groans and griefs unutterable, is he whom some of you have never thought of, whom you do not love, to whom you never pray, in whom you place no confidence, and whom you never serve. I will not accuse you; I will ask those dear wounds to do it, sweetly and tenderly. I will rather accuse myself; for, alas! alas! there was a time when I heard of him as with a deaf ear; when I was told of him, and understood the love he bore to sinners, and yet my heart was like a stone within me, and would not be moved. I stopped my ear and would not be charmed, even with such a master-fascination as the disinterested love of Jesus. I think if I had been spared to live the life of an ungodly man, for thirty, forty, or fifty years, and had been converted at

last, I should never have been able to blame myself sufficiently for rejecting Jesus during all those years. Why, even those of us who were converted in our youth, and almost in our childhood, cannot help blaming ourselves to think that so dear a friend, who had done so much for us, was so long slighted by us. Who could have done more for us than he, since he gave himself for our sins? Ah, how did we wrong him while we withheld our hearts from him! O ye sinners, how can ye keep the doors of your hearts shut against the Friend of Sinners? How can we close the door against him who cries, "My head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night: open to me, my beloved, open to me"? I am persuaded there are some here who are his elect: you were chosen by him from before the foundation of the world, and you shall be with him in heaven one day to sing his praises, and yet, at this moment, though you hear his name, you do not love him, and, though you are told of what he did, you do not trust him. What! shall that iron bar always fast close the gate of your heart? Shall that door still be always bolted? O Spirit of the living God, win an entrance for the blessed Christ this morning! If anything can do it, surely it must be a sight of the crucified Christ; that matchless spectacle shall make a heart of stone relent and melt, by Jesus' love subdued. O may the Holy Ghost work this gracious melting, and he shall have all the honour.

Still keeping you at the cross foot, dear friends, every believer here may well smite upon his breast this morning as he thinks of *who it was that smarted so upon the cross*. Who was it? It was he who loved us or ever the world was made. It was he who is this day the Bridegroom of our souls, our Best-beloved; he who has taken us into the banqueting house and waved his banner of love over us; he who has made us one with himself, and has vowed to present us to his Father without spot. It is he, our Husband, our Ishi, who has called us his Hephzibah because his soul delighteth in us. It is he who suffered thus for us. Suffering does not always excite the same degree of pity. You must know something of the individual before the innermost depths of the soul are stirred; and so it happens to us that the higher the character and the more able we are to appreciate it, the closer the relation and the more fondly we reciprocate the love, the more deeply does suffering strike the soul. You are coming to his table some of you to-day, and you will partake of bread: I pray you remember that it represents the quivering flesh that was filled with pain on Calvary. You will sip of that cup: then be sure to remember that it betokens to you the blood of one who loves you better than you could be loved by mother, or by husband, or by friend. O sit you down and smite your breasts that *he* should grieve; that heaven's Sun should be eclipsed; that heaven's Lily should be spotted with blood, and heaven's Rose should be whitened with a deadly pallor. Lament that perfection should be accused, innocence smitten, and love murdered; and that Christ, the happy and the holy, the ever blessed, who had been for ages the delight of angels, should now become the sorrowful, the acquaintance of grief, the bleeding and the dying. Smite upon your breasts, believers, and go your way!

Beloved in the Lord, if such grief as this should be kindled in you, it will be well to pursue the subject, and to reflect upon how unbelieving

and how cruel we have been to Jesus since the day that we have known him. What, doth he bleed for me and have I doubted him? Is he the Son of God, and have I suspected his fidelity? Have I stood at the cross foot unmoved? Have I spoken of my dying Lord in a cold, indifferent spirit? Have I ever preached Christ crucified with a dry eye and a heart unmoved? Do I bow my knee in private prayer, and are my thoughts wandering when they ought to be bound hand and foot to his dear bleeding self? Am I accustomed to turn over the pages of the Evangelists which record my Master's wondrous sacrifice, and have I never stained those pages with my tears? Have I never paused spell-bound over the sacred sentence which recorded this miracle of miracles, this marvel of marvels? Oh, shame upon thee, hard heart! Well may I smite thee. May God smite thee with the hammer of his Spirit, and break thee to shivers. O thou stony heart, thou granite soul, thou flinty spirit, well may I strike the breast which harbours thee, to think that I should be so doltish in presence of love so amazing, so divine.

Brethren, you may smite upon your breasts as you look at the cross, and mourn that you should have done so little for your Lord. I think if anybody could have sketched my future life in the day of my conversion, and have said, "You will be dull and cold in spiritual things! and you will exhibit but little earnestness and little gratitude!" I should have said like Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" I suppose I read your hearts when I say that the most of you are disappointed with your own conduct as compared with your too-flattering prophecies of yourselves! What! am I really pardoned? Am I in very deed washed in that warm stream which gushed from the riven side of Jesus, and yet am I not wholly consecrated to Christ? What! in my body do I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus, and can I live almost without a thought of him? Am I plucked like a brand from the burning, and have I small care to win others from the wrath to come? Has Jesus stooped to win me, and do I not labour to win others for him? Was he all in earnest about me, and am I only half in earnest about him? Dare I waste a minute, dare I trifle away an hour? Have I an evening to spend in vain gossip and idle frivolities? O my heart, well may I smite thee, that at the sight of the death of the dear Lover of my soul, I should not be fired by the highest zeal, and be impelled by the most ardent love to a perfect consecration of every power of my nature, every affection of my spirit, every faculty of my whole man? This mournful strain might be pursued to far greater lengths. We might follow up our confessions, still smiting, still accusing, still regretting, still bewailing. We might continue upon the bass notes evermore, and yet might we not express sufficient contrition for the shameful manner in

which we have treated our blessed Friend. We might say with one of our hymn writers—

“Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
And after none but thee;
And then I would—O that I might—
A constant weeper be!”

One might desire to become a Niobe, and realise the desire of Jeremy, “O that my head were waters.” Even the holy extravagance of George Herbert does not surprise us, for we would even sing with him the song of GRIEF:—

“Oh, who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things
That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree.
What are two shallow fords, two little spouts
Of a less world? The greater is but small.
A narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts,
Which want provision in the midst of all.
Verses, ye are too fine a thing, too wise,
For my rough sorrows. Cease! be dumb and mute;
Give up your feet and running to mine eyes,
And keep your measures for some lover's lute,
Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme;
For mine excludes both measure, tune, and time.
—Alas, my God!”

III. Having, perhaps, said enough on this point—enough if God bless it, too much if without his blessing—let me invite you, in the third place, to remember that AT CALVARY, DOLOROUS NOTES ARE NOT THE ONLY SUITABLE MUSIC.

We admired our poet when, in the hymn which we have just sung, he appears to question with himself which would be the most fitting tune for Golgotha.

“‘It is finished;’ shall we raise
Songs of sorrow or of praise?
Mourn to see the Saviour die,
Or proclaim his victory?

If of Calvary we tell,
How can songs of triumph swell?
If of man redeemed from woe,
How shall notes of mourning flow?”

He shows that since our sin pierced the side of Jesus, there is cause for unlimited lamentation, but since the blood which flowed from the wound has cleansed our sin, there is ground for unbounded

thanksgiving ; and, therefore, the poet, after having balanced the matter in a few verses, concludes with—

“‘It is finished,’ let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise.”

After all, you and I are not in the same condition as the multitude who had surrounded Calvary; for at that time our Lord was still dead, but now he is risen indeed. There were yet three days from that Thursday evening (for there is much reason to believe that our Lord was not crucified on Friday), in which Jesus must dwell in the regions of the dead. Our Lord, therefore, so far as human eyes could see him, was a proper object of pity and mourning, and not of thanksgiving ; but now, beloved, he ever lives and gloriously reigns. No charnel house confines that blessed body. He saw no corruption ; for the moment when the third day dawned, he could no longer be held with the bonds of death, but he manifested himself alive unto his disciples. He tarried in this world for forty days. Some of his time was spent with those who knew him in the flesh ; perhaps a larger part of it was passed with those saints who came out of their graves after his resurrection ; but certain it is that he is gone up, as the first-fruit from the dead ; he is gone up to the right hand of God, even the Father. Do not bewail those wounds, they are lustrous with supernal splendour. Do not lament his death : he lives no more to die. Do not mourn that shame and spitting :—

“ The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now.”

Look up and thank God that death hath no more dominion over him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and he shall shortly come with angelic bands surrounding him, to judge the quick and dead. The argument for joy overshadows the reason for sorrow. Like as a woman when the man-child is born remembereth no more her anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world, so, in the thought of the risen Saviour, who has taken possession of his crown, we will forget the lamentation of the cross, and the sorrows of the broken heart of Calvary.

Moreover, hear ye the shrill voice of the high sounding cymbals, and let your hearts rejoice within you, for in his death our Redeemer conquered all the hosts of hell. They came against him furiously, yea, they came against him to eat up his flesh, but they stumbled and fell. They compassed him about, yea, they compassed him about like bees ; but in the name of the Lord did the Champion destroy them. Against the whole multitude of sins, and all the battalions of the pit, the Saviour stood, a solitary soldier fighting against innumerable bands, but he has slain them all. “Bruised is the dragon’s head.” Jesus has led

captivity captive. He conquered when he fell; and let the notes of victory drown for ever the cries of sorrow.

Moreover, brethren, let it be remembered that men have been saved. Let there stream before your gladdened eyes this morning the innumerable company of the elect. Robed in white they come in long procession; they come from distant lands, from every clime; once scarlet with sin and black with iniquity, they are all white and pure, and without spot before the throne for ever; beyond temptation, beatified, and made like to Jesus. And how? It was all through Calvary. There was their sin put away; there was their everlasting righteousness brought in and consummated. Let the hosts that are before the throne, as they wave their palms, and touch their golden harps, excite you to a joy like their own, and let that celestial music hush the gentler voices which mournfully exclaim—

“Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?”

Nor is that all. You yourself are saved. O brother, this will always be one of your greatest joys. That others are converted through your instrumentality is occasion for much thanksgiving, but your Saviour's advice to you is, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” You, a spirit meet to be cast away, you whose portion must have been with devils—*you* are this day forgiven, adopted, saved, on the road to heaven. Oh! while you think that you are saved from hell, that you are lifted up to glory, you cannot but rejoice that your sin is put away from you through the death of Jesus Christ, your Lord.

Lastly, there is one thing for which we ought always to remember Christ's death with joy, and that is, that although the crucifixion of Jesus was intended to be a blow at the honour and glory of our God—though in the death of Christ the world did, so far as it was able, put God himself to death, and so earn for itself that hideous title, “a deicidal world,” yet never did God have such honour and glory as he obtained through the sufferings of Jesus. Oh, they thought to scorn him, but they lifted his name on high! They thought that God was dishonoured when he was most glorified. The image of the Invisible, had they not marred it? The express image of the Father's person, had they not defiled it? Ah, so they said! But he that sitteth in the heavens may well laugh and have them in derision, for what did they? They did but break the alabaster box, and all the blessed drops of infinite mercy streamed forth to perfume all worlds. They did rend the veil, and then the glory which had been hidden between the

cherubim shone forth upon all lands. O nature, adoring God with thine ancient and priestly mountains, extolling him with thy trees, which clap their hands, and worshipping with thy seas, which in their fulness roar out Jehovah's praise; with all thy tempests and flames of fire, thy dragons and thy deeps, thy snow and thy hail, thou canst not glorify God as Jesus glorified him when he became obedient unto death. O heaven, with all thy jubilant angels, thine ever chanting cherubim and seraphim, thy thrice holy hymns, thy streets of gold and endless harmonies, thou canst not reveal the Deity as Jesus Christ revealed it on the cross. O hell, with all thine infinite horrors and flames unquenchable, and pains and griefs and shrieks of tortured ghosts, even thou canst not reveal the justice of God as Christ revealed it in his riven heart upon the bloody tree. O earth and heaven and hell! O time and eternity, things present and things to come, visible and invisible, ye are dim mirrors of the Godhead compared with the bleeding Lamb. O heart of God, I see thee nowhere as at Golgotha, where the Word incarnate reveals the justice and the love, the holiness and the tenderness of God in one blaze of glory. If any created mind would fain see the glory of God, he need not gaze upon the starry skies, nor soar into the heaven of heavens, he has but to bow at the cross foot and watch the crimson streams which gush from Immanuel's wounds. If you would behold the glory of God, you need not gaze between the gates of pearls, you have but to look beyond the gates of Jerusalem and see the Prince of Peace expire. If you would receive the noblest conception that ever filled the human mind of the lovingkindness and the greatness and the pity, and yet the justice and the severity and the wrath of God, you need not lift up your eyes, nor cast them down, nor look to paradise, nor gaze on Tophet, you have but to look into the heart of Christ all crushed and broken and bruised, and you have seen it all. Oh, the joy that springs from the fact that God has triumphed after all! Death is not the victor; evil is not master. There are not two rival kingdoms, one governed by the God of good, and the other by the God of evil; no, evil is bound, chained, and led captive; its sinews are cut, its head is broken; its king is bound to the dread chariot of Jehovah-Jesus, and as the white horses of triumph drag the Conqueror up the everlasting hills in splendour of glory, the monsters of the pit cringe at his chariot wheels. Wherefore, beloved, we close this discourse with this sentence of humble yet joyful worship, "Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3RD, 1887, BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”—John xix. 31—37.

CRIMINALS who were crucified by the Romans were allowed to rot upon the cross. That cruel nation can hardly be so severely condemned as our own people, who up to a late period allowed the bodies of those condemned to die to hang in chains upon gibbets in conspicuous places. The horrible practice is now abandoned, but it was retained to a time almost, if not quite, within living memory. I wonder whether any aged person here remembers such a horrible spectacle. Among the Romans it was usual, for there are classical allusions to this horror, showing that the bodies of persons crucified were usually left to be devoured by ravenous birds. Probably out of deference to the customs of the Jews, the authorities in Palestine would sooner or later allow of the interment of the crucified; but they would by no means hasten it, since they would not feel such a disgust at the sight as an Israelite would. The Mosaic law, which you will find in the Book of Deuteronomy, runs as follows:—“If thou hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day” (Deuteronomy xxi. 22, 23). This alone would lead the Jews to desire the burial of the executed; but there was a further reason. Lest the land should be defiled upon the holy Sabbath of the Passover, the chief priests were importunate that the bodies of the crucified should be buried, and therefore that their deaths should be hastened by the breaking of their legs. Their consciences were not wounded by the murder of Jesus, but they were greatly moved by the fear of ceremonial pollution. Religious scruples may live in a dead conscience. Alas! this is not the only proof of that fact: we could find many in our own day.

No. 1,956.

The Jews hurried to Pilate, and sought as a boon the merciless act of having the legs of the crucified dashed to pieces with an iron bar. That act was sometimes performed upon the condemned as an additional punishment; but in this instance it was meant to be a finishing stroke, hastening death by the terrible pain which it would cause, and the shock to the system which it would occasion. Ferocious hate of our Lord made his enemies forgetful of everything like humanity: doubtless the more of pain and shame which they could cause to him the better would they be pleased. Not, however, out of cruelty, but out of regard to the ceremonials of their religion, they "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." I have already told you that this breaking of the bones of the crucified was a Roman custom; and of this we have evidence, since there is a Latin word, *crucifragium*, to express this barbarous act. Pilate had no hesitation in granting the desire of the Jews: what would he care about the dead body, since he had already delivered up the living man?

Soldiers go at once to perform the hideous operation, and they commence with the two malefactors. It is a striking fact that the penitent thief, although he was to be in Paradise with his Lord that day, was not, therefore, delivered from the excruciating agony occasioned by the breaking of his legs. We are saved from eternal misery, not from temporary pain. Our Saviour, by our salvation, gives no pledge to us that we shall be screened from suffering in this life. It is true, as the proverb hath it, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean." Accidents and diseases afflict the godly as well as the ungodly. Penitent or impenitent, we share the common lot of men, and are born to troubles as the sparks fly upward. You must not expect because you are pardoned, even if you have the assurance of it from Christ's own lips, that, therefore, you shall escape tribulation; nay, but from his gracious mouth you have the forewarning assurance that trial shall befall you; for Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." Suffering is not averted, but it is turned into a blessing. The penitent thief entered into Paradise that very day, but it was not without suffering; say, rather, that the terrible stroke was the actual means of the prompt fulfilment of his Lord's promise to him. By that blow he died that day; else might he have lingered long. How much we may any of us receive by the way of suffering it were hard to guess: mayhap, the promise that we shall be with our Lord in Paradise will be fulfilled that way.

At this point it seemed more than probable that our blessed Lord must undergo the breaking of his bones; but "he was dead already." It had pleased him, in the infinite willingness with which he went to his sacrifice, to yield up his life, and his spirit had therefore departed. Yet one might have feared that the coarse soldiers would have performed their orders to the letter. See, they do not so! Had they conceived a dread of one around whom such prodigies had gathered? Were they, like their centurion, impressed with awe of this remarkable personage? At any rate, perceiving that he was dead already, they did not use their hammer. Happy are we to see them cease from such loathsome

brutality. But we may not be too glad ; for another outrage will take its place : to make sure that he was dead, one of the four soldiers with a spear pierced his side, probably thrusting his lance quite through the heart. Here we see how our gracious God ordained in his providence that there should be sure evidence that Jesus was dead, and that therefore the sacrifice was slain. Paul declares this to be the gospel, that the Lord Jesus died according to the Scriptures. Strange to say, there have been heretics who have ventured to assert that Jesus did not actually die. They stand refuted by this spear-thrust. If our Lord did not die, then no sacrifice has been presented, the resurrection is not a fact, and there is no foundation of hope for men. Our Lord assuredly died, and was buried : the Roman soldiers were keen judges in such matters, and they saw that "he was dead already," and, moreover, their spears were not used in vain when they meant to make death a certainty.

When the side of Christ was pierced, there flowed thereout blood and water, upon which a great deal has been said by those who think it proper to dilate upon such tender themes. It was supposed by some that by death the blood was divided, the clots parting from the water in which they float, and that in a perfectly natural way. But it is not true that blood would flow from a dead body if it were pierced. Only under certain very special conditions would blood gush forth. The flowing of this blood from the side of our Lord cannot be considered as a common occurrence : it was a fact entirely by itself. We cannot argue from any known fact in this case, for we are here in a new region. Granted, that blood would not flow from an ordinary dead body ; yet remember, that our Lord's body was unique, since it saw no corruption. Whatever change might come over a body liable to decay, we may not ascribe any such change to his frame ; and therefore there is no arguing from facts about common bodies so as to conclude therefrom anything concerning our blessed Lord's body. Whether, in his case, blood and water flowed naturally from his holy and incorruptible body, or whether it was a miracle, it was evidently a most notable and remarkable thing, and John, as an eye-witness, was evidently astonished at it, and so astonished at it that he recorded a solemn affirmation, in order that we might not doubt his testimony. He was certain of what he saw, and he took care to report it with a special note, in order that we might believe ; as if he felt that if this fact was truly believed, there was a certain convincing power which would induce many to believe on our Lord Jesus as the appointed Saviour. I could enter into many details, but I prefer to cast a veil over this tender mystery. It is scarcely reverent to be discoursing of anatomy when the body of our adorable Lord is before us. Let us close our eyes in worship rather than open them with irreverent curiosity.

The great task before me this morning is to draw truth out of this well of wonders. I shall ask you to look at the events before us in three lights : first, let us see here *the fulfilment of Scripture* ; secondly, *the identification of our Lord as the Messiah* ; and thirdly, *the instruction which he intends*.

I. I ask you to notice **THE FULFILMENT OF SCRIPTURE.**

Two things are predicted : not a bone of him must be broken, and

he must be pierced. These were the Scriptures which now remained to be accomplished. Last Lord's-day morning we were all of us delighted as we saw the fulfilment of Scripture in the capture of our Lord, and his refusal to deliver himself from his enemies. The theme of the fulfilment of Scripture is worth pursuing yet further in an age when Holy Scripture is treated with so much slight, and is spoken of as having no inspiration in it, or, at least, no divine authority by which its infallibility is secured. You and I favour no such error; on the contrary, we conceive it to be to the last degree mischievous. "If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" We are pleased to notice how the Lord Jesus Christ and those who wrote concerning him treated the Holy Scriptures with an intensely reverent regard. The prophecies that went before of Christ must be fulfilled, and holy souls found great delight in dwelling upon the fact that they were so.

I want you to notice concerning this case, that *it was singularly complicated*. It was negative and positive: the Saviour's bones must not be broken, and he must be pierced. In the type of the Passover lamb it was expressly enacted that not a bone of it should be broken; therefore not a bone of Jesus must be broken. At the same time, according to Zechariah xii. 10, the Lord must be pierced. He must not only be pierced with the nails, and so fulfil the prophecy, "They pierced my hands and my feet"; but he must be conspicuously pierced, so that he can be emphatically regarded as a pierced one. How were these prophecies, and a multitude more, to be accomplished? Only God himself could have brought to pass the fulfilment of prophecies which were of all kinds, and appeared to be confused, and even in contradiction to each other. It would be an impossible task for the human intellect to construct so many prophecies, and types, and foreshadowings, and then to imagine a person in whom they should all be embodied. But what would be impossible to men has been literally carried out in the case of our Lord. There are prophecies about him and about everything connected with him, from his hair to his garments, from his birth to his tomb, and yet they have all been carried out to the letter. That which lies immediately before us was a complicated case; for if reverence to the Saviour would spare his bones, would it not also spare his flesh? If a coarse brutality pierced his side, why did it not break his legs? How can men be kept from one act of violence, and that an act authorized by authority, and yet how shall they perpetrate another violence which had not been suggested to them? But, let the case be as complicated as it was possible for it to have been, infinite wisdom knew how to work it out in all points; and it did so. The Christ is the exact substance of the foreshadowings of the Messianic prophecies.

Next, we may say of the fulfilment of these two prophecies, that *it was specially improbable*. It did not seem at all likely that when the order was given to break the legs of the crucified, Roman soldiers would abstain from the deed. How could the body of Christ be preserved after such an order had been issued? Those four soldiers are evidently determined to carry out the governor's orders; they have commenced their dreadful task, and they have broken the legs of two of the executed three. The crosses were arranged so that Jesus was hanging in the midst: he is the second of the three. We naturally suppose that they

would proceed in order from the first cross to the second ; but they seem to pass by the second cross, and proceed from the first to the third. What was the reason of this singular procedure ? The supposition is, and I think a very likely one, that the centre cross stood somewhat back, and that thus the two thieves formed a sort of first rank. Jesus would thus be all the more emphatically "in the midst." If he was placed a little back, it would certainly have been easier for the penitent thief to have read the inscription over his head, and to have looked to our Lord, and held conversation with him. Had they been placed exactly in a line this might not have been so natural ; but the suggested position seems to suit the circumstances. If it were so, I can understand how the soldiers would be taking the crosses in order when they performed their horrible office upon the two malefactors, and came last to Jesus, who was in the midst. In any case, such was the order which they followed. The marvel is that they did not in due course proceed to deal the horrible blow in the case of our Lord. Roman soldiers are apt to fulfil their commissions very literally, and they are not often moved with much desire to avoid barbarities. Can you see them intent upon their errand ? Will they not even now mangle that sacred body ? Commend me for roughness to the ordinary Roman soldier : he was so used to deeds of slaughter, so accustomed to an empire which had been established with blood and iron, that the idea of pity never crossed his soul, except to be scouted as a womanly feeling unworthy of a brave man. Yet behold and wonder ! The order is given to break their legs : two out of the three have suffered, and yet no soldier may crush a bone of that sacred body. They see that he is dead already, and they break not his legs.

As yet you have only seen one of the prophecies fulfilled. He must be pierced as well. And what was that which came into that Roman soldier's mind when, in a hasty moment, he resolved to make sure that the apparent death of Jesus was a real one ? Why did he open that sacred side with his lance ? He knew nothing of the prophecy ; he had no dreams of Eve being taken from the side of the man, and the church from the side of Jesus. He had never heard that ancient notion of the side of Jesus being like the door of the ark, through which an entrance to safety is opened. Why, then, does he fulfil the prediction of the prophet ? There was no accident or chance here. Where are there such things ? The hand of the Lord is here, and we desire to praise and bless that omniscient and omnipotent Providence which thus fulfilled the word of revelation. God hath respect unto his own word, and while he takes care that no bone of his Son shall be broken, he also secures that no text of Holy Scripture shall be broken. That our Lord's bones should remain unbroken, and yet that he should be pierced, seemed a very unlikely thing ; but it was carried out. When next you meet with an unlikely promise, believe it firmly. When next you see things working contrary to the truth of God, believe God, and believe nothing else. Let God be true and every man a liar. Though men and devils should give God the lie, hold you on to what God has spoken ; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fall to the ground.

Note again, dear friends, concerning this fulfilment of Scripture,

that *it was altogether indispensable*. If they had broken Christ's bones, then that word of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God," had seemed to have a slur cast upon it. Men would have objected, "But the bones of the Lamb of God were not broken." It was especially commanded twice over, not only in the first ordaining of the Passover in Egypt, but in the allowance of a second to those who were defiled at the time of the first Passover. In Numbers as well as in Exodus, we read that not a bone of the lamb must be broken. How, then, if our Lord's bones had been broken, could we have said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," when there would have been this fatal flaw? Jesus must remain intact upon the cross, and he must also be pierced; for else that famous passage in Zechariah, which is here alluded to, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced," could not have been true of him. Both prophecies must be carried out, and they were so in a conspicuous manner. But why need I say that this fulfilment was indispensable? Beloved, the keeping of every word of God is indispensable. It is indispensable to the truth of God that he should be true always: for if one word of his can fall to the ground, then all may fall, and his veracity is gone. If it can be demonstrated that one prophecy was a mistake, then all the rest may be mistakes. If one part of the Scripture is untrue, all may be untrue, and we have no sure ground to go upon. Faith loves not slippery places; faith seeks the sure word of prophecy, and sets her foot firmly upon certainties. Unless all the Word of God is sure, and pure "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," then we have nothing to go upon, and are virtually left without a revelation from God. If I am to take the Bible and say, "Some of this is true, and some of it is questionable," I am no better off than if I had no Bible. A man who is at sea with a chart which is only accurate in certain places, is not much better off than if he had no chart at all. I see not how it can ever be safe to be "converted and become as little children" if there is no infallible teacher for us to follow. Beloved, it is indispensable to the honour of God and to our confidence in his Word, that every line of Holy Scripture should be true. It was indispensable evidently in the case now before us, and this is only one instance of a rule which is without exception.

But now let me remind you that although the problem was complicated, and its working out was improbable, yet *it was fulfilled in the most natural manner*. Nothing can be less constrained than the action of the soldiers; they have broken the legs of two, but the other is dead, and they do not break his legs; yet, to make sure that they will be safe in omitting the blow, they pierce his side. There was no compulsion put upon them; they did this of their own proper thought. No angel came from heaven to stand with his broad wings in the front of the cross, so as to protect the Saviour; no awful ægis of mystery was hung over the sacred body of the Lord so that intruders might be driven back with fear. No, the quaternion of soldiers did whatever they wished to do. They acted of their own free will, and yet at the same time they fulfilled the eternal counsel of God. Shall we never be able to drive into men's minds the truth that predestination and free agency are both facts? Men sin as freely as birds fly in the air, and they are altogether responsible for their sin; and yet everything is

ordained and foreseen of God. The fore-ordination of God in no degree interferes with the responsibility of man. I have often been asked by persons to reconcile the two truths. My only reply is—They need no reconciliation, for they never fell out. Why should I try to reconcile two friends? Prove to me that the two truths do not agree. In that request I have set you a task as difficult as that which you propose to me. These two facts are parallel lines; I cannot make them unite, but you cannot make them cross each other. Permit me also to add that I have long ago given up the idea of making all my beliefs into a system. I believe, but I cannot explain. I fall before the majesty of revelation, and adore the infinite Lord. I do not understand all that God reveals, but I believe it. How can I expect to understand all the mysteries of revelation, when even the arithmetic of Scripture surpasses my comprehension, since I am taught that in the Godhead the Three are One, while in the undivided One I see most manifestly Three? Need I measure the sea? Is it not enough that I am upborne by its waves? I thank God for waters deep enough for my faith to swim in: understanding would compel me to keep to the shallows, but faith takes me to the main ocean. I think it more to my soul's benefit to believe than to understand, for faith brings me nearer to God than reason ever did. The faith which is limited by our narrow faculties is a faith unworthy of a child of God; for as a child of God he should begin to deal with infinite sublimities, like those in which his great Father is at home. These are only to be grasped by faith. To return to my subject: albeit the matter must be as Scripture foreshadowed, yet no constraint nor inducement was put forth; but, as free agents, the soldiers performed the very things which were written in the Prophets concerning Christ.

Dear friends, suffer one more observation upon this fulfilment of Scripture: *it was marvellous'y complete*. Observe that in these transactions a seal was set upon that part of Scripture which has been most exposed to sceptical derision: for the seal was set first of all upon *the types*. Irreverent readers of Scripture have refused to accept the types: they say, "How do you know that the Passover was a type of Christ?" In other cases, more serious persons object to detailed interpretations, and decline to see a meaning in the smaller particulars. Such persons would not attach spiritual importance to the law, "Not a bone of it shall be broken"; but would dismiss it as a petty regulation of an obsolete religious rite. But observe, beloved, the Holy Spirit does nothing of the kind; for he fixes upon a minor particular of the type, and declares that this must be fulfilled. Moreover, the providence of God intervenes, so that it shall be carried out. Wherefore, be not scared away from the study of the types by the ridicule of the worldly-wise. There is a general timidity coming over the minds of many about Holy Scripture, a timidity to which, thank God, I am an utter stranger. It would be a happy circumstance if the childlike reverence of the early fathers could be restored to the church, and the present irreverent criticism could be repented of and cast away. We may delight ourselves in the types as in a very Paradise of revelation. Here we see our best Beloved's beauties mirrored in ten thousand delightful ways. There is a world of holy teaching in the books of

the Old Testament, and in their types and symbols. To give up this patrimony of the saints, and to accept criticism instead of it, would be like selling one's birthright for a mess of pottage. I see in our Lord's unbroken bones a setting of the seal of God upon the types of Scripture.

Let us go further. I see, next, the seal of God set upon *unfulfilled prophecy*; for the passage in Zechariah is not yet completely fulfilled. It runs thus: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Jehovah is the speaker, and he speaks of "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They are to look on Jehovah whom they have pierced, and to mourn for him. Although this prophecy is not yet fulfilled on the largest scale, yet it is so far certified; for Jesus is pierced: the rest of it, therefore, stands good, and Israel shall one day mourn because of her insulted King. The prophecy was fulfilled in part when Peter stood up and preached to the eleven, when a great company of the priests believed, and when multitudes of the seed of Abraham became preachers of Christ crucified. Still it awaits a larger fulfilment, and we may rest quite sure that the day shall come when all Israel shall be saved. As the piercing of their Lord is true, so shall the piercing of their hearts be true, and they shall mourn and inwardly bleed with bitter sorrow for him whom they despised and abhorred. The point to mark here is, that a seal is set in this case to a prophecy which yet awaits its largest fulfilment; wherefore, we may regard this as a pattern, and may lay stress upon prophecy, and rejoice in it, and receive it without doubt, come what may.

I have said this much upon the fulfilment of the Word concerning our Lord; let us learn hence a lesson of reverence and confidence in reference to Holy Scripture.

II. But now, secondly, and briefly, THE IDENTIFICATION OF OUR LORD AS THE MESSIAH was greatly strengthened by that which befell his body after death. It was needful that he should conclusively be proved to be the Christ spoken of in the Old Testament. Certain marks and tokens are given, and those marks and tokens must be found in him: they were so found.

The first mark was this: *God's Lamb must have a measure of preservation*. If Christ be what he professes to be, he is the Lamb of God. Now, God's lamb could only be dealt with in God's way. Yes, there is the lamb; kill it, sprinkle its blood, roast it with fire, but break not its bones. It is God's lamb, and not yours, therefore hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. Not a bone of it shall be broken. Roast it, divide it among yourselves, and eat it, but break no bone of it. The Lord claims it as his own, and this is his reserve. So, in effect, the Lord says concerning the Lord Jesus: "There is my Son; bind him, scourge him, spit on him, crucify him; but he is the Lamb of my Passover, and you must not break a bone of him." The Lord's right to him is declared by the reservation which is made concerning his bones. Do you not see here how he is identified as being "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"? It is a mark of identity upon which faith fixes her eyes, and she studies that mark until she sees much more in it than we can this morning speak about, for we have other things to dwell upon.

The next mark of identity must be, that *Jehovah our Lord should be*

pierced by Israel. So Zechariah said, and so must it be fulfilled. Not merely must his hands and feet be nailed, but most conspicuously must himself be pierced. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." Pierced he must be. His wounds are the marks and tokens of his being the real Christ. When they shall see the sign of the Son of man in the last days, then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and is not that sign his appearing as a Lamb that has been slain? The wound in his side was a sure mark of his identity to his own disciples; for he said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." It shall be the convincing token to all Israel: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son." To us the opened way to his heart is in his flesh the token that this is the incarnate God of love, whose heart can be reached by all who seek his grace.

But I have not finished this identification; for observe, that when that side was pierced, "forthwith came there out blood and water." You that have your Bibles will have opened them already at Zechariah xii. Will you kindly read on till you come to the first verse of the thirteenth chapter, which ought not to have been divided from the twelfth chapter? What do you find there? "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." They pierced him, and in that day they began to mourn for him; but more, in that day there was a fountain opened. And what was that fountain but this gush of water and of blood from the riven side of our redeeming Lord? The prophecies follow quickly upon one another; they relate to the same person, and to the same day; and we are pleased to see that the facts also follow quickly upon one another; for when the soldier with the spear pierced the side of Jesus, "*forthwith* came there out blood and water." Jehovah was pierced, and men repented, and beheld the cleansing fountain within a brief space. The men who saw the sacred fountain opened rejoiced to see in it the attestation of the finished sacrifice, and the token of its cleansing effect.

The identification is more complete if we add one more remark. Take all the types of the Old Testament together, and you will gather this, that *the purification of sin was typically set forth by blood and water.* Blood was conspicuous always, you have no remission of sin without it: but water was exceedingly prominent also. The priests before sacrificing must wash, and the victim itself must be washed with water. Impure things must be washed with running water. Behold how our Lord Jesus came by water and by blood; not by water only, but by water and blood. John who saw the marvellous stream never forgot the sight; for though he wrote his Epistles, I suppose, far on in life, the recollection of that wondrous scene was fresh with him. Though I suppose he did not write his Gospel until he was a very old man, yet when he came to this passage it impressed him as much as ever, and he uttered affirmations which he was not at all accustomed to use: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true." In solemn form he thus, after a manner, gave his affidavit before God's people, that he did really behold this

extraordinary sight. In Jesus we see one who has come to atone and to sanctify. He is that High Priest who cleanses the leprosy of sin by blood and water. This is one part of the sure identification of the great Purifier of God's people, that he came both by water and by blood, and poured out both from his pierced side. I leave these identifications to you. They are striking to my own mind, but they are only part of the wonderful system of marks and tokens by which it is seen that God attests the man Christ Jesus as being in very deed the true Messiah.

III. I must close by noticing, thirdly, THE INSTRUCTION INTENDED FOR US in all these things.

The first instruction intended for us must be only hinted at, like all the rest. *See what Christ is to us.* He is the Paschal Lamb, not a bone of which was broken. You believe it. Come, then, and act upon your belief by feeding upon Christ; keep the feast in your own souls this day. That sprinkled blood of his has brought you safety: the Destroying Angel cannot touch you or your house. The Lamb himself has become your food; feed on him; remove your spiritual hunger by receiving Jesus into your heart. This is the food whereof if a man eat he shall live for ever. Be filled with all the fulness of God, as you now receive the Lord Jesus as God and man. "Ye are complete in him." Ye are "perfect in Jesus Christ." Can you not say of him: "He is all my salvation, and all my desire"? "Christ is all and in all." Do not merely learn this lesson as a doctrine, but enjoy it as a personal experience. Jesus our Passover is slain, let him be eaten. Let us feast on him, and then be ready to journey through the wilderness, in the strength of this divine meat, until we come to the promised rest.

What next do we learn from this lesson but this? *See man's treatment of Christ.* They have spit upon him, they have cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," they have nailed him to the cross, they have mocked his agonies, and he is dead; but man's malice is not glutted yet. The last act of man to Christ must be to pierce him through. That cruel wound was the concentration of man's ill-treatment of Jesus. His experience at the hands of our race is summed up in the fact that they pierced him to the heart. That is what men have done to Christ: they have so despised and rejected him that he dies, pierced to the heart. Oh, the depravity of our nature! Some doubt whether it is *total* depravity. It deserves a worse adjective than that. There is no word in human language which can express the venom of the enmity of man to his God and Saviour: he would wound him mortally if he could. Do not expect that men will love either Christ or you, if you are like him. Do not expect that Jesus will find room for himself in the inn, much less that he will be set on the throne by guilty, unrenowned men. Oh, no! Even when he is dead they must insult his corpse with a spear-thrust. One soldier did it, but he expressed the sentiment of the age. This is what the world of sinners did for him who came into the world to save it.

Now, learn, in the next place, *what Jesus did for men.* Beloved, that was a sweet expression in our hymn just now—

"Even after death his heart
For us its tribute poured."

In his life he had bled for us : drop by drop the bloody sweat had fallen to the ground. Then the cruel scourges drew from him purple streams ; but as a little store of life-blood was left near his heart, he poured it all out before he went his way. It is a materialistic expression, but there is something more in it than mere sentiment—that there remains among the substance of this globe a sacred relic of the Lord Jesus in the form of that blood and water. As no atom of matter ever perishes, that matter remains on earth even now. His body has gone into glory, but the blood and water are left behind. I see much more in this fact than I will now attempt to tell. O world, the Christ has marked thee with his blood and he means to have thee ! Blood and water from the heart of God's own Son have fallen down upon this dark and defiled planet, and thus Jesus has sealed it as his own, and as such it must be transformed into a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Our dear Lord, when he had given us all he had, and even resigned his life on our behalf, then parted with a priceless stream from the fountain of his heart : “ forthwith came there out blood and water.” Oh, the kindness of the heart of Christ, that did not only for a blow return a kiss, but for a spear-thrust returned streams of life and healing !

But I must hurry on. I can see in this passage also *the safety of the saints*. It is marvellous how full of eyes the things of Jesus are ; for his unbroken bones look backward to the Paschal lamb, but they also look forward throughout all the history of the church to that day when he shall gather all his saints in one body, and none shall be missing. Not a bone of his mystical body shall be broken. There is a text in the Psalms which saith of the righteous man—and all righteous men are conformed unto the image of Christ—“ He keepeth all his bones : not one of them is broken.” I do rejoice in the safety of Christ's elect ; he shall not permit a bone of his redeemed body to be broken.

“ For all the chosen seed
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his glories known.”

A perfect Christ there shall be in the day of his appearing, when all the members of his body shall be joined to their glorious Head, who shall be crowned for ever. Not one living member of Christ shall be absent ; “ Not a bone of him shall be broken.” There shall be no lame, maimed Christ, no half-wrought redemption ; but the purpose that he came to accomplish shall be perfectly achieved to the glory of his name.

I have not quite done, for I must add another lesson. *We see here the salvation of sinners*. Jesus Christ's side is pierced to give to sinners the double cure of sin, the taking away of its guilt and power ; but, better than this, sinners are to have their hearts broken by a sight of the Crucified. By this means also they are to obtain faith. “ They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.” Beloved, our Lord Jesus came not only to save sinners, but to seek them : his death not only saves those who have faith, but it creates faith in those who have it not. The cross produces the faith and repentance which it demands. If you cannot come to Christ

with faith and repentance, come to Christ *for* faith and repentance, for he can give them to you. He is pierced on purpose that you may be pricked to the heart. His blood, which freely flows, is shed for many for the remission of sins. What you have to do is just to look, and, as you look, those blessed feelings which are the marks of conversion and regeneration shall be wrought in you by a sight of him. Oh, blessed lesson! Put it into practice this morning. Oh, that in this great house many may now have done with self and look to the crucified Saviour, and find life eternal in him! For this is the main end of John's writing this record, and this is the chief design of our preaching upon it: we long that you may believe. Come, ye guilty, come and trust the Son of God who died for you. Come, ye foul and polluted, come and wash in this sacred stream poured out for you. There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for every one of you who will look to him. God grant you may look and live, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xix. 13—42.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—910, 276, 277.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 6TH, 1884. BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.”—Mark xv. 43—46.

It was a very dark day with the church of God and with the cause of Christ; for the Lord Jesus was dead, and so the sun of their souls had set. “All the disciples forsook him, and fled.” “Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone,” were the sad words of Jesus, and they had come true. He was dead upon the cross, and his enemies hoped that there was an end of him, while his friends feared that it was even so. A few women who had remained about the cross, true to the very last, were found faithful unto death; but what could they do to obtain his sacred body and give it honourable burial? That priceless flesh seemed to be in danger of the fate which usually awaited the bodies of malefactors: at any rate, the fear was that it might be hurled into the first grave that could be found to shelter it. At that perilous moment Joseph of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews, of whom we never heard before, and of whom we never hear again, suddenly made his appearance. He was the very man needed for the occasion, a man of influence, a man possessing that kind of influence which was most potent with Pilate—a rich man, a counsellor, a member of the Sanhedrim, a person of weight and character. Every evangelist mentions him and tells us something about him, and from these we learn that he was a disciple, “a good man and a just; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.” Joseph had been retiring, and probably cowardly before; but now he came to the cross, and saw how matters stood, and then went in boldly unto Pilate, craved the body of Jesus, and obtained it. Let us learn from this that God will always have his witnesses. It matters not though the ministry should forsake the truth, though they that should be leaders should become recreant, the truth of God will not fail for lack of friends. It may be with the church as when a standard-bearer fainteth and the host is ready to melt with dismay; but there shall be found other standard-bearers,

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and the banner of the Lord shall wave over all. As the Lord liveth, so shall his truth live: as God reigneth, so shall the gospel reign, even though it be from the cross. "Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth from the tree." Such is a singular version of a verse in the Psalms, and it contains a glorious truth. Even while Jesus hangeth on the cross in death he is still keeping possession of the throne, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Let this be remembered for your encouragement in the cloudy and dark day. If you live in any place where the faithful fail from among men, do not wring your hands in grief and sit down in despair, as though it was all over with the cause you love. The Lord liveth, and he will yet keep a faithful seed alive in the earth. Another Joseph of Arimathæa will come forward at the desperate moment: just when we cannot do without him the man will be found. There was a Joseph for Israel in Egypt, and there was a Joseph for Jesus on the cross. A Joseph acted to him a father's part at his birth, and another Joseph arranged for his burial. The Lord shall not be left without friends. There was a dark day in the Old Testament history when the eyes of Eli, the servant of God, had failed him; and worse still, he was almost as blind mentally as physically; for his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. It seemed as if God must forsake his Israel. But who is this little boy who is brought in by his mother? this tiny child who is to be left in the sanctuary to serve his God as long as he liveth? this pretty little man who wears the little coat which his mother's hands have lovingly made for him? Look, ye that have eyes of faith; for the prophet Samuel is before you, the servant of the Lord, by whose holy example Israel shall be led to better things, and delivered from the oppression which chastised the iniquities of Eli's sons.

God hath to-day somewhere, I know not where, in yon obscure cottage of an English village, or in a log-hut far away in the backwoods of America, or in the slums of our back streets, or in our palaces, a man who in maturer life shall deliver Israel, fighting the battles of the Lord. The Lord hath his servant making ready, and when the time shall come, when the hour shall want the man, the man shall be found for the hour. The Lord's will shall be done, let infidels and doubters think what they please. I see in this advent of Joseph of Arimathæa exactly at the needed time, a well of consolation for all who have the cause of God laid upon their hearts. We need not worry our heads about who is to succeed the pastors and evangelists of to-day: the apostolical succession we may safely leave with our God.

Concerning this Joseph of Arimathæa, the honourable counsellor, I want to speak this morning, praying that I may speak to your souls all along. As I have already said, we hear no more of Joseph than what is recorded here. He shines out when he is wanted, and anon he disappears: his record is on high. We need not mention the traditions about him, for I think that even the quotation of legends has an evil tendency, and may turn us aside from the pure, unadulterated Word of God. What have you and I to do with tradition? Is not the Scripture enough? There is probably no truth in the silly tales about Joseph and Glastonbury; and if there were, it could be of no consequence to us; if any fact had been worthy of the pen of inspiration, it would have been

written, and because it is not written, we need not desire to know. Let us be satisfied to pause where the Holy Spirit stays his pen

I shall use Joseph of Arimathæa this morning in four ways : first, as *our warning*,—he was a disciple of Jesus, “but secretly for fear of the Jews ;” secondly, for *our instruction*,—he was at last brought out by the cross, concerning which holy Simeon had declared that by the death of the Lord Jesus the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed ; thirdly, for *our arousing*,—there was an occasion for Joseph to come forward, and there is occasion now for all the timid to grow brave ; and lastly, for *our guidance*,—that we may, if we have been at all bashful and fearful, come forward in the hour of need and behave ourselves as bravely as Joseph of Arimathæa did on the eve before the Paschal Sabbath.

I. First, then, I desire to look at Joseph of Arimathæa as OUR WARNING. He was a disciple of Christ, but secretly, for fear of the Jews: we do not advise any one of you to imitate Joseph in that. Fear which leads us to conceal our faith is an evil thing. Be a disciple by all means, but not secretly : you miss a great part of your life’s purpose if you are. Above all, do not be a disciple secretly because of the fear of man ; for the fear of man bringeth a snare. If you are the slave of such fear it demeans you, be-littles you, and prevents your giving due glory to God.

“ Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear.”

Be careful to give honour to Christ and he will take care of your honour. Why was it that Joseph of Arimathæa was so backward? Perhaps it was owing to *his natural disposition*. Many men are by nature very bold; some are a little too much so, for they become intrusive, self-assertive, not to say impudent. I have heard of a certain class of persons who “rush in where angels fear to tread.” They are fearless because they are brainless. Let us avoid fault in that direction. Many, on the other hand, are too retiring : they have to screw their courage up even to say a good word for the Saviour whom they love. If they can do so they fall into the rear rank ; they hope to be found among the victors when they divide the spoil, but they are not over ambitious to be among the warriors while they are braving the foe. Some of these are true-hearted notwithstanding their timidity. It was found in the martyr days that certain of those who endured most bravely at the stake were naturally of a fearful mind. It is noted by Foxe that some who boasted of how well they could bear pain and death for Christ turned tail and recanted ; while others who in prison trembled at the thought of the fire, played the man in death, to the admiration of all that were round about them. Still, dear friends, it is not a desirable thing if you are troubled with timidity to foster it at all. Fear of man is a plant to be rooted up, and not to be nurtured. I should set that plant, if I could, where it would get but little water, and no sunshine, and meanwhile I would beg a cutting from a better tree. Would it not be well often to brace ourselves with such a hymn as this—

“ Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause,
Or blush to speak his name?”

“ Must I be carried to the skies
 On flowery beds of ease ;
 While others fought to win the prize,
 And sail'd through bloody seas ? ”

If you know that your temptation lies in the direction of fear, watch and strive against it, and school yourselves evermore to dauntless courage by the help of the Holy Spirit.

I am afraid, too, that what helped to intimidate Joseph of Arimathæa was the fact that he was a *rich man*. A sad truth lies within our Lord's solemn exclamation, “ How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.” Riches do not strengthen the heart, or make men daring for the good cause. Albeit wealth is a great talent which may be well used by the man who has entered into the kingdom of heaven, yet it brings with it snares and temptations, and when a man has not yet entered into the kingdom it is, in many ways, a terrible hindrance to his entrance. “ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom.” The fishermen of the Galilean Lake readily left their bits of boats, and their fishing-tackle ; but Joseph of Arimathæa was a rich man, and was therefore slow to leave all for Christ's sake. The tendency of great possessions is seen in the case of the young man who turned away in sorrow from the Lord Jesus, when put to the unusual test of selling all he had. Strong swimmers have saved their lives when the ship has struck upon a rock, by casting aside every weight ; while others have gone straight down to the bottom because they have bound their gold around their waists. Gold sinks men as surely as lead. Take care, any of you that are well to do in this world, that you do not permit the liberality of God to be a cause of disloyalty to him. Beware of the pride of life, the lust for rank, the desire to hoard ; for any of these may prevent your service of your Lord. Riches puff men up, and prevent their stooping to find the pearl of great price. A poor man enters a humble village sanctuary where Christ is preached, and he finds eternal life ; another man under concern of soul in the same village does not like to go down to the poor conventicle, and remains unblest. He keeps away because he puts to himself the question, “ What will the people say if the squire goes to hear the gospel ? What a stir there will be if the son of a lord is converted ! ” Joseph of Arimathæa's wealth made him unduly cautious ; and possibly, without his knowing it, prevented his casting in his lot with the common sort of people who followed the Lord Jesus. His heart was for the prize, but the heavy weight of his substance hindered him in his race ; it was an instance of abounding grace that he was helped to run well at the last.

Possibly, too, he may have been checked by the fact that *he was in office, and that he was honourable in it*. It needs great grace to carry human honour ; and, truth to tell, it is not particularly much worth carrying when you have it. For what is fame but the breath of men's nostrils ? Poor stuff to feed a soul upon ! If a man could so live as to gain universal plaudits, if he could write his name athwart the sky in letters of gold, what of it all ? What is there in the applause of a thoughtless multitude ? The approbation of good men, if it be gained by persevering virtue, is better to be desired than great riches ; but even

then it may become a temptation; for the man may begin to question rather, What will people say? than, What will God say? and the moment he falls into that mood he has introduced a weakening element into his life. The "Well done, good and faithful servant," of the Master's own lip is worth ten thousand thunders of applause from senators and princes. Honour among men is, at best, a peril to the best. Joseph was honoured in council, and this is apt to make a man prudently slow. The tendency of office is towards caution rather than enthusiasm. I would have those placed in high positions remember this, and candidly judge themselves as to whether their shrinking from the public avowal of Christ may not be a cowardice unworthy of the position in which the Lord has placed them.

It seems clear that all the earthly things which men covet may not be so desirable as they appear to be; and that which men would give their eyes to procure, they might, if their eyes were opened, think far less of.

I would lovingly enquire of you at this time (for the sermon is meant to be personal all the way through) if any of you who love my Lord and Master are doing so secretly because of the fear of men. You have never openly confessed your faith, and why not? What doth hinder your taking up a decided position on the Lord's side? Are you wealthy? Are you honourable? Do you occupy an enviable position in society? And are you such a mean-spirited creature that you have become proud of these glittering surroundings, like a child that is vain of its new frock? Are you so craven that you will not cast in your lot with the followers of truth and righteousness because they are persons of low degree? Are you really so base? Is there no holy chivalry in you? Can it be so, that, because God has dealt so well with you, and trusted you so generously, you will repay him by denying his Son, violating your conscience, and turning your back on truth; and all for the sake of being in the fashion? I know it may seem hard to receive the cold shoulder in society, or to have the finger of scorn pointed at you; but to bow before this selfish dread is scarcely worthy of a man, and utterly disgraceful to a Christian man. "Oh, but I am so retiring in disposition." Yes, but do not indulge it, I pray you; for, if all were of such a mind, where were the noble advances of truth, her reformations, her revivals? Where would have been our Luther, or our Calvin, or our Zwingli? where would have been our Whitefield, or our Wesley, if they had thought it to be the main object of desire to walk at ease along the cool sequestered vale of life? Come forth, my brother, for the truth and for the Lord. Recollect that what is right for you would be right for the rest of us: if you do not join the Christian church, for instance, every one of us might also neglect that duty, and where would be the visible church of Christ, and how would the ordinances of our holy faith be kept up as a witness among the sons of men? I charge all concealed believers to think over the inconsistency of their concealment and to quit that cowardly condition.

I feel sure that Joseph of Arimathæa was a great loser by his secrecy; for you see, he did not live with Jesus, as many other disciples did. During that brief but golden period in which men walked and talked, and ate and drank with Jesus, Joseph was not with him. He was not among the twelve: as possibly he might have been if he had possessed more courage

and decision. He lost many of those familiar talks with which the Lord indulged his own after the multitudes had been sent away. He missed that sacred training and strengthening which fitted men for the noble lives of primitive saints. How many opportunities he must have missed, too, of working for the Master and with the Master! Perhaps we hear no more of him because he had done no more. Possibly that one grand action which has redeemed his name from forgetfulness, is all that is recorded because it really was all that was worth recording. Joseph must have been a weaker, a sadder, a less useful man for having followed Christ afar off. I would to God that such reflections as these would fetch out our beloved, truly faithful and honourable Christian men, who hitherto have hidden away among the stuff, and have not come to the front to stand up for Jesus.

II. Secondly, having viewed Joseph of Arimathæa as a warning, I shall go on to speak of him as a lesson for OUR INSTRUCTION.

Joseph did come out after all; and so will you, my friends. If you are honest and sincere, you will have to avow your Lord sooner or later. Do you not think it would be better to make it sooner rather than later? The day will come when that shame which you are now dreading will be yours. As surely as you are a sincere believer, you will have to encounter that reproach and derision which now alarm you: why not face them at once and get it over? You will have to confess Christ before many witnesses, why not begin to do so at once? What is the hardship of it? It will come easier to you, and it will bring you a larger blessing, and it will be sweeter in the recollection afterwards, than if you keep on postponing it. What was it that fetched Joseph of Arimathæa out? *It was the power of the cross!* Is it not a remarkable thing that all the life of Christ did not draw out an open avowal from this man? Our Lord's miracles, his marvellous discourses, his poverty, and self-renunciation, his glorious life of holiness and benevolence, all may have helped to build up Joseph in his secret faith, but it did not suffice to develop in him a bold avowal of faith. The shameful death of the cross had greater power over Joseph than all the beauty of Christ's life. Now let us see, you timid, backward ones, whether the cross will not have the same influence over you to-day. I believe it will if you carefully study it. I am sure it will if the Holy Spirit lays it home to your heart. I suppose that to Joseph of Arimathæa Christ's death on the cross seemed such a *wicked thing* that he must come out on behalf of one so evil entreated. He had not consented to the deed of the men of the Sanhedrim when they condemned Jesus to death; probably he and Nicodemus withdrew themselves from the assembly altogether; but when he saw that the crime was actually committed, and that the innocent man had been put to death, then he said, "I cannot be a silent witness of such a murder. I must now side with the holy and the just." Therefore he came out, and was found the willing servant of his crucified Master. Come what may of it, he felt that he must own himself to be on the right side, now that they had maliciously taken away the life of the Lord Jesus. It was late, it was sadly late, but it was not too late. Oh, secret disciple, will you not quit your hiding-place? Will you not hasten to do so? You who are quiet and retiring, when you hear the name of Jesus blasphemed, as it is in these evil days, will you not stand

up for him? When you hear his Deity denied, when his headship in the church is given to another, when his very person is by lewd fellows of the baser sort set up as the target of their criticism, will you not speak up for him? Will you not be shocked by such evil conduct into an open avowal? His cause is that of truth and righteousness, and mercy and hope for the sons of men, therefore he must not be abused while you sit by in silence. Had others favoured him you might, perhaps, have been somewhat excused for holding back; but you cannot keep back without grievous sin now that so many deride him. Jesus is worthy of all honour, and yet they heap scorn upon him: will you not defend him? He is your Saviour and Lord; oh, be not slow to own that you are his. The cross laid bare the heart of Joseph; he loathed the wickedness which slew the Holy and the Just, and therefore he girded himself to become the guardian of his sacred body.

But, next, it may have been in part *the wonderful patience of the Master's death* which made Joseph feel he could not hide any longer. Did he hear him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"? Did he mark him when those blessed lips said, "I thirst"? Do you think he observed the ribaldry and scorn which surrounded the dying Lord? and did he feel that the stones would cry out if he did not show kindness to his best friend? Since Jesus spake not for himself, but was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, Joseph is bound to open his mouth for him. If Jesus answered not, but only breathed out prayers for his murderers, the honourable counsellor must acknowledge him. The sun has owned him, and veiled his face in sackcloth! The earth has owned him, and trembled to her very heart at his sufferings! Death has owned him, and yielded up the bodies which the sepulchre had hitherto detained! The temple has owned him, and in its horror has rent its veil, like a woman that is utterly broken in heart by the horrors she has seen! Therefore Joseph must own him, he cannot resist the impulse. Oh, brethren, if you have been backward, let some such motive lead you unto the van of the host.

Then there were all *the wonders of that death* which he saw, and to which I have already alluded. They sufficed to convince the centurion that this was a righteous man. They convinced others that he was the Son of God; and he who was already a disciple of Christ must have been greatly confirmed in that conviction by what he saw around the cross. The time was come when he must boldly act as Christ's disciple. Have there been no wonders of conversion around you? no answers to prayer? no providential deliverances? Should not these lead the secret ones to declare themselves?

I do not suppose he fully understood *the design of our Lord's death*; he had some knowledge of it, but not such a knowledge as we have now that the Spirit of God has appeared in all his fulness, and taught us the meaning of the cross. Oh, listen, sirs, ye that are not upon his side openly, ye that have never worn his livery, nor manifestly entered on his service. He died for you! Those wounds were all for you; that bloody sweat, of which you still may see the marks upon the countenance of the Crucified, was all for you. For you the thirst and fever, for you the bowing of the head, and the giving up of the ghost; and can you be ashamed to own him? Will you not endure rebuke and scorn for

his dear sake who bore all this for you? Now speak from your soul and say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." If you cannot say that, you cannot be happy; but if you can, then what follows? Must you not love him, and give yourself for him? The cross is a wondrous magnet, drawing to Jesus every man of the true metal. It is as a banner lifted on high, to which all who are loyal must rally. This fiery cross, carried through all lands, will rouse the valiant and speed them to the field. Can you see your Lord suffering to the death for you, and then turn your backs? I pray you may no longer hesitate, but may at once cry, "Set down my name among his followers; for I will fight it out even to the end, till I hear him say—

‘Come in, come in;
Eternal glory thou shalt win.’”

Thus much by way of instruction taken from the life of Joseph of Arimathæa. If the cross does not bring a man out, what will? If the spectacle of dying love does not quicken us into courageous affection for him, what can?

III. So I have to mention, in the third place, something for OUR AROUSING. Perhaps you are saying in your heart that the season in which Joseph lived was one which imperatively demanded that he should leave his hiding-place and should go in to Pilate, but that you are under no such constraint. Harken, friends; many people are not true to their occasions, whatever they may be; they do not consider that they have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. The Lord Jesus is not hanging on a cross to-day needing to be buried; but other stern necessities exist, and call for your exertions. This hour's necessities imperiously demand that every man who is right at heart should acknowledge his Lord and do him service. Every man that loves Christ should at this hour prove it by his actions. A buoy off the Mumbles in South Wales bears a bell which is meant to warn mariners of a dangerous rock. This bell is quiet enough in ordinary weather; but when the winds are out, and the great waves rush in towards the shore, its solemn tones are heard for miles around as it swings to and fro in the hands of the sea. I believe there are true men who are silent when everything is calm, who will be forced to speak when the wild winds are out. Permit me to assure you that a storm is raging now, and it is growing worse and worse. If I rightly read the signs of the times, it is meet that every bell should ring out its warning note lest souls be lost upon the rocks of error. You that have fallen behind because the fighting did not seem to require you, must quit your positions of ease. I summon you in the Master's name to the war. The Lord hath need of you. If you come not to his help against the mighty a curse will light upon you. Ye must either be written across the back as *craven cowards*, or else you will to-day solemnly espouse the cause of Jesus. Shall I tell you why?

I will tell you why Joseph was wanted, and that was, just because *Christ's enemies had at last gone too far*. When they hunted him about and took up stones to stone him they went a very long way; when they said he had a devil and was mad they went much too far; when they asserted that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the

devils, that was a piece of blasphemy; but now, now they have overstepped the line most fatally; they have actually taken the King of Israel and nailed him up to a cross, and he is dead; and therefore Joseph cannot stand it any longer. He quits their company and joins himself to the Lord Jesus. See how far men are going in these days. In the outside world we have infidelity of so gross, so brutish, a character, that it is unworthy of the civilization, much less of the Christianity, of our age. Now, ye fearful ones, come out, and refuse to be numbered with the unbelieving world. Besides, in the outward Christian church we see men who, having already taken away every doctrine that we hold dear, are now assailing the inspiration of God's own word. They tell us plainly that they do not believe what the Scriptures say further than they choose to do. The Bible to them is a fine book, but rather out of date. Now, if you can be quiet, I cannot. The citadel of Christendom is now attacked. Let no brave man shrink from its defence. If you can hold your tongues, and see the faith rent to pieces, I cannot. Why, it is enough to make every man gird on his weapon and rush to the fight. Years ago, when they talked of the French invading England, an old lady grew very indignant, and threatened deadly resistance. When she was asked what the women of England could do, she said they would rise to a man. I have no doubt whatever that they would do their best in any such emergency. Every iron in the fire-place, whether it be poker or shovel, would be grasped to defend our hearths and homes; and just so now, when error knows no bounds, we must stand up for the defence of the truth. Since they push error to extremes, it becomes us to hold by every particle of the faith. I will not, for my own part, give up a corner of my creed for any man. Even if we might have been prepared to modify expressions had the age been different, we are not in that mood now. A generation of vipers shall have a naked file to bite at. We will modify nothing. If truth bears a stern aspect we will not veil it. If there be an offence in the cross we will not conceal it. This shall be my answer to those who would have us attune ourselves to the spirit of the age,—I know no Spirit but one, and he is unchanging in every age. Your extravagance of doubt shall have no influence over us except to make us bind the gospel more closely to our hearts. If we gave you an inch you would take a mile, and so no inch shall be given you. Our resolve is to live for the Book as we read it, for the gospel as we rest in it, for the Lord as he made atonement, for the kingdom as it ruleth over all. I beg every trembling Christian to take heart, put on his Lord's livery, and advance to the fray. Come out now, if you never did before! Come out, if there is any manliness in you, in these days of blasphemy and rebuke.

“Ye that are men, now serve him,
 Against unnumber'd foes;
 Your courage rise with danger,
 And strength to strength oppose.”

When Joseph of Arimathæa revealed himself as our Lord's disciple, *our Lord's friends had mostly fled*—we might almost say they had all departed. Then Joseph said, “I will go in and beg for the body.” When everybody else runs away, then the timid man grows brave; and

often have I noticed it, that when there has been a wide desertion from the faith, then the feeble have become strong. Those poor souls who had said, "We hardly know whether we are the people of God at all, we are so unworthy," have crept out of their dens and have waxed valiant in fight, putting to flight the armies of the aliens. A sister was asked to tell her experience before the church, and she could not do it; but as she went away she turned round and said, "I cannot speak for Christ, but I could die for him." "Come back," said the minister, "you are welcome here!" They do gloriously, those hidden ones, in days whereof we are apt to fear that no witness for the truth will remain alive. Oh, that you who live where religion is declining may be all the more resolved to serve the Lord Jesus faithfully!

And then, you know, in Joseph's time *the people that were true to the Lord Jesus were such a feeble company*. Those that were not absolutely poor—the women that could minister to him of their substance—were nevertheless unable to go in unto Pilate and beg for the Lord's body. He would not have received them, and if he would they were too timid to have sought an interview; but Joseph is rich, and a counsellor, and therefore he seemed to say, "These dear good women need a friend; they cannot get that precious body down from the cross alone. I will go to the Roman governor. Together with Nicodemus, I will provide the linen and the spices, and the women shall help us take Jesus down from the tree and lay him in my new tomb, and swathe his limbs in linen and spices, so as to embalm him honourably." Some of you live in country towns where those who are faithful to God are very poor, and have not much ability among them. If anything should move you to be the more decided, it should be that fact. It is a brave thing to help a feeble company; any common people will follow at the heels of success, but the true man is not ashamed of a despised cause when it is the cause of truth. You who have talent and substance should say, "I will go and help them now. I cannot leave the Master's cause to this feeble folk. I know they do their best, and as that is little, I will join them and lay myself out to aid them for my great Master's sake."

Can you not see my drift? My only desire this morning is to induce any of you who have for a moment faltered to "stand up, stand up for Jesus," and everywhere, in every place as wisdom may suggest, avow his dear and sacred name. Perhaps you are flowers that cannot bloom till the light is darkened, like the night-blooming cereus or the evening primrose. Now is your hour. The evening is already come; bloom, my dear friends, and fill the air with the delightful fragrance of your love. When other flowers are closed, take care to open to the dew. In these dark hours shine out, ye stars! The sun has gone, else might ye lie hid; but now let us see you! Joseph and Nicodemus had never been seen in the daylight when Jesus was alive; but when the sun was set through his death, then their radiance beamed at its full. Oh, my hesitating brother, now is your time and your hour: boldly avail yourself of it, for our great Master's sake!

IV. Lastly, there is something in this subject for OUR GUIDANCE. Somebody says, "Well, what do you mean by my coming out? I can see what Joseph did: what am I to do? I do not live at Arimathea, and there is no Pilate in these days."

Joseph in owning his Lord *put himself under personal risk*. A Christian slave, whose master was executed for being a Christian, went to the judge, and begged the body of his master that he might bury it. The judge replied, "Wherefore do you wish for your master's body?" "Because he was a Christian, and I am one." Upon this confession he was himself condemned to die. It might have been so with Pilate; for the Jewish rulers must have hated Joseph and longed for his death. He had been backward a long time, but now he put his life in his hand, and went in boldly to Pilate. We read, "He craved the body of Jesus"; but, as a commentator well says, he was not a craven, though he craved the body. He simply asked for it, begged for it, implored to have it, and the procurator yielded to his wish. Now, do you think that if it were needful for you to jeopardize your best earthly interests for Christ, you could do it? Could you lose your character for culture and courage by avowing the old faith in these apostate days? Can you leave all for Jesus? Should it rend the fondest connection, should it break up the brightest prospects, could you take up the cross and follow your Lord? It is due to him who died for you that you should count the cost, and reckon it little enough for his dear sake if you may but do him honour.

Remember, again, that this good man, Joseph of Arimathæa, when he took the body of Jesus, brought upon himself *ceremonial pollution*. It may seem little enough to you, but to a Jew it was a great deal, especially during the Passover week. He handled that blessed body, and defiled himself in the judgment of the Jews. But, oh, I warrant you he did not think it any defilement to touch the blessed person of his Lord, even when the life was gone out of that matchless frame. Nor was it any pollution. It was an honour to touch that holy thing, that body prepared of God. Yet they will say to you, if you come out for Christ and unite with his people, that you lower yourself. They will point at you, give you some opprobrious name, and charge you with fanaticism. "Take upon yourself this blessed shame, and say, as David did, "I will be yet more vile." Dishonour for Christ is honour, and shame for him is the very top of all glory. You will not stand back, I trust, but you will come forward and avow your faith, though you thus become as the offscouring of all things.

And then, this man having risked his life, and given up his honour, was content to be *at great cost for the burial of Christ*. He went and bought the fine linen; and that rock-hewn sepulchre which it was the ambition of every Israelite to possess, he cheerfully resigned, that the Lord might lie there. Now, whenever you do own Christ, own him practically. Do not keep back your purse from him, or think that you are to say, "I am his," and do nothing for him. I was reading the story of a good old deacon in Maine, in America, who came in to a meeting after there had been a missionary collection. The minister there and then asked "our good brother Sewell" to pray. Sewell did not pray, but thrust his hand in his pocket and stood fumbling about. "Bring the box," he said; and when the box came, and he had put his money into it, the minister said, "Brother Sewell, I did not ask you to give anything, I only wished you to pray." "Oh," said he, "I could not pray till I had first given something." He felt obliged first to do something for the great mission work, and having done that he could pray for it. Oh, that

all Christ's people felt the justice of that course of conduct! Is it not most natural and proper? Joseph could not, when the Saviour wanted burying, have been true to him without burying him. And now that the Saviour does not want burying, but wants in all his living power to be preached among the sons of men, if we love him we must do all that lieth in us to spread the knowledge of his name. Come out then, come out then, ye that are hidden among the stuff! Some of you strangers from the country, who have lived in the village, and attended the services, but never joined the church, do not let another Sunday dawn till you have sent in your name to be classed with the people of God. And any of you that have come often to the Tabernacle, and say that nobody has spoken to you, just you speak to somebody and own what the Lord has done for you. Joseph of Arimathæa, where are you? Come forward, man! Come forth; your time has come! Come forth *now!* If you have followed Christ secretly, throw secrecy to the winds! Henceforth be bravest of the brave, among the body-guard of Christ, who follow him whithersoever he goeth. Have no fear nor thought of fear, but count it all joy if you fall into manifold trials for his name's sake, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xix. 23—12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—138, 670, 674.

A ROYAL FUNERAL.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 1894,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 7th, 1888.

“And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”—John xix. 38—42.

LET us go to this grave, but not to weep there; nay, not to shed so much as a single tear. The stone is rolled away, our Lord's precious body is not there, for Christ has risen from the dead. It may be that, like Mary at the sepulchre, we shall see a vision of angels; but if not, we may behold a company of comforting truths which still linger about the empty tomb of our ascended Lord.

We are expressly told, in Holy Scripture, that our Lord was buried. It was evidently not sufficient for us merely to be told that he died; we must also know that he was buried. Why was this? Was it not, first, that we might have a certificate of his death? We do not bury living men; and the Lord Jesus would not have been buried if the centurion had not certified that he was certainly dead. The Roman officer had probably seen Christ's heart pierced by the soldier's spear, when blood and water flowed forth from his side. At any rate, when his men went to execute the *coup de grâce*, which finished the lives of the other two, by the breaking of their legs, they were so certain that he who hung in the middle was really dead that they brake not his legs. Christ's being given up for burial, was Pilate's certificate that he had not merely pretended to die, but that it was a real death, and that his body had no life remaining in it. This is an essential point, for if Jesus did not die, he has made no atonement for sin. If he died not, then he rose not; and if he rose not, then your faith is vain,

ye are yet in your sins. The sepulchre, therefore, occupies a very important place in the story of the death of Jesus.

Again, was he not buried to fulfil a type which he had himself chosen? Like as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, in the heart of the sea, even so was the Son of man to lie for that time in the bowels of the earth. The casting of the runaway prophet into the sea quieted the angry waves; the tempest fell asleep when he was given up as a victim; and Christ's being cast into the sea of death has quieted the storm of almighty wrath; we sail to-day as on a sea of glass, because Christ was buried in those awful billows. He must fulfil the type of Jonah, or else he spoke not aright concerning himself when he said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."

Further, was not our Lord buried to make his battle with death and his triumph over it more complete? He has conquered death; but he has also burst open the castle of death, that is the grave. He has bearded the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall. In this matchless duel, he has set himself to fight, not only with death, but with death and the grave combined; and hence the pæan of victory is not merely, "O death, where is thy sting?" but it is also, "O grave, where is thy victory?" Christ's victory is altogether complete. He hath led captivity captive, because he became a captive. He has vanquished all death's allies, as well as death itself, by going down into the grave, and rending its bars asunder.

Beside all this, did not our Lord die, and condescend to be buried, to sweeten the grave for his people? Rightly did we sing just now concerning the tomb—

"There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume."

Unless the Lord should speedily come, as he may,—God grant that he may!—we shall fall asleep, and these bodies of ours will be committed to the silence of the grave. We must not dare to dread the sepulchre; where Christ has been, we may safely and honourably go. As I told you, the other day, he left the fine linen to be the furniture of our last bed; he left the napkin rolled up by itself, that weeping friends might dry their tears thereon; he left, beside, the myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds' weight, which Nicodemus brought. I never heard that they were taken away from the tomb; Jesus left them there, and they still shed their sweet fragrance throughout the graves of all his saints. We are not going to a noisome vault, but to a perfumed chamber, hung with the fine linen sheets that encompassed the Christ, and odorous with the spices that shed their sweetness upon him. To die, is now our gain; to sleep in Jesus, is to be blest indeed.

I may add, also, that I think our Lord was buried so that, from his tomb, he might leap to his throne. He goes to the lowest depths that thence he may rise to the loftiest heights. You, too, believer, may go as low as the grave, but you can never go any lower, and when you are at your lowest, you are then on your way to your highest. Your Lord stooped to conquer, so must you. You will have won the victory

over death when you lie, stark and cold, upon your last bed. The adversary may think that he has defeated you,—

“ When silent is your pleading tongue
And blind that piercing eye,”

and inactive that once diligent hand, but it is not so; you shall then have broken loose from everything that hinders you from entering upon your highest service for your Lord, and you shall have entered that holy place where you shall see his face, and serve him day and night in his glorious temple.

I like to think of Jesus as going down into the lowest parts of the earth, when I remember that he that descended is the same who also ascended. This should encourage us to feel that, sink as we may, lower and yet lower still, we shall rise all the higher because of that sinking, and shall enter still more completely into fellowship with Christ both in his sufferings and in his glory. It was needful, then, my brother, that there should be a new tomb in the garden close by Golgotha, and that our Lord should lie there. It is a very wonderful thing that he, whose face is the light of heaven, whose hands are sceptred with the government of the universe, and whose very feet are sandalled with the stars, should yet bear the image of death upon his pale countenance, and should lie there lifeless, to be handled by others, and to be wrapped as any other dead man might be, in fine linen and sweet spices.

But my subject at this time is concerning the wonderful working of God with regard to the burial of Jesus. The providence of God began with the body of Christ from the very first, even from his conception; and it followed him right to the last, even to his burial. You see the holy Child in the manger, and you notice how all things round about minister strangely to him. Throughout his life, all things worked together for his good; not to screen him from suffering, but to cause him to suffer, and to make him triumphant through those sufferings. And when he came to die, I see the finger of God displayed at every part of that dread tragedy; but now that he is dead, will that kind providence forsake him? Ah, no!

I want to stop here, and say to you who anxiously ask, “What will become of me when I die? I am so very poor and needy,”—never think about that matter; you have enough to do to trust God till you die. As to what is to become of your body when you are dead, never fret about that. It is wonderful how God does take care of the very dust and ashes of his chosen, how, sometimes, they receive in death respect and honour which they never thought would have come to them, and after they have passed away, their children and their household are blessed of God for their sake. The God of the living forsakes not his saints in dying, or after death. As Ruth would cleave to Naomi, and said, “Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried,” so, with greater faithfulness, does God cleave to his people; he will see them buried, and take care of their children after they are gone. This is his comforting promise, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.”

Now let me remind you how God took care of the Firstborn among many brethren. Jesus is dead, and in the hands of wicked men; the executioners have him in their charge, those same executioners, who just now broke the legs of the two thieves, have hold of Christ; but that precious body must be preserved, not a bone of him must be broken, no disrespect must be paid to that immaculate Being. Death and hell would have revelled in insulting Christ's body if they could. As Achilles dragged Hector by the heels round the walls of Troy, so would Satan have liked that men should have mauled the dead body of Christ. He would have cast him to the dogs or to the kites if he could have had his way; but so it must not be. Many a man who has been a prince has been buried with the burial of an ass; but this great Saviour, whom men despised, must have a royal funeral: how is he to have it? That is the point I wish to bring to your notice now; and, before I have finished my discourse, I hope I shall be able to prove to you that everything required for Christ's burial was supplied.

I. The first requisite was, **SOMEONE TO OBTAIN THE BODY.**

The law has executed Jesus, though wrongfully, and his body therefore belongs to the executioner, or, at any rate, to the law. Who is to rescue that precious body from the clutches of the law? Ah! you may look your eyes out, but you cannot see the man who can accomplish this task; yet God knows where he is. There is one Joseph, who has an estate at Arimathæa, a wealthy man, a member of the Sanhedrim, "an honourable counsellor." He appears upon the scene, and he is the right man to do what is required, for he is a *secret disciple*. He has great respect for that dead body; for he had great regard for Jesus while he was alive. As we look Joseph up and down, we say, "Yes, if he will do his best, he is the very man for this emergency." He is under great arrears of obligation to his Lord, whom he scarcely owned in his lifetime; yet he is a real disciple. Joseph, if thou canst do anything in this matter, we give thee this solemn charge, go and get the body of Christ.

He was, besides, an *official, and influential*; therefore he could gain an entrance where a private person could not; and what was still more to the point with such a man as Pilate, he was a *rich man*, for in those days, in the courts, everything went by favour. The poor man's cause might be just, yet he could not secure a hearing; but the gold in a rich man's hand would speak more loudly than the most convincing arguments upon a poor man's tongue. So this secret disciple is the one to beg the body of Jesus, because he is an honourable counsellor, and also because he is rich. If he is willing to undertake the task, he is the man to accomplish it.

But my heart misgives me, for Joseph has been secretly a disciple, and therefore I conclude that he must be *very timid*. During the last two years or so, he has been really a follower of Christ, and yet he has kept in the council. He has been a member of the Sanhedrim, yet he has not spoken out against its evil deeds. Ah, me! I am afraid that he will not be able to go and speak to Pilate. But note, brethren; what Mark tells us about him: "Joseph of Arimathæa went in *boldly* unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus." God can make a coward bold as a lion in the day when he needs him; and

this good man, full of honour, and abounding in wealth, said, "I will go to Pilate." Why! this cruel vacillating governor will put a man to death if he aggravates him; who knows how this interview may end? But Joseph says, "I will go to Pilate." He obtains admittance, and he asks for the body of Jesus. Pilate exclaims, "Why, he is not dead yet!" "Yes, he is," answers Joseph, "I have seen him die." When the centurion comes, he certifies that he is dead. Pilate cannot imagine what Joseph can want with a dead man's bones, but he says, "You may have his body. Take him down, you may have him." So Joseph comes back to the cross; he has proved that he was the very man for this work. We should never have thought of him, but God had him in reserve for the hour of need, and brought him to the front at the right moment.

Now you see Joseph hurrying away from Pilate's hall to the hill of Calvary, where the crosses are still standing. He has, in his hand, the order signed by the governor, he shows it to the officer in charge, and he is a man of such prominence, so well known as an honourable counsellor, an official gentleman, and a person of wealth, that everybody is ready to help him. He himself is probably first and foremost in raising the ladder, helping to pull out the great nails, and to let down the blessed body. He is the man for this work, for *he is objectionable to nobody*. He has been a counsellor, so that those on the side of the Sanhedrim do not object to him. The holy women stand watching him, but they have no fears as to his action; they know him, for he has probably done them many a kindness privately in days gone by; and they know that he has been a secret disciple of the Lord. He has brought with him fine white linen, which he was well able to buy, he reverently takes the body of Jesus down from the cross, and tenderly wraps it round with the costly winding-sheets which he has purchased; and so this trying business is finished without interference from anyone.

I hope that these details do not seem trivial to you, for nothing is trivial that concerns our Lord and his cause. In the tabernacle and the temple, even the nails had to be duly prepared; and I think that, in this matter of providing a suitable person to go and get the body of Jesus out of the hand of the legal custodian, we ought to admire the wonderful goodness of God. Depend upon it, if, at any other time, there should be some great and terrible task to be accomplished, God will find the man to do it. If one shall be wanted, by-and-by, at peril of his life to bear witness for Christ, the right person will be found; and until this chapter of divine providence shall come to an end in our Lord's eternal glory, there shall never be a crisis, however crucial, but the man shall be found whom God wants, or the woman who is to occupy the place which the Lord has for her to fill.

Thus, Joseph has obtained the body of Jesus from the hands of Pilate, and he may do what he will with it; that is the first point.

II. The next requisite is, **SOMEONE TO BURY THE BODY.**

We do not want one man to carry away that body, and lay it in the grave, for such a person as Jesus should have an honourable funeral. Now see what happens. There is another man, also a counsellor, "a

ruler of the Jews," "a master of Israel," yet another secret disciple who had come to Jesus by night; he appears just at this very moment: "There came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night." Now we have two mourners for our Master's funeral. James and John,—where are you? They cannot hear my question. Peter and Bartholomew, where are you? They are too far away; they cannot hear me. Who will follow the body of Jesus to the grave? Who will be chief mourner? There are some gracious women, brave enough to stand afar off, and willing enough, if beckoned, to come and join the sad *cortège* that attends the corpse to the tomb. But how honourable to Christ was it that the first two and the chief mourners on that sorrowful occasion should be two members of the Sanhedrim, Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, two men of note, two reputable individuals who were held in honour even among the Jews who crucified Christ!

First, let me say of these two men who attended the burial of our Lord, that *they did him honour*. Thus was fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." All the while until Christ had paid the dreadful price of our redemption, he was despised and rejected of men; but as soon as ever he could say, "It is finished," and the debt was fully paid, he must not be despised and rejected any more. Now, rich men must come and do him homage; and accordingly Joseph and Nicodemus came. It may seem only a little thing, but it indicates the turn of the tide, just as the floating of a straw may do. Jesus is no longer derided, nor even attended alone by the poorest and most obscure of Galileans; but Joseph from Arimathæa, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, attend the funeral of the great Lord and Saviour of men, and so pay such honour as they can to his dead body.

While they thus did him honour, *they received from him much more honour*. Ah, my brethren, it was a great privilege that was accorded to these two men! I stand and wonder how it was that this position was allotted to two who had kept so long behind the scenes. They had lost—they had lost—I cannot tell you how much they had lost, two, perhaps three years of constant fellowship with Christ, and of instruction from his own dear lips; they had lost incalculably. They were in the rear of all Christ's disciples; Mary Magdalene was in front of them, the woman that was a sinner was far ahead of them, they were right in the rear rank; yet their Master, in the splendour of his grace, gives them this privilege even while he himself lies dead, to them is accorded the high honour of handling his blessed flesh, and laying him in the tomb. I am afraid that some of you secret Christians, who never come out boldly for Christ, will not have such an honour as this. If the Lord ever uses you at all, it will be in some sad business, such as a funeral; and even that will be an honour to you, if you are permitted to attend him in his death though you have not shared the glory of his life. You lose—oh! you lose incalculable boons by not avowing your discipleship. Yet I pray that there may come a time, and that it may come at once, when even you will come out, and do what you can for your Lord, saying to yourself,

“Now is the hour when even I, timid as I am, must avow him.” When soul-murder is in your streets, when heresy is in your pulpits, when apostacy is in your churches, you are recreant to the last grain of your spiritual manhood if you who love Christ do not come out boldly on his side, and declare that you belong to him. If you never have confessed him before men, and you neglect this opportunity, wherein there is the greatest and most urgent of need, I fear that you will never own him at all.

Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus were both wanted for this sad task; and though we should never have thought of inviting them to perform it, yet they were the only two men connected with Christ who were exactly fitted for the office; and, as I have said, they thus honoured Christ, and he thus honoured them. I should also say, brethren, that among all the disciples, there were *no more sincere mourners for Christ than these two men*. I think that I hear Joseph fetch a deep sigh, and say, “Ah! Nicodemus, how wicked I have been, for I have not kept with Christ as I ought to have done! I ought to have gone with him to prison and to death; instead of that, I have been among the ungodly, rich and honoured.” “Ah!” says Nicodemus, “and I went to him by night, and he talked so sweetly to me, but I have been hiding away ever since. I feel ashamed to touch this blessed bleeding hand; I realize that it is a high honour to be allowed to handle these dear feet, and to wrap the linen all about them, but I do not deserve such an honour, I am sure;” and they would stop, and weep, and sigh again, to think of how they had ill-treated their Lord, by what they may have thought was modesty, but which conscience now tells them was nothing else than shameful cowardice.

And I do not think that, out of all Christ’s followers, there were any who would be *more tender with that blessed body*, for they were gentlemen. They were not countrymen or fishermen, used to handling and being handled roughly; they were of tenderer mould, and when they looked on that dear form, how gently would they treat it! Being also men of property, they would have many servants able to help them in all sorts of ways. In his wonderful interment, our Lord Jesus could not have been better attended, nor have been buried by men who would have performed the mournful duty with more solemn feelings, more hushed reverence. They loved him, yet felt that they had acted in an unloving manner towards him, and now also felt that the best they could possibly do was all too little for the blessed One who had sealed the forgiveness of their cowardice by permitting himself to be entrusted to their hands. I can see great love about this dead Christ, and great pity, and great kindness, that even his lifeless body should be giving life to the faith and hope of Joseph and Nicodemus, and should be firing them with fresh ardour. While they looked upon his corpse, they must have been compelled to resolve that never more would they be ashamed of him whom they had helped to lay in the grave.

So far we have, in imagination, brought our Lord Jesus Christ into the hands of two most suitable persons to bury him.

III. The next requisite is, THE MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR THE BURIAL.

The manner of the Jews is to bury the body wrapped in fine white linen; where is that? I do not believe that Peter has a yard of it anywhere, I hardly think that James and John have anything much finer than fishermen's coats, and so forth. *Fine linen*,—let it be the best that can be bought, let it be white as snow, for wrapping around this perfect body; but where is it to be obtained? Joseph has it; he is a man of wealth, who can get anything that is wanted, and he has brought with him the best winding-sheets in which to wrap the Saviour's body.

But we must also have *mixed spices in abundance*, fifty pounds' weight at the least. "Oh!" says Nicodemus, "I have brought one hundred pounds' weight with me, and if I could have found a conveyance, and more spices had not been superfluous, I would have brought many hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes, well mingled according to the art of apothecary, with which to surround that blessed form."

See, my brothers, Christ wanted for nothing when he was dead; do you think that he will want for anything while he is alive? "Ah! but our little church, our poor cause, is wanting money badly, and we are going to get up a bazaar." What! and you have not thought about going to your Lord for what you lack? The fact is, the Church of God has been looking to the devil to find funds for the Lord's work, instead of seeking aid from the Lord himself. It is a pity that we cannot come back to him who, even when he was dead, had a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes brought to him. Cannot we trust him for all that is required for his service? It will be a better and a brighter day for the Church when she believes that, if Christ wants myrrh and aloes, he can get them. Does not the Lord say, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine. . . . Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. . . . If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof"? Let us go forth to fight the Lord's battles without any doubts concerning the commissariat of his army. He can provide, and he will provide; only let us trust him, and not go down to Egypt for help, nor lean upon an arm of flesh.

As Nicodemus gave so freely to the dead Christ, how generously ought you and I to give to our living Lord! If we have anything in the world, let us give it all up to Christ. Even if we have nothing left but a grave, which we have provided for our own funeral, yet let us surrender that, as Joseph did when he gave up his new tomb that his Lord and Master might lie therein.

Thus, you see, that all that is needed for Christ's burial is there already. So I leave that part of our subject, and go on to the next.

IV. Another requisite is, A PLACE WHEREIN TO BURY THE BODY. We have the body, Pilate has given us that; we have the spices and the fine linen; and we have the two men ready to bury the body; now we want a tomb.

It would be very convenient, and also very important, if we could get a *sepulchre near at hand*; because, you see, if the body of Christ had to be carried a long way to be buried, the Jews would say, "Ah! they changed it on the road; they took it a mile or two out of the city, and the Christ who rose from the dead is not the Christ that was

buried." But here, just at the bottom of this rocky scarp which is called Golgotha, there is a garden, and in that garden there is a tomb. Mark the providence of God in this matter, for that tomb belongs to Joseph, and there the Saviour's body is lovingly laid. He did not, and he could not, lack a tomb when it was required; when the time came for him to be buried, the sepulchre was there already prepared, hewn out of the rock.

It would be also a great advantage if it could be a *new tomb*, wherein never was anybody buried; for if they buried him in an old tomb, the Jews would say that he had touched the bones of some prophet or other holy man, and so came to life. Ah! well, Joseph's is a new tomb; there are no bones there, for nobody has ever been buried there before.

It would seem, too, to be the proper thing for our Lord to have a *tomb in a rock*. You cannot fitly put him in sand who is himself the Rock of Ages. Nay, let our Lord Jesus, with that grand immutable love and eternal faithfulness of his, let him lie in the solid rock. There it is, all ready for him, just the very kind of tomb that is wanted for him who is the Rock of our salvation.

If it should also be a *tomb in a garden*, there would be a touch of familiar beauty about that arrangement. One likes that the very surroundings of Christ's grave should be instructive. I cannot stop to tell you about all the beauty and the instruction which cluster around a garden; the gardens of Scripture especially are most fruitful subjects, and our Lord's garden-tomb might suggest to us a most profitable theme for meditation.

Thus, Christ's tomb is the very thing we would wish for him. In no second-hand grave, in no town fosse, in no pauper's grave dug out of the earth, but in a rich man's sepulchre, worthy of a king, it is there that the Christ must lie. See how God provides for his Son, and learn how he will provide for you. If he provides for his Son when dead, he will provide for you while living; therefore be you comforted whatever your condition may be.

V. There is one more difficulty, and perhaps it is the worst of all, for it concerns THE TIME FOR THE BURIAL. You see, it is very late in the afternoon, and besides, it is the "preparation" for a very important Sabbath, and these good people cannot do any work on the Sabbath, their consciences will not permit them to do so, for they are strict Jews. But it so happened that they obtained the body just in time to wrap it round about with the spices and with the linen, and then we are told, "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for *the sepulchre was nigh at hand*." To me, it is a very pretty thought that, when there was so little time, the place of burial was so near. It would have taken all the lingering twilight to have carried Jesus far, but the right place was near. Providence knew all about the difficulty, and provided for it.

Next, they could not take much time with the body, and *the ceremony was the more fitting for Christ's rising*. Beloved, whenever you cannot do anything for your Lord as you would like to do it, do the best you can, and you may depend upon it that you have done just what ought to be done. "Oh, no!" they say, "Oh, no! we would have liked to

have wrapped him up much more leisurely, and more delicately; we would have made a finished work of embalming that precious body." Listen: nothing more was wanted. Jesus was not going to be in the sepulchre long. God's Holy One could not see corruption. He did not need to be embalmed, for he was to be up again so soon, and therefore a hurried burial was quite sufficient.

Listen again: there is another thing worth mentioning. *The incompleteness brought them early to the sepulchre.* If they do not finish their task of love on the evening of the crucifixion, they will be there early in the morning, when the Sabbath is over, to complete it. That was precisely what was wanted, that, as soon as the Master was risen, on that first day of the week, they should be there to see him; but they would not have been there to see him, perhaps, if they had not come, as the holy women did, with more spices to finish the work which had been, comparatively speaking, so roughly and hurriedly done on that dread evening.

It was all right; and I drew much comfort and joy out of this fact when I was thinking it over. I said to myself, "Sometimes, I am so oppressed with the care of the many things entrusted to me that I cannot study my sermon as I would like." Perhaps it is all the better for that; the Master does not want studied sermons. It may be also that it suits the hearer all the better. If you cannot bury Christ as you would like to because there is not time, when you have done the best that you could, and sorrowed over it, you have done the very thing that your Lord wants you to do. Rest you content with that, and just say to yourself, "He takes the will for the deed, and all my blunderings and mistakes he overlooks because I did it all out of love for his dear name."

I have talked thus to you about Christ's dead body. Oh, that I had an opportunity of speaking to you about him as the living Lord! But as I cannot, for our time is gone, I would ask you just to stoop down, and in faith and love to kiss those wounds, admire that pierced hand, that other hand, that nailed foot, that other foot, that side with the spear gash, and that dear face with closed eyes, and then say, "He bore all this for me; what have I done for him?" God bless you! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

MARK XV. 34—47; JOHN XIX. 38—42; AND 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 1—9.

Concerning the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall read in three portions of the New Testament. First, in the Gospel according to Mark, the fifteenth chapter, beginning at the thirty-fourth verse.

Mark xv. Verse 34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

It is, "My El, my strong God, my mighty One, why hast thou forsaken me?"—the bitterest words that were ever uttered by mortal lips, and expressing the quintessence of agony. Alas! that my Saviour should ever have had to say as much as this when he hung upon the cross, suffering and dying for me.

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

Did they misunderstand his bitter cry of woe? Could they mistake what he meant? Was it not, on the part of these people that stood by, a wilful wicked witticism upon what our Lord Jesus had said? We fear that it was so.

36, 37. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.*

His last words were, "It is finished."

"'It is finish'd!'—Oh what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord:
'It is finish'd!'
Saints, the dying words record."

38, 39. *And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him,*

The officer who had charge of the arrangements for the execution: "when the centurion, which stood over against him,"—

39. *Saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Probably saying a great deal more than he understood. There was something so extraordinary about this central Sufferer that the centurion could not understand who he could be unless he was truly "the Son of God."

40, 41. *There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.*

Where was Peter? We know that John was near the cross; but James and the rest of the apostles were apparently hiding away; yet the holy women were there.

42, 43. *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.*

I have no doubt that Pilate was very surprised that a member of the Sanhedrim should come and ask for the body of Jesus, when, a little while before, he had put him to death really by the mandate of that body of men.

44, 45. *And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.*

This very centurion, who had declared that Jesus was the Son of God, now came forward to bear witness that he had seen him die; and then Pilate told Joseph that he might go and take the body.

46. *And he bought fine linen,*

This was probably the first time that fine linen had touched the flesh of the Son of man; he had been accustomed to much coarser stuff in his lifetime, but now Joseph "bought fine linen."

46, 47. *And took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where he was laid.*

That is Mark's account of our Lord's death and burial, very terse, and very suggestive. Let us now read John's description of the sad scene.

John xix. Verses 38—40. *And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus,*

Oh, how tenderly, and with how many tears, did they take their Lord's body from the cross!

40—42. *And wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

John's Gospel contains some particulars not mentioned by Mark; and the same may be said of Matthew's account, and Luke's. Read them all when you are at home, and ponder the wonderful story.

The apostle Paul, speaking of our Lord's resurrection, mentions his burial. We will now read in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, just a few verses from the fifteenth chapter.

1 Corinthians xv. Verse 1. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel—*

Mark that Paul writes concerning "the gospel." We shall see now what "the gospel" is.

1—3. *Which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

That is the central truth of the gospel.

4. *And that he was buried,*

That is an essential part of the gospel.

4. *And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

This is the bright light of the gospel, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead—

5—9. *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Yet he made one amongst the many testifiers to the fact that Jesus really died, and was buried, and rose from the dead, of which we will speak more particularly by-and-by.

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